***Documentality and Display: Archiving and curating the violent past in contemporary Argentina, Chile and Colombia***

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**I BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Institution: Ciudad Comuna, Cr 10 # 52-161 barrio Las Estancias, Medellín

Name and position:

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Interviewers: Vikki Bell, Jaime Hernández, María Paula

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**II. TRANSCRIPT**

Jaime: I'm Jaime Hernández, I'm an urban architect and I work at the institute of the Javeriana. Jefferson told you, I work with him.

Leonardo: Well, all right. Where do we start? Well, I'm Leonardo Jimenez. I am a communicator, with a master's degree in Education and Human Rights. I've worked as an independent social researcher for a long time. And right now I'm also working at the Centro de Estudios de la Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana collaborating in the line of research and pedagogies [inaudible 00:00:59:00]

Jaime: Sorry, which university?

Leonardo: The Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana, the Unaula. And apart from that, I have always had, because of my work and because I link research and narrative, the pedagogy. This is a work that focusses in some experiences and territories. And for more than 10 years I’ve been a volunteer activist in various processes in the city, especially this process of Ciudad Comuna, in which I work during my spare time, which is related to the security of the process.

Jaime: Can you tell us all a little bit about the Comuna?

Leonardo: Well, Ciudad Comuna is an organization...

Unidentifiable female voice: Good afternoon.

Leonardo: Hello. It's a community social organization. This organization was founded exactly 10 years ago. And it's an organization that was born...

Jaime: You were at the foundation.

Leonardo: Yes, at the foundation. I've been away at certain times, but I've been back. And yes, I've been there from the birth of the project. And Ciudad Comuna is an organization that since its foundation has had the idea or the political vision of doing something to help to overcome the conditions of exclusion and invisibility in which many communities, organizations and territories of the city live, particularly in the periphery. That is why we call it Proyecto Ciudad Comuna, because these territories and these communities are invisibles for the city, and that affects in multiple areas: institutional policy, official media, universities, international cooperation agencies.

So this project focused from its inception on helping to tell about that ‘other city’, that other Medellín, the one on the hillsides, the one of the peripheries that a few people knew at that time. Now, a little more about it is known.

So when we founded Ciudad Comuna we added certain profiles of what we had already been doing in our careers. For that reason, many of us are communicators, we work in the field of social communication, audiovisual narrative, journalism. And we decided to have as a structuring axis of the project, the pedagogical processes and the construction of social fabric, from the alternative, popular and community communication, that has many names. But basically this organization was founded with the idea of contributing to the construction of narratives of the territories, but in a participatory and collaborative process, where the people of the communities are linked to the narratives of their own history.

So that began to give some structure to the organization. The first strategic project we founded was the Proyecto de Medios. So basically, we have a very comprehensive strategy here. We do written journalism, graphic reporting, we have an audiovisual production centre focused on collaborative documentaries. For the last three years, we have also been dealing with the digital world, but everything has been focused not on the idea of the journalistic profession, but on how to make this a pedagogy for people to tell stories. That is why it links a lot of narrative training, collaborative research and community story production.

And apart from that, about 5 years ago, we created the ‘Programa de Investigación Colaborativa’ because we were tired of the extractionist dynamics of the academy, particularly of local universities, which have had a systematic perpetration and a perverse logic of research, where they go to the community, bringing knowledge to them, with the aim of fulfilling research indicators but then, they don't give anything back to the territory and to the social experiences.

Several of us are professionals who are researchers from universities or independents, and we are going to turn this around and propose a research program that, at least, generates minimal conditions for negotiation with academic actors so that we can begin to dialogue in terms of principles in research. So, in here we apply a research methodology that comes from the legacy of Fals Borda and Paulo Freire, which is action research. And particularly we work with the community on educational processes and systematization of experiences, so the communities can have the minimal resources to produce the knowledge of their own initiatives, and doesn’t have to wait for the university to come and tell it how its knowledge should be produced. What we do after that is to develop systematizations with the people of the territories and make publications of experiences’ systematization. Not in the idea of doing scientific and academic articles and indexed journals, but in the line of building knowledge as a common good, so people start to learn to write about their own stories, their own experiences. With that information we do systematization exercises, which we turn into leaflets and pedagogical publications. That’s our idea of collaborative research as in the alliance with the territory.

And also, about 6 years we founded the program of popular education that is very *Freirian,* which works the idea of dialogue of knowledge with the territorial actors, that for us are the experts on city, urbanism, development, memory, territory. With the people from the community we make formative schools, so here we have a school that is the school in communication, because the structuring axis continues to be narrative. But it is also reflexive, since the school works every year on the themes of memories of territory, processes of resistance and the impact of this whole theme of the mega urban transformation of the city of Medellin, peace initiatives and territorial memory, a little bit about the armed conflict and territories.

So those are the main themes of our school. But in the process, the people who come to participate in the training experience also learn about narrative methodologies. So basically they do research in their own territory, that are a way of reading their own experiences and social realities, and they turn them into narrative projects, photographic exhibitions, documentary videos, journalistic chronicles, radio chronicles, museographic montages. That's pretty much what Ciudad Comuna does.

Jaime: Could you explain a little more in detail on the subject of how you work, what you do, or what have you done, and what are the memories of the territory?

Leonardo: Well, in the line of memory we have had several processes that are like participation scenarios, and at the same time are methodological strategies. We have a process that is part of the research program, which is the Activatorio Cartográfico. How does the Activatorio Cartográfico work? We make some territorial itinerant sites, we go to each neighbourhood, or at least neighbourhoods of this commune, that are closer to us, and year after year we organize some participative exercises with the people of those neighbourhoods, to build the cartographies of these territories. So it's mapping memory, because every year we do one layer.

