



THE TRAUMATIZED COLOMBIAN BODY

Collective Healing and Peacebuilding in
Post-Conflict Colombia

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ABSTRACT

The Colombian armed conflict left Colombia with far-reaching traces of both individual and collective trauma. This thesis seeks to generate an in-depth understanding of how collective trauma is manifested in post-conflict Colombia and to take under scrutiny the process of collective healing within the scope of trauma-informed peacebuilding practices from 2016 to the present day. The collection of the empirical data is organized around the Bunsichari project, a trauma-informed peacebuilding project of Dunna Corpóracion taking place within the municipalities of Fusagasugá and Venecia. This is analyzed through trauma-informed and conflict transformation literature, departing from individual trauma to how trauma is embodied on the collective level. Herewith, the collective body exhibits trauma-related symptoms such as avoidance of the past, hypervigilance, tactile as a heavy layer of constantly present collective fear, covering the underlying frail social processes. Unhealed collective trauma appears to be sustained and incited by abundant ongoing structural problems, thereby encapsulating the massive reservoir of collective trauma of Colombia and forming a breeding ground for repeated cycles of conflict. Subsequent to the inquiry on collective trauma, this research delves into the process of healing the collective trauma within peacebuilding practices. It articulates the importance of suitable spaces in which people can genuinely listen and understand to each other. Here, processes of recognition, awareness, openness and vulnerability can emerge, allowing suppressed emotions to come to the surface and igniting processes of humanization.

Keywords: collective trauma, trauma-survivors, trauma-informed peacebuilding, healing, Colombia

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FARC-EP	<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo</i>
FARC	<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</i>
M-19	<i>Movimiento 19 de Abril</i>
ELN	<i>Ejército de Liberación Nacional</i>
AUC	<i>Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia</i>
UP	<i>Unión Patriótica</i>

NGO	<i>Non-governmental organization</i>
UN	<i>United Nations</i>
ARN	<i>Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization</i>
PSC	<i>Protracted Social Conflict</i>

PTSD	<i>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</i>
DSM	<i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders</i>

LGTBI	<i>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersexual</i>
MAMU	<i>Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia</i>
MAMBO	<i>Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá</i>

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1. INTRODUCTION

“The truth is that people still live in the past (...). They are living every single day in the past, crying over the past every day, and that generates more war. And because of that, peace cannot exist (...).”¹

When I ask Evelia about how the Colombian armed conflict affected the communities, she refers to the vast amount of pain and resentment that many community members still hold on the present day. She tells me that this unresolved pain translates to deeply entrenched tensions in the communities. Evelia recognizes this repeatedly in her work as social leader, and illustrates this with the following example: *“I want to organize an activity in my community to share with all families (...), and I start looking for resources, I feel this joy in my heart (...). I want unity in this movement, I want everything to be pretty, not with violence, like right now (...) So I go with a positive thing in the community, but others undermine that and pressure on the negative”².*

Evelia Meléndez is one of the nine million victims that the Colombian armed conflict has left (ICTY, 2022). Evelia and her family were living in Viotá, when the FARC-EP was welcomed by the local Communist party to her municipality. Evelia' father was forced to work for the FARC-EP, and members of the FARC-EP started to threaten and harass Evelia and her family. Due to the high pressure and unpredictable situation, Evelia' family was falling apart, and they were forced to flee their home³. Over the course of five decades, the internal armed conflict in Colombia has caused more than 8 million forced displacements and at least 220.000 deaths, most of them civilians, thereby forging the world's second largest population of internally displaced persons (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016). As the conflict left nearly one fifth of the Colombian population as victims, Colombian society has been entrenched with deep traces of both individual and collective trauma (García Hernández, 2020). This thesis will generate an in-depth understanding of how collective trauma is manifested in post-conflict Colombia and to take the process of healing this reservoir of collective trauma under scrutiny.

The Colombian armed conflict

Over the last five decades, an intense internal armed conflict has been the tragic reality for Colombians due to successive waves of confrontation among the government, guerilla and paramilitary forces (ICTY, 2022). Having the fourth highest armed conflict related deaths between 2003 and 2007, has made Colombia one of the most violent countries for the past few decades (World Health Organization, 2008). Homicides, forced displacement, rape, torture, disappearances, extortion and kidnappings became normalized and started to form a

¹ Evelia Meléndez (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with the author, 22 April 2022

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

part of the social fabric in Colombia (Franco et al., 2006). Concomitantly, the rates of these different forms of violence reached absurd high levels. Clearly, the lives of the Colombians were severely disrupted by the armed conflict and the concurrent large-scale violence. The armed conflict involved many interests and actors, and is the product of competition for resources, political ambitions, and social and economic tensions (Franco et al., 2006).

The latest stage of the armed conflict finds its roots in a prior cycle of violence that occurred between the traditional political parties in the 1940s and 1950s. This period is known as *La Violencia*, and was triggered by the assassination of the liberal political leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948. Traditionally, Colombia is highly elitist and corrupt, with the power centralized around a few families (Escobar, 2002). Discontented by the lack of democratic openings to address political and social problems, several Liberal and Communist militants mobilized into a number of guerilla groups around the 1960s. The largest guerilla group in Colombia history, the *Fuerzas Armada Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)* was formed in 1964 (Skretteberg, 2015). The FARC-EP is essentially a Marxist-Leninist group and counted at its peak an estimated number of 16.000 combatants (Calvo, 2016). Next to the FARC-EP, other left-wing guerilla groups, such as the *Movimiento 19 (M-19)* and *Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)* mobilized and expanded their presence into both cities and far stretched corners of the Colombian rural areas. These guerilla groups were countered by far-right wing paramilitary groups with the complicity of the Colombian political elite around 1980. This culminated in the paramilitary forces as a manifestation of complexly interwoven interests of the Colombian elite including an estimated number of 11.000 public officials, politicians, influential businessman, cattle rangers and a number of the most powerful drug cartels (Colombia Reports, 2016). The drug trade contributed massively to the irruption and expansion of all armed groups and has become one of the main factors inciting the conflict (ICTJ, 2009). The collision between the Colombian elite with the paramilitary forces is referred to as “parapolitics” (Colombia Reports, 2016), and incorporates the financing of the paramilitary actors in the combat against the guerilla and the eradication of political opposition (García, 2016).

Around the 1990s, these paramilitary groups asserted independent political and military power, and proclaimed the establishment of an umbrella right-wing organization, the *Autodefensas Unidad de Colombia (AUC)* (Colombia Reports, 2016). The interests of the groups became deeply intertwined with the drug trade, solidifying their financial position, and subsequently, their political influence increasingly extended in different areas in Colombia, by means of extreme violence, threat and intimidation, also towards civilians (CRIC, 2012). This paramilitary expansion was countered by solidification of the military actions of the guerilla, reinforcing the bloodiness of the conflict. In 2002, an appalling amount of 80.427 people died and 763.347 people got displaced due to the armed conflict – which are merely the registered numbers, as many are too scared to report what happened to them (Registro Único de Víctimas, 2019).

Numerous factors affected the evolution and degradation of the conflict, such as the lack of state presence and services in the most affected regions of Colombia, and the continuation of agrarian issues such as the rural-urban gap, inequality and the concentration of land ownership (ICTJ, 2009). Importantly, at the time of conducting this research and writing this thesis, there were upcoming elections for new presidency. On 20 of June, after the right-winged government was in power for over two decades, the left-winged Gustavo Petro won the elections with his anti-corruption campaign and promises for profound economic and social change. The entire political context stands on the brink of vast change, and Colombians are awaiting to discover what this new presidency of Petro will bring.

Unhealed trauma obstructing the path to peace

After fifty years of violence, the Colombian government of President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC-EP initiated peace negotiations in September 2012. Those mainly took place in Cuban Havana and culminated in the final peace agreement that was signed on 24th of August 2016. Unexpectedly, the referendum to ratify the peace deal in October 2012 was unsuccessful after 50.2 percent voted against the agreement and 29.8 percent voted in favor. Subsequently, the FARC-EP and Colombian government continued the negotiations and signed a revised peace agreement on 24th of November. Instead of a second referendum, the peace agreement was sent to the Colombian congress for ratification. The revised peace agreement was approved by the Colombian congress, and thereby, marked the end of the armed conflict on 29th November 2016 (ICTY, 2022). Signing the peace agreement formed the first step in the peacebuilding process in Colombia. As Galtung describes, peacebuilding focusses on transforming structures and relationships in society to decrease the likelihood of future conflicts (Galtung, 2013).

A common assumption is that after war, when peace agreements are signed and weapons are put down, people just return to normal life and “just get over it”. However, this is a myth and implies the underlying tendency for a quick fix. A society that lived war is inhabited by an uncountable number of traumatized individuals. Individual trauma occurs when a person faces a dangerous and threatening experience that causes the person to feel afraid, helpless and powerless, and can come with a spectrum of trauma-related symptoms (see chapter 3, p. 26). In addition to individual trauma, there is collective trauma. In this thesis, this is viewed as the hidden emotional legacies, the rupture of social fabric due to war or mass disasters, entailing negative consequences of trauma on the collective level, such as social relations, processes and practices (see chapter 3, p. 31). Emotional legacies refer to the feelings that accompany traumatic memories and histories (García Hernández, 2020). Collective trauma can become socially embedded in the lived experiences and identity of a group and can feed nationalism through the formation of polarizing identity groups (Funk & Berry, 2020). Furthermore, collective

trauma can be passed through generations, such that children and grandchildren, who did not experience the trauma directly, also get stuck in behavior patterns they learned or epigenetically received from their traumatized ancestors. Hence, the scars of postwar trauma cut through the political and social fabrics on all levels of society (Good & Funk, 2020), and disrupt the sense of normalcy and daily rhythms for those who survive it (Hook, 2020). Neglected traumas and emotional legacies combined with political dysfunction and evolving pressures may fuel into negative feedback loops that increase the risk of future recurrent outbreaks of violence, leaving the country vulnerable to future insecurity and instability. Thus, collective trauma gets trapped in society through structural violence in institutions, through historical and cultural memory, and is even kept within the very human bodies.

The armed conflict left Colombia with far-stretching traces of trauma and deep war-wounds, thereby sustaining extensive emotional legacies resulting from this body of trauma. When neglecting potent feelings connected to the past, such as anger, fear, sadness and humiliation, a sense of community is rooted in an antagonistic juxtaposition to everything that differs, detrimental to sincere healing and peace processes (Premaratna & Bleiker, 2016). Hence, in paving a way to sustainable peace in Colombia, it is crucial to include the emotional legacies of the armed conflict (Funk & Berry, 2020). Yet, the psychosocial dimension of peacebuilding has been reduced to merely an addendum within predominating peacebuilding practices, overshadowed by the *hard core* of peacebuilding consisting of economic, political, security and justice issues (Hertog, 2017). These conventional approaches centralize building institutions and effectuating a rule of law in their peacebuilding practices (Funk & Berry, 2020), and consider emotions to be of an exclusively private nature or irrational and thus of little relevance to politics. Subsequently, they are usually not equipped to adequately deal with these underlying emotions (Premaratna & Bleiker, 2016).

In Colombia, innumerable efforts have gone into peacebuilding. On the present day, however, the recognition of the unhealed individual and collective trauma, as well, as the processes of supporting trauma healing is still limited. Obstacles that impede the processes of recovery relate to inappropriate institutional and societal responses to help traumatized people, a lack of political will to recognize the collective dimension of accountability and war traumatization and a lack of a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to healing historical wounds and structural violence (Hook, 2020). Although Colombia represents a pronounced case of bottom-up peacebuilding initiatives, centralizing engagement with the everyday life and concerns of the local people, little room exists within these initiatives for addressing the collective trauma (Brett & Florez, 2016). Considering bottom-up approaches seek to transform life where it matters most, how people experience and see the everyday, it is exactly this realm of peacebuilding initiatives that hold the potential of carving suitable spaces for silenced voices and narratives,

fundamental to the healing processes of the emotional legacies on both individual and collective level (Premaratna & Bleiker, 2016).