Jaime: But by cartography do you mean maps?

Leonardo: Yes, yes. What happens is that, as I said, the basis of this is that we work with territories that are not yet recognized by the land use plan. For many of these neighbourhoods, the maps that we make in the Activatorio Cartográfico are the first resources of visibility of their territory. So we have been working on the Activatorio Cartográfico for about 6 years and in those 6 years we have made the origin layer, the one that represents the historical origin of the territory, how it was founded, from where the people came, what is the relationship of the foundation of the territory with the armed conflict in other regions of the country. Then we built the social fabric layer that describes the participatory and organizational processes that have happened in that territory. Then we made a very important layer that is the one of affectations by mega-projects, because in most of those territories, several projects have been developed, and most of them are already operating, the subway-cables, the garden bypass, and of course, these projects are highlighted by the authorities, under the idea of increasing development and welfare, but only a few people know the negative repercussions that the construction of those infrastructures had. Processes of intra-urban displacement, social leaders being threatened because they did not want to sell, the purchased of land from the communities under unworthy conditions, and a mobility problem that despite the fact that the projects have already been built, has not been resolved. So that's a layer we worked on.

Then we made a layer about the invisible borders to know how is the logic of the armed conflict configured in these territories, who are the actors and where are those borders? And the last layer that we made, which is from last year and a little bit from this year, is a layer that is a more proactive one, that is the layer of memory and popular knowledge. That is to say, what is the wisdom, the wealth of knowledge of the people who come, that is present in these territories, because they are communities with a very interesting cultural hybridization. Here we have indigenous communities, peasant communities, afro communities and all of them comes to these territories with ancestral wisdom and knowledge, of rituals, culture, and cuisine. Well, we are already working on more layers, as if to highlight more the value of these territories and the wisdom of the people who are part of these territories.

And with that work of the Activatorio Cartográfico, which was called originally Observatorio, the same community corrected and told us: 'don't come and observe anything. Here we are going to come to activate resources, possibilities of collaboration to produce the stories and the maps of our territories'. We compile these layers, we design them with people who are part of the team, who work all the graphic part, we do scale maps, then we continue to work as with the maps of imaginary that people bring, and we redesign, publish them, and then they are digitally linked.

So from those same territories we have audiovisual stories, we have photographic works, radio works, so we basically synchronize the visual cartographies with the interactive narrative. That for us is the most powerful thing because the political sense of this is that the people of the city, of all Medellín, begin to talk about their neighbourhoods, that they know they are there, that they exist. So for Ciudad Comuna it is a very militant vindication of memory, not an abstract, hegemonic discourse, but a vindicating memory. In other words, people have the right to build their memory in the middle of invisibility conditions, of marginality that this system has perpetrated for a long time, with the exclusion logic that it has put in the periphery territories.

And those resources that are produced have become a political tool that have allowed that many of the actors from those territories in those neighbourhoods begin to demand the authorities with more political effectiveness, to officially and formally update the maps. Because as long as a territory is not visible in a territorial planning, development, income distribution and arrival of conditions of improvement of rights and quality of life will not be possible. That is where you find the connection with the claim of the right to territory, of the right to the city, of the right to a dignified life. That’s one of our strategies.

Vikki: So are the maps professional or affective? If you understand...

Leonardo: Both, perhaps the most important one is the subjective map, that is, the imaginary map, the one that people draw and recognize. But we have also begun to make maps in scale because we have started to build alliances with researches and with other institutions that are doing what are called ‘Estudios alternativos de territorios’. Therefore, it is important to work with more technical and professional maps, and also because it has been validated by the territorial actors. We don't do anything if the community doesn't agree. That is the first principle that we have here, we just do things if the community sees the political sense of it, the sense of claiming, otherwise it is not done.

Jaime: And who is the community?

Leonardo: Here we have more than 15 organizations, none of which is part of the informal participation structure. In other words, the territories in Medellín, and that’s how it is in any commune of Medellín, are grouped into 2 expressions of organization. Some are grouped in the traditional structure of participation and representation of the territory according to the constitution, which are communal action boards, neighbourhood committees, local administrative boards, councillors and citizen security boards. This is more or less the democratic structure established by the constitution, but in neighbourhoods that do not yet legally exist, this form of participation cannot be promoted. If you do not have a legally constituted neighbourhood, you will never be recognized as an institution by a Junta de Acción Comunal.

These territories have built alternative forms of grouping and organization. The ones that have been in this process are: The Mesa de Víctimas, the Red de Mujeres Populares, the mesa Inter-barrial por Vivienda y Servicios Públicos, the Red de Memoria del Territorio, Procesos de diversidad inter-étnica, which are all legitimately constituted processes, but with schemes of organization and participation that are not so representative, but more assemblies. They function more like assembly cells and they try to build political agreements in knowledge dialogues. That has been our base group for this particular process of the Activatorio where coincides that those who are in these scenarios of participation have been also founders of their own territories. In other words, they are people who began to get together to start developing the neighbourhoods, in what is called ‘conditions of informality’, we don't like to say 'illegality' which is the word that the institutions use. They're not illegal neighbourhoods, they're informal neighbourhoods.

Then these same committees, groups, networks, were the ones who began to look for how to build a community agreement, to build the first houses and the first soccer field. A word that has a lot of relevance in this process of the Activatorio, is the word 'convit', that are solidarity actions that brings development to a territory. And we are talking about an average of about 150 people representing all these participation spaces.

And in the memory key we have another process that is the Festival de las Memorias Comunitarias, just this morning there was a planning meeting. We do this festival every year. We've been doing it for five years, so this would be the fifth version. And the Festival de las Memorias is a festival about community memories, which tries to make the city interact with the territory, asking or reflecting about other point of views about the territory memories. So basically what we have consolidated in the Festival de Memorias is the recovery of community archives, through an exercise that we do every year. We use a fusion of visual ethnography techniques, through, for example, opening and dialogue with family album archives.

Vikki: Personal.

Leonardo: Yes, from families. There is a call for people who want to bring audiovisual material that has homemade formats. And we give albums to everyone, from the old man of 15, to the girl, or the series of pictures made in Kodak of how the first community aqueduct was made. So every year we update that inventory and here we already have a huge database.

Jaime: [inaudible 00:20:55:00]

Leonardo: Yes, what happens is that we have been looking for a way to manage some resources in order to be able to physically install it and have an itinerant modality. We want to make a version, a kind of a rolling box that can go through the neighbourhoods. Because for us, more than the typical idea of an archive as a filing a space, we have the idea of a more dynamic space. That is to say, what is it for, how is it going to be made dynamic, what educational spaces can be generated, how can people use it, especially the people of the territory. But we have...

Jaime: Within that program people came here and said...

Leonardo: They bring their archives. Then we make a conservation policy, some leave us the original versions, others let us make copies of materials, VHS, betacam, cds, many printed photographs. But that is only one of the many festival activities. Apart from that, we organize a cycle of memory activations that are usually workshops that link memory and narrative, memory and art, memory and graffiti, memory and sound of the territory. So they're like laboratory formats and workshop formats.

Vikki: And music too?

Leonardo: Yes, we have a format called Memorias Sonoras that is with music. With music and with musicians. In fact, they are musicians from the city that comes to work with musicians from the neighbourhood.

Every year at the festival we do an exchange of research failures, because we are very interested in dialogue, especially about the contradictions in research, in a memory key. So every year at the festival there is a call for research groups or study centres, or processes that are carrying out research on memory issues, territory and peace. But it is not for them to come and talk about research results or 'the 5 most interesting points of my research'. Instead, it is a dialogue around the challenges represented by the methodologies, so we can learn to do research in a more horizontal way, in a dialogue of knowledge. It is a type of activity that people like very much, in fact we don't even have to make calls because there are many people who want to come to that conversation.

So it's a dialogue around action research methodologies, but they are working on memory issues basically. And people who want to talk honestly about the challenges comes, and shows how easy or how difficult it is to say that you are going to do research that includes the community. It’s easy to say that that is an action research. Right. In practice this has many challenges and contradictions, but we do a knowledge dialogue that has become very therapeutic for many sensitive researchers who have no space in academy to talk about it. Because academy only wants to hear your results, generally speaking, there are exceptions, but...

And we have a very political space in the festival, that is the community memories assembly, which is a space that we make with all the territorial actors that participate in these processes, in that assembly there is a political discussion around some of the topics that we touch. Last year, for example, at the community memory assembly, people spoke about what the value of the territory's memories is and why the territory's memories must be preserved. The theme of this year's assembly proposed by the people is to talk about community legacies, how to look back at all these territorial struggles. And those community assemblies always leave a tangible and concrete result which is the political manifesto.

How does a manifesto work? A group of thinkers meets and constructs different views on a problem, a reality of a subject, they leave political approaches, and these political approaches are written as a manifest.

And what it has to be present in the community memory assemblies is the dialogue with the narratives and with the artistic expressions. So we always have an audiovisual exhibition at the festival. Last year's audiovisual exhibition brought together more than 20 audiovisual works that dealt with different views on living well in the territories. So, we received works from many communes of Medellín, because here there is a lot of community audiovisual production that has no way of being projected on the official circuits. And we even receive works from people from other territories or other countries as well.

And there is always an artistic part where the artists of the territory can show their art at the closing of the festival. So it's like the other format we have.

Vikki: So the festival last...

Leonardo: 3 days.

Vikki: 3 days. Okay. But there is also a travelling exhibition.

Leonardo: Yes, the workshops usually 'travel' through the neighbourhoods, the assembly meets in one place, and even before the festival begin we do territorial tours. In fact, we start next Saturday. Next Saturday is like the ‘prelude’ to the festival, because this year the festival is on November 15 and 16, but next Saturday we're going to take a tour on El Faro neighbourhood, which is one of the neighbourhoods that doesn't exist on the map of Medellín, but which has a beautiful social, cultural, and political dynamic. It's behind the Pan de Azúcar hill. In fact, it's a very rural neighbourhood, you go there and you walk in like a... like a plot of land opening up... very, very, very beautiful. So we take advantage of the tours to start calling for the festival, and especially because we have a dialogue with students from many universities who love these tours. Some teachers use these routes as a kind of lecture on territory, on urbanism, on memory, on peace. Then the territories are always very good hitch to start the festival, people start to gather around the tours.

And until 2 years ago we had a project that was in alliance with other community organizations, that precisely was done in alliance with the Museo de la Memoria, which was the project of ‘Memorias en Diálogo’, which was a process of... it was like a political school of processes and narratives of memory in 5 communes of Medellín. That is, it was an articulation of about 10 organizations. So we had commune 1, commune 6, commune 8, commune 13 and commune 4. And what we did was, designing a common methodology to exchange narratives, working methodology and community social memory, and we had a very powerful school for a couple of years. We had some funding from the Museo de la Memoria, which did exchanges, territorial tours, and produced a series of very interesting videos and publications. I'll see if there's anything left in the archive.

But because it was a project that required a great deal of resources, and when the museum's policy changed…

Jaime: Did it change with this administration or it was already changed? Because there's a new director since, like, the beginning...

Leonardo: No, Lucia was there, and Lucia the first two years wasn't a complete failure, there were strategies that worked and others that didn't. It seems to me that the attempt to have a territorial strategy for the museum from my humble point of view worked well. And I think that one of the strong points of this strategy of territorial articulation was this project of Memorias en Diálogo.