Healing the emotional legacy of the Colombian war

Six years after signing the peace agreement, the transformation of post-conflict Colombia towards a peaceful society is moving haphazardly. Colombia is still facing ongoing waves of direct violence, whilst structural and cultural violence continues to exist (Isacson, 2021). Two factors that impede the peace process relate to the absence of the government outside of cities and towns, and the culture of chronic impunity. Rarely, powerful people are brought to justice for human rights abuse or corruption. As a consequence, state absence and impunity reinforce cycles of violence in which illegal economies, such as narco-traffic, continue to thrive (Isacson, 2021). Moreover, the active colossal body of collective trauma as a result of decades of war manifested on many societal levels in Colombia (García Hernández, 2020), and also has a central role in fueling cycles of conflict (see chapter 3, p. 39). Therefore, transforming Colombia successfully to a state of sustainable peace requires meticulous awareness and attention to trauma in all its forms and all its consequences. Departing from this starting point, this thesis seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the emotional legacy of the Colombian armed conflict, and how this is manifested on both individual and collective level in society, and aims to study the processes of healing on as well both individual and collective level in Colombia. In order to do so, this research builds on a body of trauma-informed literature on both individual and collective trauma, incorporating conflict transformation literature to gain a more profound understanding of the context in which collective trauma resides and the healing of it.

It may be clear by now that in the process of pursuing sustainable peace, spaces for healing of the collective trauma resulting from the war are required. Those spaces need to be created from the bottom-up, thereby ensuring local engagement and the reinforcement of local resources of healing. I argue that healing processes are non-linear and involve healing simultaneously on different levels, such as the individual, communal and societal level, and with that concurrently interacts between those various levels. Generally, much research has been conducted on individual recovery from trauma, however, healing trauma on a collective level appears to be relatively understudied in the field of peacebuilding. There is eminently little research, solid theory or evaluation, as well, as inadequate foundational strategies on trauma-informed healing within peacebuilding (Funk & Berry, 2020). In fact, even less is written and known on the specific case of Colombia. In order to incorporate healing adequately within peacebuilding, it is essential to gain a more profound understand of *what* needs to be healed, and *how* this healing may look like on the different levels within society.

The *what* and *how* serve as a point of departure in my research that I wish to take under scrutiny through the following research question:

How do healing experiences of trauma-survivors participating in trauma-informed peacebuilding initiatives promote collective healing, and subsequently, sustainable peace in Fusagasugá and Venecia in Colombia from 2016 to the present day?

Addressing this research question is academically relevant as it broadens the understanding on healing of post-war trauma within peacebuilding practices, and seeks to build on different theories that exist on healing trauma. The empirical complication narrows down the scope on the *how* in healing and peacebuilding, as it brings focus to the role of individual healing experiences in the larger context of community-healing and peace. Empirically, my research will contribute to the knowledge on views on healing within the specific context of Venecia and Fusagasugá in the Sumapaz region of Colombia, as this research will centralize surrounding the Bunsichari project of Dunna Corpóracion that takes place in these municipalities (see chapter 2 for further elaboration). Furthermore, my contribution to healing and peacebuilding studies is in the form of a bottom-up and trauma-informed approach, and thereby, overcoming the state-centric and top-down tendencies of the field, and carving a space for both structural approaches, that are necessary to understand the context in which the trauma resides, and individual approaches to address individual emotions, culture and perspectives.

I will unpack my research question in the four following chapters. Every chapter will include the theoretical foundations corresponding to the chapter's theme, followed by a dialogue between theory and the empirical findings. This thesis will continue with the second chapter that centralizes around the methodological foundations of this research, elaborating on my research design and including an outline of the context of Fusagasugá and Venecia. Chapter three will explore the concept of trauma, by zooming in on how trauma is substantiated in individual and collective bodies, and will conclude by linking collective trauma to renewed eruptions of violent conflict. The fourth chapter will delve deeper into the abundant structural problems that seem to have enclosed the basin of collective trauma, followed by an elaboration on the body of literature on healing and trauma-informed peacebuilding, and broaden these theoretical foundations by scrutinizing the healing processes in Fusagasugá and Venecia. In the final chapter, I conclude my research findings, answer my research questions, and reflect on my findings in the larger context of healing and peacebuilding.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to address the proposed research question, I take a social research approach as introduced by Ragin. This approach centralizes around retroduction which refers to the interplay between inductive and deductive processes, thereby incorporating a dialogue between *ideas* and *evidence*. Ideas help to make sense of evidence, and evidence helps to extend, revise and test ideas (Ragin, 2011). This refers to a dialectic process between the analytical frame (derived from theoretical concepts introduced at the beginning of each chapter) on the one hand, and images (patterns derived from empirical data presented in chapter 3 and 4) on the other. Moving from data to images requires a process of connecting different aspects of cases in a meaningful way to ultimately create overall ideas or coherent images (Ragin, 2011), and the outcome of this synthesis enables me to signal what the interaction between the healing experiences of Colombian trauma-survivors and trauma-informed and conflict transformation theories is a *case of*, which refers to describing to what wider phenomena my conclusions could be generalized (Lund, 2014). In order to understand how the empirical evidence was gathered, and how I derived images from this, I will elaborate and reflect upon methodology of this research in this chapter. In doing so, I will present the research design, the data sampling including an outline on the context of Venecia and Fusagasugá, the research method, analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of this research.

Research puzzle and sub-questions

As presented in the introduction, the research puzzle of this thesis is the following: *"How do healing experiences of trauma-survivors participating in trauma-informed peacebuilding initiatives promote collective healing, and subsequently, sustainable peace in Fusagasugá and Venecia in Colombia from 2016 to the present day?"*

In order to provide an answer to this research puzzle, I distilled four sub-questions. (1) *What are the life narratives of the participants in the Bunsichari project, how did the armed conflict affect them on the emotional, social and physical level, and how is trauma manifested in their lives?* (2) *How does the emotional legacy of the armed conflict manifest on the collective level in Colombia, and how does trauma on different levels (individual and collective) interact with each other?* (3) *What are the healing experiences of participants the Bunsichari project, and what do they consider necessary for (both individual and collective) healing?* (4) *How does individual and collective trauma relate to healing and to the creation of sustainable peace?*

In order to lay a solid foundation to study collective healing and its relation to peace, it is a prerequisite to gain a comprehensive understanding of the underlying individual and collective trauma and how the dynamics within these different levels of trauma look like. As

aforementioned, healing requires spaces and horizontal engagement with the local community, and hence, this research puzzle departs from bottom-up trauma-informed peacebuilding approaches and their participants. This research puzzle focuses on the time period after signing the peace agreement in 2016, as a considerable number of the interviewees are ex-FARC combatants and were only included in the peace process since that moment. However, as it is known that healing processes are everything but time-bound and linear, and may have been taken place before the 2016 peace agreement, the indicated timeframe is not considered exclusive over the course of conducting this research.

Epistemology, ontology and research design

As I am aiming to understand the meaning of action, the proposed puzzle statement reflects an understanding epistemology. Furthermore, my puzzle statement infers that actors attach subjective meanings to their actions, and that these meanings are required to understand the social world (Mason, 2018). The ontological nature would be the fusion of the categories of "Meaning and Symbols" and "Processes and Interactions" (Fumerton, 2021), and would be on the individualism side on the range of ontological positions, somewhere between "Reality as a realm of symbolic discourse" and "Reality as a social construction" (Fumerton, 2021). Namely, healing processes are unique to every individual, and hence, translate to symbols and meanings and with my question, I am interested in how these images and experiences relate to overcoming collective trauma, healing the collective body and the creation of sustainable peace. Hence, one obvious manner to do so is to conduct qualitative interviews with individuals to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences within trauma-informed peacebuilding experiences. My research question involves trauma-informed frameworks embedded within conflict transformation frameworks. These frameworks originate from an understanding epistemology, and have the same ontological properties as the overarching research question. With this epistemological and ontological nature, my research question indicates that the social world is constructed of meanings, emotions, symbols, narratives, experiences and interactions (Mason, 2018), and hence, can only be understood from "within". Considering the core of my research question, which concerns the experience and/or meaning of being individually healed, reaching community-healing and being in peace, and the ontological and epistemological nature of both the research question and conceptual framework, the proposed research fits best within a qualitative research design.

Contextualization and data sampling

In order to answer the research question, this thesis is built on qualitative data collected within the timeframe of March to May 2022 in Bogotá, Fusagasugá and Venecia. During the preparatory phase of this research, I searched for organizations in Colombia that are occupied with peacebuilding practices that focus on collective healing. One of the organizations that I

contacted was Dunna Corpóracion, a Colombian NGO committed to alternative peacebuilding approaches, such as dance and yoga, towards community-healing and sustainable peace in Colombia (Lefurgey, 2021). Dunna Corpóracion and I initiated a collaboration, and hence, I decided to centralize my research around their work, with a specification on their current Bunsichari project. This project is a replication of an earlier pilot project in Viotá that was conducted in 2021, and focusses on creating spaces for collective trauma, the mind-body relation, and the practice of observing and being in the presence (Martinez, 2022). The Bunsichari project aims to provide tools and skills for strengthening the processes of community reconciliation, to contribute to fortifying the social fabric and levels of mutuality and trust, and to prepare the participants to be multipliers of the acquired tools for their community. The sessions were interspersed facilitated by four facilitators that are also included in the study sample. As a way of emphasizing the central role of the replication of the learned tools, Dunna Corpóracion named the project Diplomado for the participants (Martinez, 2022). Importantly, literature on reconciliation often centralizes state-building and the development of various security, legal and economic institutions, and concurrently demands changes in a broad socio-psychological repertoire, including attitudes, values, societal beliefs and emotions. Yet, traumatized societies often fail to address the emotional legacies resulting from a conflict. Hence, I decided to narrow the focus of this thesis to the emotional part within reconciliation, specified as collective trauma, the healing from it within peacebuilding practices, and to depart from the psychological field, utilizing trauma-informed bodies of literature to analyse the empirical findings.

The Bunsichari project takes place in the two municipalities of Fusagasugá and Venecia in the province of Sumapaz (see figure 1), located southwest in the department of Cundinamarca (Martinez, 2022). The armed conflict in the province of Sumapaz originated in the social inequality and was fortified due to the strategic location of Sumapaz, as it served as a strategic corridor towards Bogotá city. The conflicts over territorial control was mainly between the FARC, the state and the paramilitaries, resulting in massive body of victims. Sumapaz counts 189.309 inhabitants and has ten municipalities: Arbeláez, Cabrera, Granada, Pandi, Pasca, San Bernardo, Sylvania, Tibacuy, Venecia with Fusagasugá being its capital (Suma+Paz, 2022).

The municipality of Fusagasugá has a population of 165.340 inhabitants, and has currently 10.432 registered victims of the armed conflict, of which the majority is due to forced displacement, homicide or threat of homicide, crimes against



Figure 1. Map of the Sumapaz province

freedom, sexual violence and forced disappearances. The municipality of Venecia has an estimated number of 4771 inhabitants in 2022, with a victim population of 1003 people. In Venecia, 80% of the victims are forcefully displaced from other regions in Colombia. The government of Cundinamarca, the United Nations (UN) mission of verification and the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN) are involved in the peace process in both municipalities (Suma+Paz, 2022).

The Bunsichari project started in each municipality at the beginning of April 2022, with each 12 sessions of 7 hours. Initially, 31 participants were invited in Fusagasugá to participate in the Diplomado, including 8 members of the Table of Victims, 15 ex-FARC combatants that are in the process of reintegration, 2 of the national police, 2 of the army and 2 from the local mayor's office. In Venecia, 27 participants were initially invited to participate the Diplomado, including 13 members of the Table of Victims, 9 ex-FARC combatants that are in the process of reintegration, 2 from the National police and 3 from the mayor's office (Martinez, 2022). The Table of Victims is created in compliance with the law and is an organization including representatives of different victims' organizations, defenders of the rights of victims and has representatives from different marginalized communities such as the LGBTI community, elderly, Afro-Colombian community and the disabled. However, from the first session it became clear that many of the invitees would not show up, which resulted in less attendees as well as a varying composition in both groups.