We proposed to the museum to have a room for museography in knowledge dialogues. And Ciudad Comuna was, I think, the only organization in the city that managed to design and mount an exhibition that was not a rigid, expert and traditional museography, but a more social and community-based museography. We exhibit in a room, during 7 months an interactive exhibition called 'Relatos desde la Frontera’, which was a project that we did in partnership between Ciudad Comuna and the Museum, where we managed to use part of all these materials that we produced in the Activatorio Cartográfico. But with the change of management obviously…

Jaime: Adriana.

Leonardo: With Adriana Valderrama the museum stopped being the Museo de la Memoria and became, for me, the museum of post-truth, right? A legitimation of a unique truth. In fact, it began with a nefarious event, in which there was a modification of the main exhibition that was about the whole topic of armed conflict in Medellin. That exhibition originally had some stories and pieces that talked about state crimes, and those pieces were excluded from the main hall, and that’s when the whole redesign of the Museum de la Memoria began. Then it moved on to the modality of changing the knowledge dialogue into public calls. So they cease to give primacy to the groups that were conducting memory processes in the territories, but they began to encourage groups to show and win contests. That was a drastic change for us. And the space closed as a participation stage to all sectors and concentrated only in some particular focuses. So Ciudad Comuna took the political decision of not engaging with them anymore.

Jaime: But now Catalina is there.

Leonardo: Actually, yes, I know that there is someone else, but we are now very disengaged. I know they do things there, they have this scholarship thing, but we never knocked on doors there again, after it changed like...

Jaime: I was just wondering that you do a lot of things, and you need resources for them, so where do they come from?

Leonardo: What happens is that Ciudad Comuna is an organization where, as here we say, 'we use the street'. Here we are socially very stable, politically very correct and materially broken. That's the executive summary of Ciudad Comuna.

But that's because it's been the connectivity consensus. Because what happens is that there is a very complex issue with the resources management at the local level, and it has happen in all the administrations, I could not say that it has been different from one government to another, regardless their political colour. The thing is that when you receive funding from an institution, you usually give up part of your pedagogy, your methodology and your political approach, in order to receive those resources. Ciudad Comuna received money from the public budget for about 4 years, from this participatory planning and budgeting program.

And for us, it was a very tense period because we had resources to make things, but we were totally conditioned methodologically and pedagogically, because the dynamics of institutional contracting have a range of demands that first sacrifice the pedagogical sense of the processes. To give you a concrete example, we had money to make 12 newspapers, 36 pages, full colour, and 10,000 copies. But we had a contract that was for one year and only processing the contract took 3 to 4 months. Also the formalization took another month, the establishment of the terms, the schedule and all that took another month, then it means that we were given 5 months or so to do all that paperwork. It was a process that worked the journalism ethics and the inclusive perspective in the production of content, so in order to comply we had to sacrifice the entire pedagogical component. We prefer to build a media with a social, community, participatory approach, so we took the decision of making the newspaper when we are able to release it without sacrificing the pedagogical bet.

So we usually do not have management dynamics with government institutions, it is easier for us to be called by them and heard their proposals, but with stablish very clear conditions. Right now there is a process being carried out, that we were proposed to do here in this territory that is a school of inclusive language, because in this territory as in all the territories of Medellín, there is much disrespect for differences. So, here there is a very negative treatment towards people who have another sexual identity, people don't know how to call an indigenous person, people don't know how to call an Afro person. So languages are usually stigmatizing. From one to the other.

So they proposed us to use the participative methodologies of Ciudad Comuna, to make a pedagogical process that leaves as a result the construction of an inclusive dictionary so that the people of the territory have a resource to learn to name and to recognize the different cultural, social, gender, and sexual identities. The first thing we told them is, that the process takes at least 6 months. We are not going to finish it in a month, because it needs methodology and it needs pedagogy. They told us yes, so we did it. But if it is not under those conditions we prefer that the process continues to be broken physically or materially, but not sacrifice what has been built so beautifully in these years, which is a pedagogical bet, for us is the most important value of that process. Some people say that we are very romantic and that we need to survive, and it is true, but we have held that position as a personal decision of all of us who are here, and the thing is that here we all contribute voluntarily with our time. Nobody gets paid anything here. I come on my own time, I do workshops, I teach in action research workshops, I teach in audiovisual workshops, I do photography with children and I do it with a lot of love. Ciudad Comuna doesn't pay me for this, and neither does anyone else.

Maria Paula: I think they're saying goodbye.

[Interview interrupted briefly]

Vikki: I understand that this is a cultural centre, but the audience is mainly people from here.

Leonardo: Of the communities, yes.

Vikki: But are there other audiences? Legal ones? For example, prosecutors? That you think, for example. A wider audience to build lines for reparations, for example, or to make the neighbourhood legal...

Leonardo: We have some alliances that have allowed us to generate collaborations. So, for example, we have had some collaborative dialogues with Planeación Territorial. With universities that have done research in those territories. The Universidad de Antioquia, the Universidad Nacional, with the Unidad de Víctimas Regional, three years ago, we collectively designed a route to care for children at risk of recruitment.

Let's say that it is not something so planned, but when the partnerships result in the possibility of a contribution in something that represents benefits or above all improves the welfare and protection conditions of the community, we take advantage of it. But let's say that, the main audience of Ciudad Comuna is the people and the processes of the territories, many university students from many universities who are involved, or class studies, degree practices, there are even about 3 or 4 courses from different university programs that have decided to use methodologies of Ciudad Comuna and come here directly... So they are like collaborative alliances.

Many people use the archives of Ciudad Comuna also to research. Specially the archives in key of territorial memory, construction of Ladera neighbourhoods, human rights approach. It is a very wide archive, because we have been working for many years in aspects of the territory that nobody else collects.

[Someone enters the room. Introductions]

Leonardo: And many young people come here. Young people from 6 communes of the city, not from this commune. We always said, the school of communications is attended by people from the 8th, but young people from the 1st, 4th and 13th are enrolled. Obviously we are not going to close the space to participation.

Jaime: Regarding the records, of these archives that you have been collecting through time. First of all, is there any articulation or any idea of doing it, at some point, with the Red Nacional de Lugares de Memoria? And second of all, have you thought in doing it with the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica?

Leonardo: We had a collaboration with the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica two years ago. There's a friend who was working there, Pedro. He was coordinating the pedagogical strategy of the Centro Nacional. And when they began this project of the great museographic format of Voces para transformar Colombia, we talked, and they proposed us to make a contribution, to write the chapter of Antioquia. Which was actually on display, it was there at the Fiesta del Libro, at the botanical garden for a week. What happens is that those are very interesting invitations but, in our view, they are far from being able to build these alliances in conditions of equity. The Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, with all the resources that it has had or had, because it seems that now it does not have many, could do all those processes, but it is not the same as the effort that Ciudad Comuna has to make to build the narratives, and to reflect it in different formats.

So initially they were proposing Ciudad Comuna to donate some materials from the community archive for the museography of the Voces para Transformar a Colombia. And that didn’t seem fair to us. We didn't say no, but instead we made a different proposal. So we told them: 'We propose to decentralize the formats of museography and to make a cycle of itineraries in the territory with materials from Ciudad Comuna, which can have the seal of Voces para Transformar a Colombia, but under a more itinerant idea that dialogues more with the territory'. Because this scenario was very interesting, but it represented many difficulties for the process we work with. First of all, most people don't have money to go to the botanical garden. It's a very nice format, a very open idea, but we can't fool ourselves with that, they are not formats accessible to all citizens and even less to the people we work with.

So what we did was to do a tours cycle here in Ciudad Comuna, where we invited people from different territories to share their stories, asking them for their permission to record those stories on video and audio, and that the Centro Nacional can use them. Some of these stories became sound and visual narratives that were shown in the museography, which was central to the exhibition. In fact, a collaborative workshop was held, some mediations with local girls and boys. That was like an experiment.

We haven't had any contact with this Red Nacional. We have collaborated with the people from the Montes de María audiovisual festival process, which we did in Ciudad Comuna a couple of times... I work on a line of research that is not very well known here, which is very mixed with archives as well, that is the line of violence of classification. Then, during 2 years, 2013 and 2015, we made an alliance with parque Explora, a cycle of workshops on classification violence and methods [inaudible 00:44:46:00] of archive. And there we met some of the organizations that participated. Our friends from Montes de María collective, who have a very big audiovisual archive on that territory. We were working with the Belén de los Andaquíes audiovisual school, which also has a very significant audiovisual archive. We were 'camellando' [working hard] with a project in Medellín called Ciudad Graffiti, which has an idea of an archive of memory in the form of tours, of photographs and compilation of archives of how the thought of Medellín has been transformed and is expressed in the murals, in the graffiti.

Last year, the Medellín film library proposed a theme for us, to provide audiovisual archives of our documentaries. Ciudad Comuna has about 50 documentaries of 24 minutes each on the channel. And also a lot of micro-stories that are 1-minute videos, but we usually save all the production material. I mean, the archive is huge. The Medellín film library was proposing us to send them some materials because they don’t have a lot about the communes. It's very cinematographic, and in Medellín very [inaudible 00:46:09:00] and show what has been done in cinema, but these community narratives have nothing there. But as it is just an idea, they are proposals in conditions of great inequality. Is very different what the municipal cinematheque can do, with all the resources it manages to build an archive, than what Ciudad Comuna has to do to produce everything it has produced all these years. So this is like [inaudible 00:46:35:00]. And also under criteria that do not dialogue with the principles or the political sense with which Ciudad Comuna has generated all these records for so long.

So, that's why we are betting on designing, or rather consolidating our own archive project, and looking for a way to produce it at some point. It is physically produced, but we would like to have some basic things like a catalogue or a spare time’ archives can circulate in the community. But it's a slow process.

Vikki: Sí. Jaime, translate the question to make it better. I think that is important to say that we are also trying to give some advises to people in other places. And one of the questions that we used to ask but we haven’t asked this week is about things that they’ve done in the centre that you are very proud of. That you think it would be good… Are you listening to me Jaime? [Laughs]

Jaime: Sorry. I was trying to say I’m not available [Laughs].

Vikki: Not, just this question of whether there are things that the centre is particularly proud of, or they think is good advice to give to another country in similar situation or worst situation. And things that maybe they think are precautions, or errors even.

Jaime: Yes, Leonardo, part of the aims of our research, of what we were talking about, is from those experiences, whether they are governmental, collective, social, private, etc. As for other countries that are following similar processes. Specifically, in terms of memory archives, uses of those archives, and so on. From your own experience and the experience of the Ciudad Comuna, what type of recommendations could you give to…, for example, Vikki works or has worked in Nepal where there is a lot of interest and a lot of ideas about it, but let's say that they are living a different process. That is, I don't know if I can say it like that, but for better or for worse we are a step ahead. So it's... either Sri Lanka or other countries.

So, from your own experience or the experience of Ciudad Comuna, can you say, are there any things [recommendations] that it is definitely interesting that these countries or these collectives or these communities take into account? because we have done it and it has worked well.

Leonardo: On the subject of archives?