Ultimately, I gathered the data for this research mainly within the context the Bunsichari project, consisting of interviews ($n = 24$) and participants observations ($n = 5$). More specifically, my data set includes participant observations in Venecia ($n = 2$) and Fusagasugá ($n = 3$), semi-structured interviews with participants in the Bunsichari project in Venecia ($n = 5$) and Fusagasugá ($n = 7$), the facilitators of the Bunsichari project ($n = 4$), the academic director of Dunna corpóracion ($n = 1$), NGO workers from the field of peacebuilding focusing on collective healing ($n = 3$) and employees from the UN mission of verification and ARN that are involved in the local peace processes ($n = 4$). I purposely sampled my data according to significant aspects of my research, and thereby this way of sampling constitutes the method of purposive method of snowball sampling (Mason, 2018). As the NGO workers, facilitators and employees of the UN and ARN were mostly located in Bogotá city, I conducted these interviews face-to-face in Bogotá or online. Furthermore, I collected supportive data that helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the current political climate and the context of the Colombian conflict and the subsequent peace process. I did this by taking pictures of posters and murals in Bogotá city, by visiting several museums and exhibitions in Bogotá and Medellín and by informal meetings with various local Colombians about the conflict and the peace process.

Research method

The collected data originates from roughly five categories of sources. Below, I present a table demonstrating the sample included in this research. For the core of my data, I developed various topic guides (see appendix I for the main topic guide, p. 72), informed by concepts from trauma-informed and conflict transformation literature, that served as guidelines to the interviews. I used a separate voice recorder to record the interviews.

Sample List of the research on Collective trauma in Colombia
<p><i>Total Sample Size = 24 Interviews and 5 participant observations</i></p> <p><i>Including: Supportive data in the form of museum visits, casual conversations and murals and posters in Bogotá city</i></p>
<p>24 Semi-structured interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 Participants from the Bunsichari project in Fusagasugá <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 Male ex-combatant of the FARC and M-19 ○ 1 Female ex-combatant from the FARC ○ 4 Female victims from the Table of Victims ○ 1 Male victim from the Table of Victims • 5 Participants from the Bunsichari project in Venecia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 Male ex-combatants of the FARC ○ 3 Female victims from the Table of Victims • 4 Facilitators of the Bunsichari project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 with a background in psychology and restorative justice ○ 1 with a background in psychology ○ 1 with a background in yoga and meditation ○ 1 with a background in psychology and dance and movement therapy • 4 Employees of institutions involved in the peace process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 Male employees from the UN Verification mission ○ 1 Female employee from ARN • 4 NGO workers in peacebuilding addressing collective trauma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 Female employee with a somatic psychology background ○ 1 Female employee with a political scientist background ○ 2 Female employees with a conflict studies background
<p>5 Participant observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 Sessions in Venecia on 1st of April 2022 and 13th of May 2022 ○ 3 Sessions in Fusagasugá on 8th of April 2022, 22th of April 2022 and 20th of May 2022
<p>Supportive data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five museum or exhibition visits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Claustro de San Agustín ○ Museo de Arte Miguel Urratia (MAMU) ○ Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación ○ Museo Casa de la Memoria Medellín ○ Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá (MAMBO) • Photos of murals and posters that shed light on the current political climate • Various informal conversations with Colombians on the conflict and peace process, captured in extensive fieldnotes

The first category covers the main body of data in my research, and includes the semi-structured interviews with the participants of the Bunsichari project. This category mainly provides insight and knowledge on sub-question 2 and 4. After introducing myself, I approached some of the participants for an interview that took place at either the location of the session, in a public space in town or at the houses of the interviewees. The participants in the project spoke solely Spanish, and hence, I collaborated with a psychology and anthropology student that translated the interviews during my fieldtrips to Venecia and Fusagasugá. Although I sought to diversify the sample on gender and background characteristics, this appeared to be challenging (see limitations, p. 24). All the victims are members of the Table of Victims in their municipality, and most of them were forcefully displaced or lost a loved due to the conflict. In this thesis, the concept of victim means individuals that were affected by the armed conflict in different ways, and this research is based on how they described themselves. The sample of ex-combatants mostly consisted of ex-FARC combatants, but also includes one individual that was active for other guerilla groups (see Appendix II for a list of the informants, p. 74).

The second category are the facilitators of the Bunsichari project of Dunna Corpóracion. These facilitators had different sets of expertise varying from psychology, restorative justice, yoga to dance and movement therapy. One of the facilitators was new to the organization, whilst the other three were already involved in earlier projects of Dunna Corpóracion. Each of them facilitated three sessions in each municipality (see appendix III for an overview of the sessions, p. 76). Due to their close involvement in the Bunsichari project combined with their earlier experiences in trauma-informed peacebuilding, these data sources provided insight on mostly sub-questions 2 and 4. However, their close involvement with the participants provided valuable additions to the data gathered within the first category of data.

The third category of data refers to the participant observations. I attended five sessions of the Bunsichari project, of which two in Venecia and three in Fusagasugá. I participated in most part of the sessions, and at the same time, I was also observing group dynamics, body-language and both individual and group behavior. In doing so, I used my knowledge and experience from my background as psychologist. I took fieldnotes on my observations, and after the session I wrote down how I experienced the session in the form of a research diary. The participant observations yielded data for all sub-questions, and generally, provided insight on the overall peace process.

The fourth category are the NGO workers in the field of bottom-up peacebuilding focusing on collective healing. I rapidly discovered that only a small number specifically focuses on collective healing: namely, Respira, Fundación Prolangar and Dunna Corpóracion. Prolangar Fundación works through community- and arts-based interventions in war-torn areas, and I

conducted an interview with the methodologies director. Respira Fundación is a NGO working on collective healing mainly through meditation and breathing techniques. I conducted a duo-interview with the two co-directors of Respira. Within Dunna Corporación, I interviewed the facilitators and the academic director that was in charge of the methodological protocol for the Bunsichari project. Additionally, I included an interview with BogotArt, a NGO that works through art on community-healing and peacebuilding, as they provided knowledge on the political context of peacebuilding in Colombia. The data collection techniques I used were semi-structured interviews, and these sources provided insight and knowledge mostly on sub-question 2 and 4.

The fifth category includes the interviews with the employees of the UN and ARN, that are or were involved in a way to the peacebuilding process in Venecia and Fusagasugá. Due to their positions, I cannot specify on their exact roles and positions, as this could reveal their identities. These sources provided contextual information to Venecia and Fusagasugá, and hence, answered mostly sub-question 2 and 4. Finally, the supportive data in the form of casual conversations, museum visits, murals and posters provided contextual data that helped me to profoundly understand the Colombian context and the current political climate, and offered various new points of departures that I incorporated in the conducted interviews.

Data analysis

After conducting the interviews, I transcribed the interviews manually. Regarding the interviews with the participants, I solely transcribed the English parts that my research volunteer translated due to limitations in time and resources. I organized my observations and ideas in files with fieldnotes, organized per session that I attended. Additionally, I kept a separate file in which I gathered supportive data and concurrent observations and thoughts. Each time I finished working with the interview data, I deleted the recording from the recording device, and stored it at my external hard drive and the OneDrive of Utrecht University to ensure secured data storage that only I have access to.

Having gathered the data, I coded my fieldnotes and interview transcripts in NVivo, a software tool for qualitative analysis of textual information. Informed by my conceptual frameworks, I started coding my data inductively. This process is described as *open coding*, and refers to the process of breaking down the data into smaller fragments (Boeije, 2009). This process led to more clear-cut categories which I kept reorganizing during the process. The overarching codes relate to trauma (specified on individual and collective trauma), peace(building), healing and the structural context. Within these main categories, many sub-categories emerged that ensured sufficient refinement of the empirical data. Searching through the created empirical overviews allowed me to search for relational associations between the different categories and to assemble evidence and traces. By bringing the findings together with trauma-informed

and conflict transformation literature, the deductive and inductive processes are linked. In doing so, I will be able to present in chapter 3 and 4 a comprehensive outline of how individual and collective trauma manifests itself in Fusagasugá and Venecia and I will reveal variables that are obstructing and fostering in the process of collective healing.

Ethical considerations

As the Conflict Studies and Human Rights program does not have its own Ethics Committee, ethics particularly should be addressed with attention and carefulness prior, during and after the data collection. Research that is not relevant to the studied population or location imposes burdens without benefits. Although I am not able to directly contribute to the local peace process, I made sure that I approached the participants horizontally with openness and transparency. In doing so, I attempted to give them space for their stories and emotions, and as commonly is known, simply having space to be heard and seen is already very valuable to people.

Settled on the principle of informed consent, I informed the groups in the Bunsichari project in the first session about my purpose of attending the sessions, followed by asking them consent. Due to the ongoing change in the composition of the group, I approached the new participants to inform them about my research. At the beginning of every interview, I ensured that participants were aware of the content of the research, the process of the interview and their right to withdraw from the research at any time and to be pseudonymized in my research. I emphasized that the recordings would solely be used for the purposes of research. Additionally, I gave the interviewees my contact details, ensuring space for a clear procedure of feedback, and promised to share the findings of my research once finished, thereby complying to the principle of care (American Anthropological Association, 2012).

Despite most of the participants agreed to using their full name, I decided to use pseudonyms for all the participants of the Bunsichari project, utilizing a random name generator. Specifically, for the ex-combatants this is highly important, as exposing their identities could pose risks to their safety and security. By doing so, I took into account the principle of confidentiality (American Anthropological Association, 2012). Additionally, I tried to conduct the interviews in private spaces to stay as much as possible out of sight of the public, to guarantee them the opportunity to speak freely, and as well, to minimize disturbance from the environment. If interviews took place outside of the session's location, I let the participant propose a location so that he or she would feel as comfortable as possible to have the interview.

Importantly, the nature of the interviews is highly sensitive, emotional and distressing. Some shared stories were traumatic and emotionally affected the participants. As my training to become a psychologist was centralized around war-induced psycho-trauma, I was equipped

to deal with the difficult emotions that came up during the interviews, as well, to give them psychoeducation when needed. Repeatedly, participants were emotional when talking about past experiences. On those moments, I purposely created space for their emotions and explored their needs to see if those could be fulfilled. An example of given psychoeducation refers to when participants shared their inexplicable somatic complaints with me, often accompanied by how physical movement enhances it. Consequently, I explained to them how unprocessed trauma potentially manifests in elevated stress levels in the body, translating to somatic complaints (see chapter 3, p. 26), followed by instructions and tips on how to cope with these trauma-related bodily tensions.

Working with a research volunteer was essential to my interviews, however, appeared to be ethically somewhat complex. Due to a lack of a research budget, I could not compensate my research volunteer financially. To mitigate this, I informed my research volunteer about my considerations, and ensured that he would receive a volunteer certificate from Dunna Corpóration. Furthermore, I covered all his expenses during the fieldstrips, including some enjoyable dinners and lunches to show my gratitude. Due to my Dutch nationality, I inherently represent certain structures and systems (e.g. oppression and inequality). Moreover, coming from the Global North to the Global South without a research budget for compensating local resources is at least to say a wrenching paradox. In order to deal with this, I reflected regularly on my positionality and how this may affect my data collection, and also discussed this subject with different Colombian locals. Initially, I expected that my positionality as a researcher from the Global North would impose difficulties to my research, translated in unwillingness or suspiciousness of the potential interviewees towards me. However, in contrast to my expectations, my interviewees welcomed me warmly, and were remarkably enthusiastic and content when I approached them. Through conversations with the participants, I learned that my presence was viewed as recognition of the international community which they deemed very valuable. Another returning reflection concerned the realization that I have very little or none influence on my positionality. The only thing that lied within my power was to be constantly aware on whether my positionality was influencing my research, and if needed, to be as transparent as possible about this subject towards my participants.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge that the individuals in this research do not represent victims and ex-FARC combatants as a whole entity. Suggesting that victims and ex-FARC combatants hold a singular experience of particular events, is problematic and oversimplified. During an interview with an employee of the UN⁴, I learned that the ideologies of FARC and how they precisely operate is highly dependent on the geographical location. For instance, FARC-

⁴ Anonymous (UN employee), in interview with author, dated on May 11th 2022

groups from e.g. the Caribbean coast and the groups surrounding Bogotá even oppose each other in their ways of thinking and operating. Additionally, the Bunsichari project was only accessible to certain participants as only a number of organizations were involved, such as the Table for Victims. This was noticeable in how strong the political views and ideas were of the majority of the participants, thereby clearly not representative for all Colombian victims. Albeit that the sample in this research is referred to as victims and ex-FARC combatants, I emphasize that this research will provide an image of social life in the specific locations of Venecia and Fusagasugá and not *all* social life.