Jaime: Yes. Archive and memory. Archive in memory key. Or the opposite, things that have turned out to be a failure and are better not to repeat.

Vikki: Or just a waste of time.

Jaime: Or a waste of time. I think in a way, Vikki, I think you've insisted on a very particular topic, which I've taken note of. And you have said it Leonardo, it's the lack of balance. You've repeated it several times. [We’ve heard it] here in this organization and in others, in Bogotá too and in Colombia. In the Red, I don't know if you know Mónica Alvarez of the Red Nacional de Lugares de Memoria, which is a lot...

Leonardo: Maybe. There are so many faces I see and I don't remember their names.

Jaime: She also talks a little... But well, let's say...

Leonardo: Yes, I would say that, in the last 2 or 3 years, we have come closer to the notion of the common goods. We've worked a lot from that perspective, especially because me and several friends that I work with are somehow doing processes of resistance and all this logic of indexed code, the ‘private repositories’, which is related to understanding the academy as an industry today.

And how does the notion of common goods come into play here? For us, the community archive that perhaps Ciudad Comuna manages today doesn’t belong to this organization. It's not Ciudad Comuna property, it belongs to the community. It is a common good of the territory that has been built in a collaborative way. So we may have the cameras, the equipment to record, but if we didn't have people's stories those archives wouldn't exist. For us, perhaps the most important thing politically and symbolically, is to construct the idea that an archive is not itself the archive of an institution or the archive at the service of a claim, but that it is a common good. And that is why we wanted to slowly think about what is the best methodology now that perhaps the archive is bigger, so that this common good can begin to circulate.

We had a little campaign when the [inaudible 00:53:05:00] of the Museo de la Memoria, the Archivo Documental that is on the top floor, started. And we began a campaign for truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition in cases of investigations that were never returned. Because we had anecdotes, we toured that documentation centre with many people from the territory and we found photographs, stories of people from the territory, in primers, in publications, that they did not know. It is very easy to sort, group, and compile to privatize. That is supremely simple and it seems that it remains the focus, even if it has claiming speeches. It is much more complicated to think of methodologies to make the archives accessible and for them to have a kind of co-ownership. That’s is the point that I debate a lot with the institutions or at least this organization, to talk more in a collective way. Because there is a trend that you have to build archives, that you have to compile, that you have to organize your memories. But that generates new classifying violence.

Because the methods of organizing the archives are not always agreed upon and discussed. So that would be a very interesting point for me. Who defines it? Who defines how an archive is organized? Under what criteria? And above all, from what political perspective? It seems to me that in this there is not so much a sense of openness, so generally there are apparently very participatory processes for building archives, but they are very participatory in the phase of 'bringing in the archives'. As you have come, as I have shown you several examples of people who have come here to Ciudad Comuna: 'Hey, bring the archive. We're missing the one of the 8 and all that territory. There is a lot of democracy there, but I don't remember the first institution that invited us, and say to us: Come, let's organize an archive on this subject or about this territory. Why don't they come and make us a dialogue? Under what criteria can we organize an archive? If by narrative? If by thematic axes? If by historical periods?

There is not so much democracy there, it is more perpetrated, and it is a very rigid classifying idea where generally the experts are the ones who participate. Who organizes an archive from the point of view of academy, from the point of view of the Museum, from the point of view of the Centro Nacional, who arranges the archives? Who defines the parameters of organization and classification? There is a point here that implies taking risks and perhaps, as we have thought, that in this there can be participatory, collaborative, dialogical criteria. We have a minimal exercise of organizing the materials, and that exercise was done in a cycle of workshops that we did with people from the community. We told them: ‘Ok, this is what we've produced in 7 or 8 years. Add it 3 years to it. This is yours, it's not from Ciudad Comuna. We're storytellers, we're not even storytellers. We are a kind of vehicle for that narrative to be compiled into something and to have the possibility of becoming a physical repository and a preservation narrative. Period. There's the thing. How would you do this?’. So we came up with 7 possible routes to organize this material, not provided by us, but provided by the community.

One part of the community says: 'Oops, what a cool narrative of rural life in Medellín, the gardens, the planting as a ritual, that’s a way of understanding'. Others said: 'No, the narration in key of the past is very cool, it’s another way of understanding the archive’. Others said: 'No, relational historical sites, political conflict, transformation of the territory'. Right now we have 7 possibilities to organize that archive. Why does it have to be 1?

So there is also a theme, that there are some very hegemonic matrices that have been perpetrated in this idea of how to make memory, how to build archives, how to read the territories, how to systematize experiences, and it seems to me that there are a thousand possibilities. So I would say that an important recommendation, if you are working on archival issues, is that you should take up the challenge, of people contributing with ideas of how to classify or organize, and most importantly, their uses. Because we can do a very participative process, but then: 'Oh, we are done, everything was very good. We left it at this library, come and visit it’. And that's all. I think that's one of the points where there's a lot of...

And one subject of debate, which has been a subject from which we have learned a lot with territorial actors, is that we don’t have to digitize everything. Now, there are some very strong debates, especially because there is already enough material to understand how this new hegemonic model of cognitive capitalism and the propagation of all kinds of knowledge through digital platforms is being done. We are providing everything to the google repositories. And it seems to me that there is no problem that not everything has to be uploaded to a cloud, to the internet and be digitized. Here with the community we are learning again to work what is called 'tecnologías artesanales’, to make the call we do not always have to upload the invitation into Facebook. We have already realized that the people who live higher up... [Interruption. Greetings to a person] that the people who live in the higher parts of the commune, prefer to read our newspaper [inaudible 00:59:51:00] that is handicraft printed here and is added on the community bulletin board. We already know that when a documentary video is finished, it is more important to show it up in the community and to give a copy of the DVD to the people, rather than uploading it to YouTube. We do that later.

In other words, there is a certain idea that everything have to be digitized, and make people think that all the archives somehow have to go there, but I think that this is an interesting process of debate because, of course, there is this whole idea of democracy and that everything on the net is accessible to humanity, but what if all humanity does not want to be there? What happen there? We have territorial actors who have told us: 'I provide such a story, you can use it in workshops, you can work with it in the community, but I do not want that to be uploaded on the Internet'. So there emerge some ethical principles, which are very important to consider that many times are ignored, giving way to a more rigid manner to understand how the archive should flow. But the only way for an archive to flow does not have to be solely and exclusively by being digital. Also, because at least in our experience, the fact that digital inclusion has reached all of Medellín is an illusion. Half of commune 8 has no connectivity and we are talking about more than 15,000 people.

In other words, from the Llanaditas neighbourhood upwards there is no way to install a network, optical fibre, satellite, or anything else. Those are communities that the closest media they have is the newspaper we make and bring to them.

Vikki: So the events in the neighbourhood are very important.

Leonardo: Yes, I think that, that is perhaps a topic that could be a recommendation. The most interesting thing about this is playing, what do I do with it? Should I organize a festival, should I organize a cycle of workshops, with this I can make an audiovisual exhibition. There are actors who contributed with stories that are still alive and can come to talk about their own work. In other words, this has to be seen with more dynamism, as well as more flexibility, and there is a place of conflict between perhaps pedagogy and rigid methods. For us, pedagogy is the key. Because if we don’t consider that, we have a lot of material there, but what do we do with it? Right now in the festival that theme comes back and goes, we are going to do, perhaps, some organization of materials considering what people proposed to us on how to show things. We can do a short documentary about agro-ecological practices done in the territory. There is a lot of material that we can use, redesign, and share. That's about it.

Jaime: Leonardo, what about the not so good experiences?

Leonardo: Not so good, mmm. For example, we did not have all these criteria so clear at the beginning of the process. And perhaps the materials that we produced during the first years of work in Ciudad Comuna, have some problems to be reused and shared. And that is because we did not make previous agreements with the territorial actors who contributed stories. We were just getting started, learning from trial and error. Now this whole issue of ethical principles is very much installed in the organization, we know how have to look for every territorial actor, remind him that we have this material, and ask him if they agree that we have it and we use it. That was an initial error, but that's because on the way...

When we started working we were very passionate about narrative. Our fascination was to collect people's stories. But there weren't so many criteria around that. Let's just say the process itself was throwing that away. Well, at the beginning of the process there were not so many ethical criteria, actually there were none at all. It was more like: 'Oh, people told us their story. That’s so good!' but there was no agreement on anything. So there are many people who have participated in a more democratic and concerted exercise over the last 5 or 6 years, but the first few years none of that was done. With have got in touch with some territorial leaders, and we have told them that we have those materials. Others have already passed away. We need to talk to the family maybe.

One mistake we made, which we made a lot of at the beginning of the process, was not putting our archive in value. We were more naive politically speaking, we donated many materials to many people, mainly institutions. That's why I say, this has all been a learning process. And it's not that that was wrong, what happens is that we feel years later that we should have given more value to what we had. In fact, we gave out original materials. And when I speak of value, I do not mean putting a monetary price on it, but putting this into social, historical, political value, which implies the effort of producing the narratives as well. We have learned this over time and that is why we insist so much on the issue of negotiating conditions, which are cultural, which are social and which are also political.

What else could I tell you on that subject? No, I think that would be it.

Jaime: And how is the future of Ciudad Comuna as a collective? Is it to work on those lines that you have already identified over time? There is something else you want to do? Or any changes? or... Because one thing that interests me a lot and that you have commented on that you have repeated several times and it connects with what Vikki asked a few moments ago. And it is about the political projection of this work and there you realize that it is the important political construction that you want to do. And in a certain way, as I understand it, it is very much associated with the territories and the communities, but someone could say: wouldn't a greater projection in that sense be interesting? A greater projection of that dimension, of that political proposal, of that way of seeing it. Or is that how you want to be? Or is that how you 'can be'?

But beyond that, which is a particular issue, which is an interpretation I'm making, the question is about the future, whether you or the collective or whatever, how [inaudible 01:07:08:00]

Leonardo: That's the same question we're asking ourselves. What happens is that this year has been particularly difficult for Ciudad Comuna, and it has been much more evident the immense effort that has been made to sustain most of the actions, because this has been the year in which Ciudad Comuna has been almost 100% self-managed. So that has obviously brought a lot of satisfaction and it has strengthened the foundations of the collective. But it has also led to greater exhaustion, which is not easy. So there we also try that the methodologies we work with outside are also projected inside. So we have an assembly space in which we bring together all the people who are part of this process to share their ideas about possible new ways of doing things or new possibilities.

I know that there is an issue that is pending in the projection of next year and is to create as a kind of ethical protocols for management, which allow us to determine the manners we can get into management, how we can channel certain routes of management, thinking that there is a greater possibility of access to resources, as you said, amplify the capacity for action. But for us, amplifying the capacity for action does not necessarily mean doing it more widely, or in more places, but rather strengthening the pedagogical, participatory part, if you want infrastructure.

This is a very interesting year because it is a year of transits, because there are some of us who have been here longer, but there is a younger generation that is coming, with a desire to make commitments, and I believe very much in relays. I have been in social movements for a long time and many social movements have collapsed because historical leaders perpetuate themselves...

Jaime: But also because new ones don’t appear.

Leonardo: Of course. So I know that there is an important challenge and it is to give a little more political training to a lot of boys and girls who have incredible talents, with an ability to work with people, with a desire to continue growing and that also implies as greater political strengthening.