Another limitation relates to the relatively small research sample, as it includes 12 participants of the Bunsichari projects whilst approximately 60 participants participated over the course of time. Additionally, the Bunsichari project covered 12 sessions in each municipality, allowing me to only attend the first few sessions in both municipalities and focus solely on the healing processes beginning of the project. For an all-encompassing image of the social reality in Venecia and Fusagasugá, a larger time frame and more varied sample is preferred. This limitation also applies to the NGOs focusing on collective trauma. Hence, I might have missed to include some other important NGOs, which is significant towards situating Dunna Corpóracion in the larger peacebuilding context.

Furthermore, the language barrier imposed a limitation in this research. Words or phrases might have get lost during the interviews, thereby missing opportunities to ask follow-up questions and navigate more profoundly through the discussed topics. Although I could follow the main lines in the interviews, my Spanish was insufficient due to the language-specific nature of the topic of trauma. By working with a research volunteer that also holds a background in psychology and anthropology, his views may have affected the interpretations of what has been said by the participants, thereby influencing my ultimate set of data. Additionally, due to limited time and financial resources, I decided to solely transcribe the parts that my research volunteer translated in English during the interviews. Subsequently, I might have missed information that was said in Spanish and that could have added depth to my research. Despite the language difficulties, the limitation also created space for me to gather data beyond language, and to focus more on the body language. This was particularly relevant for the participant observations during the sessions of the Bunsichari project. Bearing in mind the aforementioned limitations, I seek to do justice to the stories of my interviewees in the best way possible.

3. COLOMBIA'S CONTAINER OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

there is no depth
where no clarity shines,
no silence
where no sound resounds.
wake up the silent
- Even now he's still asleep! -
light up the dark
that created us
there is no darkness
that the light does not win,
no silence
that the sounds do not tune.
But that calm
that rests in the uncertain
dark in silence
the last show

- *Hanna Arendt*

In San Claustro de Agustín, I visited *El Testigo*, an photo exhibition that presents the harrowing human cost of the internal conflict in Colombia. Jesús Abad Colorado presents 557 photos that tell the story of this conflict, including photos that portray the acts of violence against the civilian population, the forced disappearances and the search for loved ones, peasants and indigenous people, children and old people fleeing violence, and the nature attacked by the war. Although all braided in immense pain and suffering, the photos also unmistakably show the resilience of the Colombian people and a deep love that does not perish, beautifully captured by Hannah Arendt's poem that was also included in the exhibition. This chapter elaborates on the war-induced trauma that resides in Colombian society, and will intersperse a dialogue between theory and empirical findings. Theoretical foundations will be proposed for individual trauma, collective trauma, and lastly collective trauma in relation to cycles of conflict. Every theoretical section will be followed by a presentation of the empirical findings, analyzed through the proposed theoretical frameworks.

The nature of trauma

The word *trauma* is derived from the Ancient Greek word "traumatizo" and means "wound", "a bodily injury", "physical wound" caused by an external agent. Later, trauma was defined as a sense of "wound of the mind", an unpleasant experience which causes abnormal stress, and has evolved into a psychobiological wound in relation to a variety of psychological, social, biological and other environmental factors (Kellermann, 2007). Nowadays, the word "trauma" became everyday language referring to experiencing a negative event outside the range of what is considered the ordinary human experience. Trauma occurs when a person faces a dangerous and threatening experience that is overwhelming and causes the person to feel afraid, helpless and powerless. Traumatic events can be a single event or can be part of an ongoing pattern of events (Brigitte, 2020).

After a long period in which trauma was failed to be recognized, named and acknowledged, interest in trauma returned after the Vietnam War, and caused that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was named and included in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III). Attention arose for secondary trauma as a result of being exposed to evidence or stories of trauma, as well, as the recognition of the fundamental differences between normal, rational and chronological stories about the past that can be integrated in the autobiographical memory and dissociated traumatic memories. Nowadays, the fifth and latest version of the DSM (DSM-5) includes PTSD under a category named Trauma and Stress Related Disorder, and is defined as exposure to threatened or actual death, serious injury or sexual violence including symptoms in the following clusters: intrusion, avoidance and hyperarousal symptoms, and negative alterations in cognitions and mood. Reactions to trauma largely depend on the nature of the traumatic event, but has a high potential to have a debilitating and devastating impact on one's psychological, physical and mental wellbeing (Nolan, 2016). Chronic trauma in childhood can result in a complex presentation of PTSD symptoms that last into adulthood, including core symptoms of PTSD as well as disturbances in self-regulatory capacities, troubles in self-perception and relational capacities, alterations in dissociation and attention, poor body awareness and somatic distress (West & Liang, 2017).

The high prevalence of somatic complaints among traumatized individuals indicate that the body "remembers" the trauma. One of the foundations in understanding trauma is that it impacts the central nervous system, and holds the potential to chronically disrupt the hormonal systems in the body that regulates stress. Trauma can get "locked" in the genes (called: epigenetics) and in this way transfer over generations (van der Kolk, 2015). This fostered a paradigm shift on how the nature of trauma is viewed. Traditional trauma interventions often solely focus on helping victims finding the words to describe what happened to them. Albeit this act of storytelling can be profoundly meaningful, it is often insufficient as it does not necessarily address directly how trauma is held in the body through somatic symptoms and heightened physiological states. Traumatized bodies that continue to be hypervigilant, prepared to be assaulted or violated at any time, need to learn that danger has passed and that they live in the reality of a safe present (pg. 21). To address the somatic symptoms and physiological dysregulation, scholars began to explore the use of mind-body practices, such as mindfulness or yoga-based practices, demonstrating significant reductions in both PTSD and somatic symptoms (Nolan, 2016).

What has been outlined in this paragraph so far, is aligned with how I was educated in my previous studies in psychology and trauma, and allowed me to observe how individual trauma is manifested Fusagasugá and Venecia. Therefore, considering the Bunsichari project particularly involves body-mind techniques, I deployed my expertise and experience on the

somatic component on trauma as a theoretical point of departure to understand the nature of individual trauma within the participants of the Bunsichari project. Understanding the individual nature of trauma forms a stepping stone towards understanding the wider context of collective trauma that will be discussed in the next sections of this chapter. Additionally, as the sessions of the Bunsichari project were organized in Spanish, a body-oriented approach on trauma, allowed me to observe trauma beyond the language-bound content and provided me unique and valuable sources of information.

Individual trauma in Colombia: Venecia and Fusagasugá

"We have all been affected by this violence. Just for the fact of being Colombian, made us all victims."⁵

By merely being in Colombia for three months revealed poignantly how nearly every Colombian was affected by the armed conflict. Each Colombian that I encountered, could tell me a story of how he or she, or the family, suffered pain due to the conflict. This is also reflected in the eminently high numbers of victims and victimizing facts reported by Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, which unmistakably illustrate the massive body of trauma that resides within the Colombian population.

Interestingly, in orienting conversations with former UN employees, I discovered rapidly how the concept of trauma is rarely known by Colombians. I learned not to explicitly use the word trauma during interviews with ex-combatants, as they would either deny it or not recognize themselves as being traumatized⁶. The apparent lack of recognition of trauma may be explained by one of the main characteristics of trauma, namely: avoidance of trauma-related thoughts, feelings or external reminders. Van der Kolk (2015) points out that avoidance behaviors are to prevent the occurrence of an uncomfortable emotion such as sadness, shame or fear (e.g. the use of substances), and are effectively an effort to withdraw from feelings and situations that may produce trauma-related symptoms (van der Kolk, 2015). A second explanation for the absence of recognition of trauma could also relate to that the concept of trauma arose within a Western-oriented discourse, and hence, is not recognized as such within the non-Western Colombian culture. Additionally, according to my research volunteer who has a psychological background, trauma is referred to as *daño* in Colombia, meaning "damage".⁷ A last explanation may be the strong ideologies that many ex-combatants seem to have towards the armed conflict. Even though certain actions in war could have been traumatizing, if the person in question was convinced that his or her actions were in sake for the right cause, this could have been sufficient to minimize the traumatizing effects

⁵ Ariel Sanchez (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with the author, dated on May 19th 2022

⁶ From Fieldnotes dated on March 14th 2022

⁷ From Fieldnotes dated on April 22nd 2022

of the events of oneself (Farnsworth et al., 2014). Due to the absence of the term trauma, I referred to pain and/or suffering when I sought to explore my interviewees' perceptions on trauma during the interviews.

Despite that trauma as concept was often not recognized by my interviewees, clearly many of them suffered severe trauma and experienced trauma-related symptoms. Nora Pinto is currently participating in the Bunsichari project in Fusagasugá as a victim. She was part of the Union Patriotic (UP), a leftist Colombian political part founded by the FARC⁸. Supporters of the UP were systematically massacred between 1984 and 2018, mainly by the army and state-linked paramilitary groups (JFC, 2022). Although Nora survived the massacre, her daughter was brutally killed during the massacre. She tells me about the many somatic complaints she has, and connects this herself to the death of her daughter: *"I tend to somatize a lot, as my daughter was killed and tortured, and put into pieces while she was alive. She was a beautiful girl (...). They broke her arms and bones. She was so young. So, this is what is somatized in my body. My heart hurts, I have hypertensions (...). The pain of having your daughter killed under these conditions, the only daughter you have... That is so painful, that cannot be erased"*.⁹ I am the witness of Nora's ongoing pain when she tells me her story, and when I tell her that the stress that we cannot carry with our minds, we carry with our bodies, she nods in agreement. Evidently, Nora was exposed to traumatic experiences and suffers bodily tensions and somatic complaints.

Another interviewee that experienced a massive body of trauma is Jose López. He is one of the participants in the Bunsichari project in Venecia, and is currently combatting for recognition of being a victim. He was forcefully recruited for the paramilitary forces when he was 14 years old¹⁰. The moment he arrived for our interview, he showed us his gun and mentioned that this could be his last interview, as he could be killed at any moment. After the first scare, the interview quickly surfaced Jose's hypervigilance that resulted from the many traumas that he suffered. Jose tells us: *"I was forcefully recruited for the paramilitary forces when I was really young (...). I stayed there until I was 22 or 23, and then I manage to escape (...). The guerillas, they only shoot, but the paramilitaries are really scary. They liked people to suffer as animals, and opened people alive and forced them to eat their own guts. They put children alive on sticks (...). Sometimes when they wanted someone to prove his loyalty, they let the person kill his uncle and made that person rape that dead body."*¹¹ He adds that he barely sleeps at night, because he is feeling constantly threatened. Although he himself does not explicitly labels this as trauma, the sleeping problems and hypervigilance are strong characteristics of

⁸ Nora Pinto (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with the author, dated on April 23d 2022

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Jose López (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with the author, dated on May 12th 2022

¹¹ Jose López (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with the author, dated on May 12th 2022

trauma. Another example that illustrates his hypervigilance concerns his worries about the location of the session of the Bunsichari project: *"I texted three hours ago to the group that we should have the session in the mayor's office, because safety is essential to the session. A lot of people that are attending the session are military targets, so maybe someone could attempt to take all our lives tomorrow while we are doing the session (...). These people hold a lot of resentment, and want to take revenge, and at the end, they would kill all the attendants and thus also you!"*¹². Obviously, I verified with Dunna Corporación if there was a real threat and whether it would be necessary to change the location of the session, coming to the conclusion that although Jose's fear is understandable, there were no indications of an objective direct threat considering the current security situation in Venecia. Hence, this example exposes his hypervigilance and the underlying trauma that Jose suffers.

Next to the above outlined cases, many others that I spoke to elaborated on the pain they endured, and described symptoms that fit fluently within the conceptualization of trauma. Their trauma was visible in what they told me, but also in their body language, or in some cases, in what they were *not* telling me. By way of illustration, in some of my interviews I ran into a tactile wall when I tried to gain a deeper understanding on what trauma may have happened in their lives¹³. From my clinical experience, I recognized this as a form of resistance, and hence, trauma-specific avoidance. Next to the exposure to trauma, avoidance and hyperarousal, trauma is also characterized by intrusions and negative alterations in cognitions and moods. Albeit that the latter two symptoms were not discussed during the interviews, participants presumably still suffer those, but did not recognize it.

Besides the interviews, I attended five group sessions of the Bunsichari project as well. As these sessions were in Spanish, this enabled me to observe the body language of the participants and the group dynamics. There were two phenomena that caught my attention. One refers to the visible tensions that many of the participants hold in their bodies, sometimes translating in tactile resistance or a closed attitude towards others in the group. Specifically, several participants shared in the group that after body-focused exercises they suddenly became aware of all the weight, tiredness and tensions in their body, and how the exercise allowed them the space to let go some of those tensions¹⁴. Furthermore, trauma literature has consistently shown how childhood trauma is closely linked to the development of traits of personality disorders, in which trauma can get stuck in so-called child modes. Child modes are parts of self which came to exist in the childhood in response to emotionally neglecting or traumatic experiences. When traumatized during childhood, these child modes may be disrupted and come to surface even when far in adulthood (MacIntosh et al., 2015). Hence,

¹² Jose Lopéz (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with the author, dated on May 12th 2022

¹³ From Fieldnotes dated on May 13th 2022

¹⁴ From Fieldnotes dated on May 20th 2022

this was visible in one particular participant of the Bunsichari project in Fusagasugá. He has an important role within the community, and many community-members noticeably looked up to him. During one of the sessions, employees of Dunna Corpóracion gave away left-over lunches to people outside of the session. After the concerned man discovered to whom the lunch was given, he got unreasonably angry. Apparently, Dunna Corpóracion gave one of the lunches to someone in the community that he did not approve, and to show his discontent, he refused to eat his own lunch that day¹⁵. This unreasonable and childish appearance fits within the dynamics of trauma-induced child modes, which I recognize as well from my earlier clinical work. Having outlined some of the examples of how individual trauma was visible within the Bunsichari project in Venecia and Fusagasugá, this chapter will continue with laying down theoretical foundations for collective trauma, followed by illustrative empirical findings collected in Venecia and Fusagasugá.

Collective trauma, collective memory and broken social tissues

The global discourse on trauma has been controlled by the field of clinical psychology, centralizing the individual and holding a singular focus on the human mind (Rinker & Lawler, 2018). These predominant approaches on trauma are built on a western medical illness model perspective that is essentially dualistic, thereby separating the body from the mind, and the individual from society and is primarily individualistic in orientation. Within these prevailing western traditions, the tendency is to seek for help from a psychologist or counsellor which can be culturally inappropriate within collectivistic communities (Somasundaram, 2014). Other ontological perspectives, however, tend to incorporate the self and body and ways of experiencing the world into an integrated whole, known as the *social body*. In a similar vein, Elsass (2001) specifies that the features of PTSD in different cultural settings worldwide do not hold the same meaning to people in each setting. Additionally, he doubts whether the diagnosis of PTSD is even useful and appropriate to non-Western cultures (Elsass, 2001). Subsequently, much is written on trauma from an individual psychological perspective, thereby focusing on the internal dynamics and experiences of trauma. However, Audergon (2004) adds that trauma cannot be seen as a solely an individual experience, but stretches through the whole collective body of a community or society (Audergon, 2004). I argue that viewing war-induced trauma from solely an individual perspective does not suffice, as complex situations following war have a psychosocial impact not only on the individual, but also on their families, communities and larger societies. More recently, an increasing amount of attention has arisen towards collective, designating the need for an orientation on trauma that is simultaneously personal, communal, cultural and political. (Audergon, 2004). Hence, the criticism on the individualistic Western discourse on trauma opened space for a more collective and cultural-

¹⁵ From Fieldnotes dated on 22nd April 2022

sensitive response on trauma, yet, these conceptualizations remained up to the present day rather abstract and form a lacuna in the academic debate. In response to this gap, an increasing amount of work have centralized the traumatic collective past, including its impact on individuals, groups and societies over time (Brigitte, 2020). This is classified as collective trauma which is more than simply adding up individual traumas and refers to the psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affects an entire society. The various ways that collective trauma is viewed resulted in an incoherence within the academic debate, and therefore, no clear-cut definition on the concept of collective trauma exists. In order to demarcate a point of departure, Brigitte (2020) defines collective as a family, an identity group or as a society on a national, subnational or trans-national level. Collective trauma is used interchangeably with *cultural trauma*, *historical trauma*, *mass trauma*, *national trauma*, *social trauma*, *transgenerational or intergenerational trauma*, and *indigenous or intergroup trauma* (Brigitte, 2020). Brigitte (2020) discusses these different terms by illustrating them with various examples. These examples will be complemented with some thoughts on collective trauma of other scholars.

Examples of cultural trauma are the African American experience of slavery and Holocaust that are imbued with the particular characteristic of collective memory and identity formation (Brigitte, 2020). Hirschberger (2018) articulates that collective trauma transforms into collective memory, and subsequently, forms a system of meaning allowing victims and perpetrators groups to define trans-generational collective identities (Hirschberger, 2018). One primary function of collective memories is defining a trajectory that contributes to the construction and maintenance of a group's identity, as history gives us narratives that tell us who we are, where we came from and where we should be going. For victims, the collective memory of trauma has demonstrated to promote vigilance that may elevate group survival. For perpetrators, the memory of collective trauma forms a threat to their collective identity, as reminding them of their responsibility for their past misdeeds indicates derogation and results in negative attitudes towards the victims. This may lead to a defensive attempt to protect the group by distorting the memory of the event, minimizing culpability for wrongdoing, minimizing the historical crime and justification of the in-group behavior. Another possibility is acknowledging responsibility, entailing one of the most difficult decisions for perpetrators groups and comes with apologizing for the harm they have done. Thus, for both perpetrators and victims, deriving meaning from collective trauma is an continuous process that is constantly negotiated between and within groups and holds the potential of either debates over memory or providing a basis for intergroup understanding. Szy (2018) adds that collective trauma has been socially developed and transferred, and refers to the traumatization of entire identity groups that share similar memories in the body and minds, and suffer from the trauma-induced social wounds. Where collective exposure to trauma has taken place, these social wounds translate to broken social

fabrics including ruptures in social relationships and structures within families, communities and entire societies (Szy, 2018).

Some exemplary cases of historical trauma and transgenerational or intergenerational trauma refer to the Rwandan Genocide, the Holocaust and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Rinker and Lawler (2018) assert that despite that an individual was not directly exposed to trauma, he or she still can be affected by trauma by being in contact with other traumatized individuals, labeled as intergenerational trauma. This can take place through family dynamics in which, for instance, parents are avoiding their own trauma but still physically experiencing trauma-related symptoms, and it is also within families where core beliefs about oneself and the world are transmitted to the children. In the same line of thought, Danieli (2007) points out that the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma can pass on through parent-child interactions, epigenetic processes, family dynamics, sociocultural perpetuation of a persecuted ethnic identity based on communal memories, language, arts, institutional structures and political ideologies (Danieli, 2007). When a community or population is exposed to an eminently clearly defined trauma on a macro-level, such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks, this falls within the category of national trauma. Saul (2014) describes the trauma after 9/11 as a larger societal impact, occurring at various levels, including the loss of social trust, shared injuries on cultural, social and physical ecologies of the population, and a large-scale impact of the adversity on relationships, families, communities, and societies (Saul, 2014). In a similar vein, Erikson and his colleagues (1980) stress that the population of North American Indians suffers *broken cultures* and the destruction of the entire *fabric* of their culture due to forced displacements, dispossession from traditional lands, separation of families, massacres, and loss of ways of life, spiritual beliefs and relationships (Erikson & Vecsey, 1980). The violence on Aboriginal people has torn the social fabric in a similar way and includes dispossession, massacres, diseases and dispersal from the land. The definitions of the above mentioned different traumas are interrelated and overlapping in this case. Albeit that the context for each definition may differ, these different definitions share similarities relating to the unforgettable, lasting and irreversible character, the collective memory, and the psychosocial, socio-cultural, neurophysiological and psychobiological effects, including the consequences on the social dynamics, processes and structures of a society (Brigitte, 2020).

Concludingly, collective trauma has lasting effects on the collective memory and fundamentally changes the functioning of the families, communities and societies. Within families, domestic violence, the dynamic of single parent families, changes in significant relationships, lack of trust within the family members and child rearing practices are visible. Communities tend to be more silent, dependent, without leadership, mistrustful, passive and suspicious. Additional effects include the breakdown of familiar ways of life, traditional structures and institutions, and deterioration of ethics, social norms and the loss of social capital

(Somasundaram, 2014). Wilson and Tang (2007) contribute to this by emphasizing that cultural and social beliefs, values and perceptions shape how traumatic events ultimately impact the individual, family and community, and the way how they respond (Wilson & Tang, 2007). In the same line of reasoning, Somasundaram adds that when a family or community regain their equilibrium and healthy functioning, there is often improvement in the wellbeing of the individual member as well (Somasundaram, 2014). Therefore, this thesis views that collective trauma bears the potential to have far-reaching affects over generations through the mechanisms of collective memory, and articulates how collective trauma manifests itself in the wounding and rupture of the social fabric due to war or mass disasters with negative consequences on the collective level, that is on the social processes, relationships, networks, institutions, dynamics, functions, capital, practices and resources (Somasundaram, 2014).

Social tissues ruptured by collective trauma in Venecia and Fusagasugá

At the beginning of the first session of the Bunsichari project in Venecia, a tensed atmosphere of lightness prevailed the room. Participants hesitantly trickled into the room, carefully laughing and being notably friendly towards each other. At the same time, they immediately formed smaller sub-groups that resided in different corners of the space. Although I expected that it would be easy to identify who was a victim and who was an ex-combatant, it appeared difficult to identify to which group each participant belonged. Participants camouflaged their identities and remained meticulously on the waver-thin upper layer of the social dynamics whilst they navigated themselves with great prudence over this fragile surface. This made me wonder where in the room the war-induced tensions and scars were residing. I only started to observe these hidden tensions during the “bienvenida circle (welcome circle)” initiated by the facilitator. In this circle, each participant was instructed to walk to another participant at his or her turn and welcome this person verbally and bodily (with a gesture). It was striking to witness many participants getting visibly more tensed in their bodies when they approached the other participant more closely, as well, as how a number of participants either made solely a very short moment of eye contact with the other - or not at all. Seemingly, this exercise made it more difficult for the participants to stay on the very surface of the social dynamics and to avoid each other. Soon enough, I gained more clarity and understanding in the above described dynamics¹⁶.

During the lunch break, I had a conversation with a UN employee who also attended this session. He explained to me that in the times of conflict constant power changes took place in the rural areas, and that it was never sure for the locals who would be in charge of that specific community. Considering affiliation with certain groups was considered as betrayal by opposing groups, it was considered dangerous and highly risky to be open about your thoughts, feelings,

¹⁶ From Fieldnotes dated from May 1st 2022

opinions or ideologies. Hence, safest was to be as neutral as possible, so that the potential new armed group in power could not accuse you for having ties with the preceding controlling group. As a way of dealing with these constant changing power dynamics and to minimize the risk of being seen as adherents of potentially opposing groups, many Colombians learnt during the armed conflict to act in a way that was neutral, politically correct and socially desirable. This behavior originated in fear, and can be viewed as a type of safety behavior that is employed to protect oneself to potential risks and dangers¹⁷. As described by Rinker and Lawler's (2018), this outlined example resonates with the symptom of avoidance in trauma, and reveals how avoidance on an individual level can manifest on a community-level milled as collective avoidance (Rinker & Lawler, 2018). Clearly, avoidance was useful in times of conflict, yet, now reinforces collective hypervigilance, manifested in a heavy layer of collective fear, and impedes the processes of addressing the underlying trauma, thereby obstructing the repairment and fortification of the broken social tissues.

This layer of safety and avoidant behaviors hides the massive body of broken social tissues that is covered under the surface. This broken tissue, including weak social cohesion and broken social relationships, was clearly tactile and visible in how tensed and arthritic the participants navigated through the social space. As aforementioned, collective trauma ruptures social relationships, processes and practices, which Gabriela Martinez, the academic director of Dunna Corpóracion, extends on: *"With violence, cultural practices that existed before the conflict tend to be suppressed and not exist anymore. Cultural and collective expressions, such as building things together, coming together, dancing and eating together, doing practices together, are controlled, avoided or prohibited, while those are the resources of the communities. Violence interrupt these practices, and trauma causes fragmentation in communities."*¹⁸ Additionally, despite that Dunna Corpóracion repeatedly called the invited participants to confirm their attendance in the sessions, many invited participants did not turn up. Gabriela, who was also closely involved in the execution of the Bunsichari project, explained that the low attendance resulted from a lack of incentive to come which was meticulously interlaced with the social fragmentation that originated in the broken social tissues¹⁹.