We have a plan to propose to some universities that usually take us into account for many things, that we reinvent or reverse the logic in which we work with them. They invite us a lot to do things that imply that the university comes here, but they usually don’t invite Ciudad Comuna to the academic field. Despite the fact that here there is a team of professionals, most of whom are very well trained. Easily Ciudad Comuna could be teaching a collaborative lectureship at the Universidad de Antioquia, at the Universidad de Medellín, at the Nacional, but it is always like a scenario of negotiation that we find very particular. So why can't it be in a two-way direction? That's a subject we're kind of working on.

One decision we took this year is that stop using the ‘logical framework’ as the organization's planning scheme because we find it deeply colonialist. Because territories don't think in indicators. So this year we did a very interesting experiment, which was to design our own methodology of strategic planning with a structure that we set up and called: 'by vindictive axes'. And that implies that perhaps the biggest challenge is to find people who want to cooperate with the organization, but that they might be sitting down like most agencies in the logic of the logical framework or in the 'illogical of the logic framework '.

There's a very interesting phenomenon. I am doing a study on that at the Centro de Estudios and is that all the social organizations of Medellin that have had international cooperation for more than 20 years and have been working with the logical framework scheme, today all still have community claims. And they all have supremely institutionalized structures, which do not correspond to what a community-based organization should be. Do you understand that? That’s the impact of understanding the logical framework as the only way to project and plan the political and social action of an organization.

And the second half of the year, we also decided to have a smoother operational rhythm, not so strenuous, because we have dedicated a lot of time to systematize the processes. So now, at the end of the year and in the first quarter of the next year, we’ll have several very interesting publications. So we have a book on action research methodologies that we are finishing. We have a series of booklets on methodological design to work on issues of memory and territory from the community audiovisual, photography, radio and neighbourhood narratives. We have this challenge that I told you about of how to show the archive and start to interact from it, which necessarily implies that we already have a basic project. What is missing now is to start a negotiated management route. Because we can show it to different entities and surely more than one will say yes, but the difficult thing is to negotiate the conditions. It may seem very ambitious, but we really have to protect the political sense with which this process is being done.

And with all that the intensification of the conflict in Medellín again, the worsening of the conflict in the communes, I am not talking about the social conflict but the armed conflict. We had abandoned that line a little, but I think we are going to come back again to that issue of the invisible borders. Cases of recruitment of children, young people and the issue of threats to social leaders that you know are everywhere, are starting to increase again. It was a line that we had abandoned a bit and we had concentrated more on issues of territories because we were optimistic that with all the peace process it could be achieved to sustain a certain dynamic, a certain work environment. But we have seen that all this is very sharpened again, so surely next year we will take up again the lines of work and research on narratives that focusses on the issue of peacebuilding from the territory and peace initiatives, with respect to social initiatives.

That's what we have talked about so far. We stop our actions now on November 30th. We have a couple of weeks there that we spend like evaluating and measuring the impact of what we do. I'm encouraging the team, because most of us here are into the qualitative research. Those of us who are in the academy, students, or some who are already professionals, and that is very good. But I’m trying to encourage them that to have some political effectiveness we must also be working on some of the quantitative aspects. Trying to show our impacts as well, because more than 1,000 people interact here per year, and that's not just a figure. In other words, if you start measuring under different criteria, the impact of what we do, despite the precariousness of resources and the numerous limitations that we have, the impact is incredible. I believe that we must also play with that to have some more political effectiveness, and also that can be an effective exercise of optimism. Because sometimes you think you do a lot and nothing happens, but it really happens.

Just right now, they are editing a video over there.

Another line that we have been supporting is that we have interns from universities from other countries that have come here very spontaneously. So now we want to build, in a more organized way the line of international volunteers and internships. So we have some agreements with Spanish universities that send students here. Laura is the one that came this semester, from the Programa de Cooperación al Desarrollo of the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia. We also have an alliance there with the [inaudible 1:16:46:00] foundation of the University of Manchester. And we do little things there that spontaneously appear, but they go shaping up spaces that get every time more organized.

Jaime: Well, congratulations. The challenges are great, and it looks like there are not only ideas but also an important path has been built. I don't know if you have any other questions?

Vikki: That's good, that's very interesting for us. Thank you.

Leonardo: Yes, you can follow us in our website too. We upload almost all this pedagogical process, everything is released through there. By the website of ciudadcomuna.org. We're going to check it right now, but it's active there. And on the networks, look for ciudadcomuna as one word and everything appears there, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram. The whole patch is still there.

Jaime: Thank you very much.

Vikki: Thank you very much.

Leonardo: I hope it’s helpful for you.

[Audio cuts off]

Leonardo: Memoria y Saber Popular is a collective made up of people who come from different careers, from different cities. People come from Pascua, there are people from Cali, from Pupayán, some boys and girls from Bogotá, and it is a collective that also works on the idea of narratives and action research. But they are very focused on the theme of popular knowledge, memory and folk knowledge and they use a methodology of radio schools for memory. I have done a project with them, I have collaborated in 3 projects, a series that we did that was called Ciencia para la Gente, which showed that science is not only in the laboratories, but that science is everywhere. Then we did another series called Cuentos para la Paz, which are stories for peace from people who come from the countryside and arrived in the city of Bogotá. And now they are doing again a series called Venga le Cuento, which are stories of older people about armed conflict, migration, the spraying of the countryside, the arrival in the city, it’s very nice. Then I do some narrative workshops with them.

Jaime: Let me know when you come down and you're in town to see you, and talk to you.

Leonardo: Yes. Last year Jefferson invited me to the symposium of the research works in memory, there I was listening, they were very nice. They did a lot of storytelling; it was very deployed now.

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