María Andrea Garcia, one of the facilitators of the Bunsichari project, adds: *"(...) What I observed throughout these years is that what conflict really does is splitting. Splitting, dissociating, in the same way that one dissociates with oneself, communities also dissociate, they break down. So violence just nurtures distrust, envy, differences, individualities rather than*

¹⁷ From Fieldnotes dated from May 1st 2022

¹⁸ Gabriela Martinez (Academic director Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on April 20th 2022

¹⁹ From Fieldnotes dated on April 8th 2022

community.”²⁰ In traumatized individuals, dissociation is a way of protecting oneself to the overwhelming amount of stress that may come along with remembering trauma, and causes detachment and disconnection within the person. Hence, dissociation is intently interwoven with the phenomenon of collective withdrawal of emotions described by Rinker and Lawler (2018), thereby producing fragmented communities with low trust, resentment and a low sense of the collective (Rinker & Lawler, 2018). With fragmentation as foundation, the trauma is left unaddressed and traumatized individuals move alongside each other, hindering the formations of tenable relationships. Another example that illustrates the ruptures in the social tissue in Fusagasugá is described by Evelia Meléndez, who I also mentioned in the introduction. Evelia is a social leader and has a leading role in Fusagasugá, and she describes how she runs into broken social tissues on daily basis in Fusagasugá. “(...) I want to organize an activity in the community to share, to do it with all the families. And I start to look for the resources, I feel this joy in my heart (...). I want unity in this movement, I want everything to be pretty, not like how it is right now, with violence (...).”²¹ In this example, it becomes clear how past violence continues to exist within her community, and how this continuously affects trust, images of the “other” and social processes and how this obscures cultural practices.

Remembering the Colombian past: Venecia and Fusagasugá

Throughout Colombia, many places have arisen seeking to preserve the stories of the armed conflict. In Bogotá, many museums are portraying art and exhibitions that emphasize the importance of the remembrance of the past, such as *El Testigo* that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. These images and stories are seeped through with traces of collective trauma, being very tactile and aiming to move the viewer. One of the most poignant exhibitions I visited was the *Traces of disappearance. The cases of Urabá, Palace of Justice and Nukak Territory*, an exhibition exhibited by Museo de Arte Miguel Urratia (MAMU). This exhibition is the first advance of research findings by the Truth Commission of their final report, and relives events such as the case of disappearance of the Palace of Justice, the dispossession of land in Urabá and the disappearance, violence and forced displacement of the Nukak people in Guaviare. The visitors were allowed to comment on this exhibition by leaving notes on a table in front of the exhibition. Many of the notes hold a message of non-violent pacifism, the need of forgiving, and referred to the importance of preserving historical memory as a fundamental building block for constructing the future (e.g. “One who does not know his or her history is doomed to repeat it”, “I promise to continue knowing the history of my country, not to forget, but to remember so we can transform and continue fighting for peace”, and “I promise to remember and work for my country and its victims, we must speak our voices”), as well as, the cruciality to acknowledge the many victims that are due to the

²⁰ María Andrea García (Facilitator Dunna Corporación), in interview with author [Zoom], dated on May 17th 2022

²¹ Evelia Meléndez (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on April 8th 2022

conflict (e.g. *"I promise to recognize my history and its victims and to transcend without forgetting the silenced and "I promise to not forget the victims of the state"*²²). The above described is an illustration of Hirschberger's description of how collective trauma carries on through collective memory, and how it can shape victim's and perpetrator's identities, yet, the space of this exhibition revolved mainly around the victims.

Albeit that this exhibition in MAMU revealed the relevance of collective memory for conflict transformation in the larger Colombian context, same tendencies of collective memory and meaning are visible more locally. Many of my interviewees articulated the importance to have truth, to recognize the past, and to ensure that the historical memory will be kept intact over generations. Nora, who I mentioned before, shares the struggles around gaining recognition and space for remembering the past in Fusagasugá: *"It has been years that we have been asking for a Casa del Memoria for the Sumapaz (...) The mayor gave us land, but there is no political will to actually do anything about it. It is extremely important to have this, because the people who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it. No one is going to do it, and if it is not for us, victims, who is going to do it? We are all going to die without this memory center. And all our memories and stories will be lost..."*²³ What Nora tells illustrates how the memory of what happened to her and many other victims is essential to the creation and maintenance of the group's identity, given that the historical memory transforms in meaning that ensures the perseverance of their victim's identity. In contrast, many ex-FARC combatants in this research appear to be struggling with the recognition of their past deeds. Lilia de la Cruz is one of the ex-FARC combatants participating in the Bunsichari project in Fusagasugá and when I ask her about her time with the FARC, she explains to me: *"I thought taking the guns was the way, and I do not regret it, I would do it again"*²⁴. When I try to dig deeper into the pain that she inflicted upon her victims during her combatant time, I notice that she clearly evades that specific topic by replying to the question with a very short, abstract, vacuous answer. This pattern was also present in interviews with other ex-FARC combatants, as nearly all of them elaborated very little on the pain and trauma they caused towards victims of the conflict. Remarkably, the ex-combatants exclusively elaborated on the victims of the other groups, thereby silencing the victims of their own groups²⁵. This resonates with what Hirschberger points out as a defensive attempt to minimize, avoid or distort the memory of the event as the collective trauma forms an identity threat for the perpetrators. Acknowledging the responsibility is an alternative, but a very difficult possibility for the perpetrators. Libertad del Olmo, who fought for the FARC for 33 years and participates in the Bunsichari project in Venecia, explains to me: *"I feel the weight and the blood of all those years in my body. Of all*

²² From Fieldnotes dated on March 26th 2022

²³ Nora Pinto (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on April 10th 2022

²⁴ Lilia de la Cruz (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on April 9th 2022

²⁵ From Fieldnotes dated on April 8th 2022

the blood that was spilled in Colombia because of this absurd war (...). I am currently giving information that I have to the truth commission (...). It is very hard, especially when going back to the spaces where the harm was inflicted is really painful. But we need to speak the truth (...)."²⁶ In doing so, Libertad is one of the few ex-combatants that is cooperative in revealing the full truth of the armed conflict, and by that, entailing the most difficult decision of acknowledging and apologizing for the harm he has done. Hence, the process of deriving meaning from collective trauma, that Hirschberger highlights, takes place continuously, and by attending multiple sessions of the Bunsichari project, I witnessed the process evolving over time. Victims and perpetrators increasingly mentioned the growing empathy for each other and the importance of hearing each other's stories. This allowed them amongst others to change the way they perceive the other and to attribute new meanings to what happened in the past, which is essential in the overarching peace and healing processes (see chapter 4, p. 45).

Conflict rooted in collective trauma

In the work of Rinker and Lawler (2018), collective trauma is placed at the center of protracted social conflict and conflict transformation processes. They argue that collective historical trauma underlies most of the social conflicts in the world today, and they view unaddressed trauma as a collective, rather than individual, disease and a root cause of protracted social conflict. Rinker and Lawler's (2018) stress that most social scientists hold an aversion towards the legacy of trauma, and a deficiency exists in the interdisciplinary study on the legacies and impacts of trauma in larger human systems like communities and collectives. The academic bridge between clinical psychologists and peace and conflict scholars is still fragile, and hence, Rinker and Lawler bundle their backgrounds respectively on peace and conflict studies and clinical psychology together to submit that the majority of the continuing cycles on all levels of societal conflict are trauma-based. Drawing on the criticism on the western individualistic discourse on trauma, Rinker and Lawler point out that psychologists explain trauma majorly in individual terms, by that trauma also generalizes horizontally in communities and collectives, and vertically across generations (Rinker & Lawler, 2018). Little is known on how individual traumas affect collectives and influence protracted conflict dynamics. Additionally, the tendency within the academic debate is to view collective trauma as a consequence rather than a cause of protracted social conflict.

A traumatized collective consists of people that suffered trauma directly, horizontally from others in the society or intergenerationally. On a daily base, the majority is reminded of their traumas via media or via in vivo experiences with others. Such collective is often controlled by a minority of oppressors in positions of power and privilege, captured in the role of the

²⁶ Libertad del Olmo (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 13th 2022

aggressor. As a way to prevent trauma that would trigger the pain within the oppressors, they attempt to establish a sense of pseudo-safety by force and justify inhumane treatment of the oppressed by not recognizing them and dehumanizing them economically and socially. This authoritarian control over the oppressed communities reinforces cycles of violence against the oppressed ones. Consequently, revenge and need for justice trigger violent acts against the oppressor. Issues of oppression are usually left unaddressed by oppressors that hold power in traumatized collectives. Through cycles of conflict, a traumatized collective becomes hopeless about its future as anything is drenched in conflict. Moreover, past trauma is often silenced in such collectives and reinforces the delegitimization of claims of historical oppression and reinforced avoidance of the dialogue about past trauma. In this way, a traumatized society becomes fatalistic in future outlook and collectively withdraws itself from public expression. Such a collective remains in a high state of arousal, filtering everyday events through hypervigilance and collective fear, in which without nuance the reality is distinguished between safe and threatening. Hence, above outlined traumatized collectives exhibit similarities with a traumatized individual, avoiding any potential trigger to its own traumatic past, thereby reinforcing inwards focused cycles of anger and depression, maintaining itself in a hypervigilant state and being hopeless about its own future outlook. By viewing conflicts through this trauma lens, Rinker and Lawler reveal how the legacy of trauma is embodied and transmitted by the oppressors in power and the oppressed with less power and limited social access, causing these traumatized collectives to be vulnerable to continuous cycles of violent conflict.

In alignment with Rinker and Lawler, Audergon continue on their argument by stressing that conflict cycles escalate at so-called *hotspots*, referring to a particular dynamic in a social interaction. At a hotspot, there are volatile signals and the sense that something "out of control" might happen, and commonly, people are tensed or frightened at these hotspots. These hotspots hold a reservoir of pain and trauma, and touching a hotspot can possibly trigger trauma. An example of a hotspot could be a situation where a momentary flare up in a group interaction takes place, followed by a tensed laughter, silence or quickly moving on and acting like it did not happen. If such hotspots are ignored repeatedly, the trauma remains intact just below the surface, and will come back until the point that the underlying conflict will escalate. However, knowing that this is where the real problems lie, if these interaction can be safely facilitated, people may be willing and relieved to explore the hotspot. Hence, for successful conflict transformation, it is essential to address these hotspots with knowledge on trauma, awareness and carefulness, as these form the doorways from the violent past to a peaceful future. It is underlying the superficial community interactions, where pain and trauma can cause cycles of violent conflict, but is also here where the deeper, creative levels of the community's life can emerge.

Conflict cycles and trauma in Colombia

"We are trapped in this never ending circle of violence. That is what many of us feel. Same characters, same scenes in areas, same things, same struggles (...)."27

The collective trauma resulted from the conflict ruptured a vast body of social tissues throughout Colombia. Within these ruptures, traces of trauma are constantly ignited, causing renewed outbreaks of violence and conflict. As Colombia knows a long history of conflict from even before the armed conflict, the reservoir of collective trauma consists of many historical layers and is unconceivably massive. Through the trauma lens, the entanglement of collective trauma and broken social tissues reinforces oppressor-oppressed cycles. Within these cycles, feelings of resentment or revenge and a need for justice arise, usually triggering a wave of violence. This pattern resonates with the uprising of the various left-winged guerilla groups, including the FARC, at the origin of the armed conflict. This uprising was met by strong suppression of the state and their accompanying paramilitary forces (Colombia Reports, 2016). Rinker and Lawler point out that these suppressions often remain unaddressed in traumatized societies as the oppressor is commonly closely linked to the governing elite. In Colombia, the governing elite state even entirely embodies the oppressor in this specific oppressor-oppressed cycle. The state oppression was visibly present throughout the last decades in Colombia. One of the most recent examples are the 2021 Colombian protests against corruption and increased taxes, that was met by the state with brutal violence. Protesters alleged more than 2000 instances of police brutality, including around 200 missing persons and 27 cases of sexual violence (Rubiano, 2021). Such events fluently illustrate Rinker and Lawler's argument on how oppressors in traumatized societies attempt to achieve a sense of pseudo-safety by force and by justifying inhumane treatment of the oppressed. Furthermore, many of my interviewees stressed how the state has been non-compliant to the peace agreement and has been abandoning the people most in need²⁸. In doing so, structural and cultural violence continues to exist through the institutions, which Rinker and Lawler would explain as a manner to keep distance to the underlying trauma as this could potentially trigger old pain within the oppressors. Hence, the deeply entrenched collective trauma in Colombia seem to maintain and reinforce these cycles of violence between the oppressor and the oppressed, manifesting in institutional structural and cultural violence.

Simultaneously, Colombians continue to suffer trauma in vivo horizontally through their daily lives in society, but also continue to experience trauma through the media. This is highlighted by one UN employee: *"When I think about collective trauma, I think mostly about Colombians*

²⁷ Viviana Gamboa and Paula Andrea Ramirez (Co-directors Respira), in interview with author, dated on May 18th 2022

²⁸ From Fieldnotes dated on April 8th 2022

who have experienced the war through the screens, through the TV and through the media. They have their own people killed in the most awful ways (...). These people are traumatized (...)"²⁹ Moreover, by constantly hearing and seeing trauma in vivo and through media, violence has been normalized in the Colombian culture. Alejandro, one of the facilitators, elaborates on this: "We grew up seeing news, very sad stories, and in a way, that became part of what was normal (...). We as a community started to normalize violence, to see it as a feature of the scenery (...). So very shocking, disturbing, dark and sad news that is supposed to be disturbing started to no affect people anymore (...). And I don't know how healthy that is in the long run."³⁰

The majority of the victims of the armed conflict were due to the state and their paramilitary forces. Considering the immense amount of state victims and how publicly known this is, I initially assumed that the existence of the paramilitary groups were officially recognized. However, during my research, I was surprised to discover that the state up to the present day still does not fully recognize the existence of the paramilitary forces. As mentioned earlier, Jose was forcefully recruited for the paramilitary, and has been trying to get recognition on state-level for that ever since, yet, without any success so far. The Colombian state has been silent about amongst other their part in the inhumane violence executed by the paramilitary forces, as well, as many other cruel facts that they were responsible for³¹. Another consequence of silenced trauma is a non-inclusive narrative of the conflict that prevails in Colombia, in which many wrongdoings remain invisible. Therefore, no one is held accountable, leaving the victims of the perpetrators in grief and pain. Silence and avoidance of the past is also closely interlaced with a society being fatalistic in their outlook, as the ongoing cycles of conflict shapes a future outlook drenched in conflict. Several of my interviewees expressed how hopeful they were just after the signing of the peace agreement in 2016, however, many of them have been getting less hopeful as the violence started to increase again over the past few years, as described by Albano Crespo: "After the peace treaty, we had some days of calm and tranquility, and the killing numbers really decreased, but now the numbers are higher than before. Especially, the killings of social leaders and community leaders have been increasing..."³² As long as the reservoir of collective trauma is left unaddressed, a traumatized collective remains in a high state of arousal and being in constant fear. I noticed this every day of my stay in Colombia, as I had to be constantly inordinately careful when I left my house and discussed with my housemate whether certain hours or streets were safe enough to be on the streets³³. This experience was echoed by several of my interviewees. One of them was Maria Andrea, one of Dunna Corpóracion's facilitators. She explains: "We live on a certain level of

²⁹ Anonymous (UN employee), in interview with author, dated on May 12th 2022

³⁰ Alejandro Gómez (facilitator Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on May 24th 2022

³¹ Jose López (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with the author, dated on May 12th 2022

³² Albano Crespo (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with the author, dated on May 13th 2022

³³ From Fieldnotes dates on April 6th 2022

*paranoia. We do not feel safe, even with porters, with security. Every day, when it gets dark, I get starting impatient and anxious, and I prefer that my whole family is in the house." You simply see it when we just go out of our houses and have to think: "oh shit, I am going to be mugged, my god, it is evening, it is better not to go out."*³⁴ Through this lens of fear, Colombians solely know a reality with a sharp non-nuanced distinction between safe and threatening.

Earlier I gave an example on how participants in the Bunsichari project stayed on the upper layer of the social fabric and dynamics, and thereby, carefully avoided each other in order to secure their own safety (see chapter 3, p. 34). Besides protecting their safety, it turned out that this avoidance had also another function. This avoidance hold the intention to stay away from the underlying massive reservoir of collective trauma and tensions. One of the UN employees that was present during that session explained to me that when scratching a bit from that superficial layer, very high tensions would be found underneath. He elaborated on this by sharing an earlier experiences with me. He observed similar dynamics of lightness and socially desirable behavior between the participants in an earlier similar project to the Bunsichari project. Strikingly, in sharp contrast to what he witnessed during this session, a massive fight broke out between two of the participants a few days after the session, in which one of the participants killed the other one violently³⁵. This specific example, but also the observations of the Bunsichari project, resonate undoubtedly with Audergon's hotspot. Audergon describes these hotspots as reservoirs containing a tremendous amount of pain and trauma. Merely touching a hotspot, could potentially cause a flare-up in trauma, resulting in returning cycles of conflict within these hotspots. Notwithstanding, these hotspots may be dangerous terrain, these also hold the fences that form the pathway from where collective trauma can move towards healing and peace, provided that these hotspots are addressed in a conscious and knowledgeable way.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter sought to provide a theoretical framework for individual and collective trauma, and by that, paving foundations for a dialogue between theory and the empirical findings. As is revealed, trauma in individuals is closely interlaced with trauma that is held in the collective body of Colombia. Many Colombians are left as victims due to the conflict, carrying hidden traumas within their bodies. Yet, the majority seem to barely recognize it as such, thereby denoting different views on trauma and/or avoidance of trauma. This pattern of avoidance is also clearly visible on both individual and community-level in the Bunsichari participants. Most participants described various trauma-related symptoms and inexplicable somatic complaints that were also evidently perceptible in the group dynamics and the body language.

³⁴ María Andrea García (facilitator Dunna Corporación), in interview with author, dated on May 17th 2022

³⁵ From Fieldnotes dated on April 1st 2022

Understanding what trauma looks like in individuals forms a stepping stone towards understanding trauma in the collective dimension, referred to as collective trauma. In the collective body, trauma manifests in collective avoidance. Community-members navigate themselves cautiously on the thin upper layer of the social dynamics, and in doing so, they stay away as far as possible from the underlying broken social tissues that originated in the collective trauma. In both Venecia and Fusagasugá, the rupture of the social fabric is visible in the frail social processes and dynamics, weakened cultural practices and fragile social relationships and networks. Exposed by the testimonials of the interviewees, as well, as museums and memorial centers, collective trauma occurs to nestle in the memory of the collective and thereby shaping the identities of several societal groups. Considering forgetting the past would create a vacuum for repetition of the violence, the establishment and maintenance a group identity seems to be crucial for the victims of the conflict. Opposed to the victims, the ex-combatants seem to struggle with recognizing their past deeds, tending towards minimalizing, avoiding or distorting the historical memory as recognition of the past imposes a threat to their identity. However, during the observations of the Bunsichari sessions, the dynamics of recognition and attributing meaning between the victims and the ex-combatants started to unfold and mature, denoting the importance of these processes towards healing and peacebuilding (see chapter 4, p. 45).

Additionally, Rinker and Lawler elaborate on how collective trauma is central to the genesis of armed conflict, and by analyzing Colombia through their lens, it becomes visible how the symptoms of the collective trauma lead to repeated conflict cycles through mechanisms of silence and avoidance, hypervigilance and collective fear, institutionalized structural violence and unaddressed oppressor-oppressed dynamics. Collective trauma appears to retain the collective body avoidant and hypervigilant, and thereby, has become a structural problem itself. Consequently, on top of the reservoir of collective trauma many hotspots occur, in which the trauma lives right under the paper-thin surface and can erupt anytime. Despite the instable character of these hotspots, it is exactly here where sincere conflict transformation can take place. As this chapter elaborated on trauma-symptoms in the collective body and its relation to returning cycles of conflict, the next and final chapter will explore abundant structural problems obstruct the building of sustainable peace, and scrutinize the process of collective healing of trauma within the context of peacebuilding.

4. COLLECTIVE HEALING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF PEACEBUILDING

"We need spaces for healing. We need spaces where truth is put out in the public. We need spaces that let allow people to execute that peace and to have recognition."³⁶

Now that we have come to understand how unhealed trauma leads to the destruction of social tissues and social functioning of individuals and communities, thereby forming a very fertile soil for new eruptions of war and violence, let us dive into the process of healing of collective trauma. This will again take place in an interspersed dialogue between theoretical foundations and a dialogue between theory and empirical findings. In the first part, I will elaborate on peace, structural and cultural violence and human needs deprivation, drawn from the thoughts of Galtung and Azar. This will allow me to reveal some of the structural problems that obstruct healing the collective trauma and has encapsulated the massive Colombian reservoir of collective trauma, and to reflect on what constitutes peace in Venecia and Fusagasugá. How inhabitants of Venecia and Fusagasugá perceive peace enables a more profound understanding collective healing within peacebuilding practices. Therefore, the section on what peace means (see p. 45) forms a bridge between the two parts of this chapter. Departing from this web of meanings of peace, the second part of this chapter will scrutinize collective healing within peacebuilding practices in Venecia and Fusagasugá. Here, I will depart from a broader set of theoretical foundations on healing and peacebuilding, providing groundwork for understanding the collected empirical findings. Since I found eminently varied findings on healing that could tap into an immensely wide array of academic theories, I decided to focus on a number of mechanisms of healing that were repeatedly coined during the interviews. Spaces appeared to be a prerequisite to a broad array of processes and mechanisms conducive to healing, with humanization, religion and spirituality as the most prominent variables. Hence, *spaces, humanization and religion and spirituality* will form the corner stones in the second part of this chapter.

Peace, structural violence and need deprivation

What is peace? This question has been pondered on by many scholars within the academic landscape. One of the most renowned scholars that addressed this question is Johan Galtung. He elucidates what peace is by using two metaphors. The first one is "health", Galtung asserts that peace is to violence what health is to disease. The second one is "love". Love is the union of body, mind and spirit, referring respectively to the economy, polity and culture in peace (Galtung, 2013). In other works, Galtung coined the concepts of negative and positive peace (Galtung, 2013). Negative peace is the mere absence of violence and war, whilst positive peace goes beyond that and incorporates features such as access to justice, sustainable

³⁶ Ariel Sanchez (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with the author, dated on May 19th 2022

development and human rights (Fry & Miklikowska, 2012). Galtung describes the “act of physical hurt” as instrumental, expressive and visible violence, designated as manifest violence, and argues that this manifest violence is fueled by underlying cultural and structural violence, built into deeply unequal, exploitative and unjust social structures, such as racism, capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism. Within such structures, humans cannot realize their fullest true potentials, and this is maintained by cultural violence that legitimizes direct and/or structural violence (Galtung, 2013). By coining these refined concepts of violence, Galtung draws attention to violence to the normality of things that is massively destructive, but as it is much less visible, remains often unseen and unaddressed. Hence, through Galtung’s theoretical lens, peace may be sustained, even when there are highly destructive forms of structural violence (Galtung, 1996). Bringing in the wider context of ongoing structural and cultural violence will help to understand *where* collective trauma exactly resides and *what* maintains and fuels collective trauma. Additionally, many interviewees articulated the importance of the fulfillment of human needs in the process of healing from collective trauma. To shed light on how deprivation of human needs relate to conflict, Azar’s presented a framework on Protracted Social Conflict (PSC), building on the assumption that PSC’s evolve when communities are deprived of satisfaction of their basic needs based on their communal identity, resulting from a complex interplay between initial conditions, such as colonial legacy, and various actors involving the state and international linkages. His theory views grievances due to the deprivation of basic human needs as the main driver of conflict (Azar, 1990). These thoughts of Azar and Galtung allow space for the larger whole in which the Colombian trauma is nested, and hold potential to explain how the reservoir of collective trauma continues to be sustained and incited in the following sessions.

Collective healing obstructed by structural violence and need deprivation

“When the source of trauma does not stop, how can we find the time and space to digest the trauma, to cry if we need to cry for whatever that was painful, and eventually to find peace...?”³⁷

Maria Reyes, who is the methodologies director of Fundación Prolangar, imposes the question above that has been emulated by many interviewees. They repeatedly referred to the deprivation of needs and ongoing structural problems an obstacle in the process of healing collective trauma. One of them is Marco Valencia, he was part of both M-19 and FARC and is participating in the Bunsichari project in Fusagasugá. He explains to me that in order to heal trauma, other fundamental problems need to be addressed first: “(...) *There are a lot of victims with a lot of pain and resentment who are abandoned by the state. Their basic needs need to be solved, the government does not care about that. These people should go to study, to be*

³⁷ Maria Reyes (Methodologies director Fundación Prolangar), in interview with Author, dated on April 26th 2022

healed economically. Give them chances to change their ways of thinking, and then they can be oriented psychologically (...)"³⁸ Libertad adds: "We need a government that has political will, that shows up for the social situation (...). Addressing the structural problems in Colombia is that path. After that, the collective pain can be healed (...)." ³⁹ Carina Josefina was forcefully displaced by the conflict and separated from her siblings, and is participating in the Bunsichari project in Venecia. She points out: "(...) Right now, there is no healing of the trauma, the government needs to change. First, they need to assure jobs, education and opportunities. If not, the conflict will just continue and continue... (...)"⁴⁰ Another victim of the conflict is Ariel Sanchez, her family was also forcefully displaced. When I ask her about what is needed to address the collective trauma, she reflects: "(...) On the bigger level, we need affirmative actions, because everything is left on the paper. And the paper is really nice and beautiful, but it does not work if it is only on the paper. So the way of addressing collective trauma is to improve the lives of people, give them access to education and to opportunities."⁴¹ These testimonials expose how neglected structural problems and human needs leave the collective trauma unhealed and cemented within the abundant problems that also formed the root cause of the conflict in which the collective trauma originated.

Regarding the larger context of Colombia, navigating the streets of Colombia reveals just how deeply unequal the country is today. One small elite group holds all the power and privileges while the vast majority of Colombians are stuck in a reality where they have no access to education or healthcare and therefore few opportunities to climb the social ladder. Likewise, many interviewees echoed this. Angela, one of Dunna's facilitators reflects: "Most people are stuck in very poor circumstances, and they are constantly in severe distress (...). I think structural and cultural changes are needed first (...)"⁴² Alejandro, another facilitator of Dunna, adds: "(...) In this country, there are so many needs, there is a lot of social injustice. I think Colombia is one of the countries that is considered to be the most unequal in the world (...)." ⁴³ Moreover, Libertad points out the ongoing poignant differences in social class: "The conflict in Colombia originated because of the problem with the land (...). Land is owned by a few, whilst the majority of the Colombian do not even have a single piece of land."⁴⁴ Thus, despite that the manifest violence has reduced over the last few years, structural and cultural violence continues to exist in the normality of things in Colombia. Furthermore, the state failed to fulfill the many basic needs that continue to exist in Colombia. Many of my interviewees told me how the government has been abandoning its people, by not being present in rural areas and

³⁸ Marco Valencia (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on April 23rd 2022

³⁹ Libertad del Olmo (participant Bunsichari Project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 13th 2022

⁴⁰ Carina Josefina (participant Bunsichari Project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 13th 2022

⁴¹ Ariel Sanchez (participant Bunsichari Project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on May 19th 2022

⁴² Angela Cortez (facilitator Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on April 27th 2022

⁴³ Alejandro Gomez (facilitator Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on May 24th 2022

⁴⁴ Libertad del Olmo (participant Bunsichari Project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 13th 2022

by not complying to the peace agreement that incorporates profound changes that would ensure equality, justice and the fulfilment of needs.⁴⁵ This governing state is also known to be highly elitist and corrupt, and to have close links with narco-traffic and paramilitary forces (Escobar, 2002). These characteristics fit fluently within what Azar views as the origin of protracted social conflict. Lastly, during the presidential elections, the hope for real change was strongly tactile everywhere in Colombia, as well, as during the interviews and casual conversations that I had with other Colombians⁴⁶. Petro Gustavo was elected on the 20th of June, and Colombians are hopefully awaiting to discover whether he will be able to address the many structural problems that have been mentioned during my research.

A web of meanings of peace: Venecia and Fusagasugá

The collective trauma resulting from the armed conflict is evidently present in the communities of Venecia and Fusagasugá, and has manifested itself in the collective body (see chapter 3, p. 34). For an all-encompassing understanding of collective healing in the context of peacebuilding, I considered it profoundly relevant to gain insight in how inhabitants of Venecia and Fusagasugá perceive peace. Hence, I concluded each interview by asking them what peace means to them, seeking to construct a web of meanings of peace. I argue that this web of meanings holds many starting points from which a deeper understanding of collective healing and peace can be understood. The question “*What does peace mean to you?*” inherently seemed to bring calmness to my interviewees. After absorbing the question, often followed by a soothing sigh, many of them gave answers including words such as “harmony”, “tranquility”, “calm”, “equality” or “equity”. It was remarkable how many of these answers firmly resonated with Galtung's conceptualizations of positive peace. Several of my interviewees emphasized that peace is not the mere absence of war, but entails walking freely on the streets without the fear of being killed and to be able to live in tranquility and prosperity⁴⁷. I will present some illustrative testimonials below.

Marco shares what peace means to him: “*There is so much... Peace is like living in harmony, there is an absence of pain, an absence of needs. (...) Peace cannot only be the absence of conflict. The mere silence of guns, that is not peace.*”⁴⁸ Very much in line with Marco's meaning of peace, Libertad adds: “*Peace begins with equality and equity in each one of the social sectors. That the peasants and their families have a piece of land, even when it is really small, so that we can produce, have our autonomy, and have access to healthy food. In this way, we are fed with dignity. And also, that we do not have to beg for our rights, that we are entitled to them is very important (...).*”⁴⁹ Jose conveys the following message: “*Peace is health, both*

⁴⁵ From Fieldnotes dated on April 23rd 2022

⁴⁶ From Fieldnotes dated on April 22nd 2022

⁴⁷ From Fieldnotes dated on May 14th 2022

⁴⁸ Marco Valencia (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on April 23rd 2022

⁴⁹ Libertad del Olmo (participant Bunsichari Project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 13th 2022

psychologically and physically, it is prosperity. Peace includes values. Peace is whoever you want to be, without being judged or feeling less, whether you have black, blue or green eyes, whether you are fat or skinny, whether you are gay or straight. Peace is to be able to walk freely on the streets, and to be calm, which is not the case now (...)."⁵⁰ Albano Crespo reflects: "I believe that peace is to live with tranquility, not fearing of being killed by a bullet or by whatever is threatening your life. I feel like that that is the law of life: to be able to die, because you are old, and not because of anything else. That is what peace is."⁵¹ Ariel expresses her view of peace as: "Peace means reconciliation with the other, it means individual growth, it includes human values. The conflict is only one factor that is not allowing us to live in peace, there are many other factors... (...)"⁵² These testimonials indicate that solely the absence of manifest violence cannot be seen as a state of peace, and all of them describe peace as a state of positive peace that needs human needs to be fulfilled and cultural and structural violence to be overcome.

Collective healing and trauma-informed peacebuilding

Presently, trauma is still often viewed as an individual experience, whilst its destroying effects on collectives are evidently visible (Funk & Berry, 2020). One person that is unable to cope with his or her own negative emotions or experiences, could cause misery for dozens of people surrounding him or her. Subsequently, it appears that social healing and psychological healing are interdependent and mutually reinforcing (Woodside, Santa Barbara, & Benner, 1999), and hence, trauma on both the individual and collective level need to be simultaneously addressed. Within the academic debate on peacebuilding, there is growing consensus that trauma healing needs to be incorporated in peacebuilding practices. To do so, antiquated notions of trauma must be abandoned and be replaced by psychosocial, integral and trauma-informed peacebuilding approaches that address trauma at all societal dimensions (Gitau, 2018). Much is written on individual healing of trauma, yet, there is a lack on the understanding on what constitutes collective healing. To respond to this gap, Thomson (2021) developed a conceptual framework towards collective healing. He argues that the core of collective healing is the act of dehumanizing. In his work, he defines healing as a holistic overcoming of the act of being dehumanized, and explains that a comprehensive collective healing must consist of four processes: understanding the act itself, working through the harmful effects on the individual, transcending the antagonistic social relations, and acknowledging and trying to overcome the structural conditions that enable the actions. Thus, collective healing must entail the individual, relational and social aspects within a traumatized collective (Thomson, 2021).

⁵⁰ Jose Lopéz (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with the author, dated on May 12th 2022

⁵¹ Albano Crespo (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with the author, dated on May 13th 2022

⁵² Ariel Sanchez (participant Bunsichari Project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on May 19th 2022

It may be clear by now that sustainable peace is difficult to reach without adequate attention towards the emotional legacies of a conflict (Hertog, 2017). Importantly, peace consists of different layers that together form a whole: the inner peace core, the middle interpersonal and intercommunal peace layer, and the outer national and international peace layer (Gitau, 2018). Inner peace in individuals is not solely a sign of mental health but is also crucial for collective peace (Hertog, 2017). Regarding peacebuilding practices, the terms of trauma-sensitive peacebuilding, trauma-informed peacebuilding, psychosocial peacebuilding or trauma awareness and conflict transformation have been coined and are used interchangeably (Hertog, 2017). The psychosocial angle refers to interventions that address the psychological dimensions of experiences, such as emotions and feelings, and the social aspects of the experience, such as culture, spirituality and relationships. Being trauma-informed incorporates a holistic outlook in considering the impact of trauma on its survivors, taking into account the differentiated and culturally inclined ways the trauma-affected people experience trauma beyond the traditional PTSD diagnosis, and engaging diverse processes from different disciplines to address trauma and improve the resilience of affected populations. Clancy and Hamber (2008) have described trauma-informed peacebuilding as an intervention that explicitly recognize the connection between mental health and social agency through the incorporation of trauma-informed interventions, that promotes psychological well-being (Clancy & Hamber, 2008). For the purposes of this chapter, I will continue using the term of trauma-informed peacebuilding, building on the assumption that the intervention impacts both the psychological well-being of the participants and the larger community.

As mentioned earlier, collective trauma resides under the surface of the so-called hotspots, causing repeated cycles of conflict through small triggers that activate the underlying trauma (see chapter 3, p. 39). By neglecting such hotspots, it is assured that the underlying conflict will escalate at some point again. However, when approaching these hotspots with expertise and safety, the underlying collective trauma can be adequately addressed and emotional catharsis can occur, and subsequently, these hotspots evolve into doorways towards peace (Audergon, 2004). Considering peace and healing take space (Mitchell & Kelly, 2011), I argue that these hotspots bear the potential to transform into suitable spaces forming a prerequisite to successful trauma-informed peacebuilding practices. Interestingly, within the landscapes of war and peace, space has gained increased attention, and reflects upon space as symbolic and material, giving meaning through peoples' embodied activities and interactions (Brigg & George, *Emplacing the spatial turn in peace and conflict studies*, 2020). Having appropriate spaces set points of departures for peacebuilding practices where transformation can occur on alterations of meanings, and memories and stories, thereby fostering the trauma healing and slowly transforming the overarching discourses on war, trauma and peace. These processes can be spatialized in tangible products and may even

come to be inculcated as new identities, bringing solid potential for conflict transformation (Brigg, 2020). Those spaces need to be constantly negotiated, conversational and cross-cultural, and require the participation and engagement of the local communities (Pia, 2013). Albeit attention has been growing for spaces within peacebuilding, the current academic debate fails to provide concrete conceptualizations on the types of spaces that exist. By bringing in empirical evidence in the next section, this chapter seeks to elaborate on theorizations on what space constitutes within collective healing and peacebuilding,

As Thomson (2021) highlights, the process of humanization must be centralized within these spaces in healing and peacebuilding practices. Human connections between victims and perpetrators are required to overcome deep-seated emotions of revenge and anger (Thomson, 2021). For that, it is crucial to find non-violent manners of working through differences that maintain divided and traumatized societies apart (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2008). Consequently, trauma-informed peacebuilding must take into consideration the ways in which the practices serve to humanize, where the survivors were dehumanized, rebuild connections where they were destroyed by displacement and violence, and restore a sense of meaning, belonging and purpose where these were shattered during the period of mass violence (Gitau, 2018). Hence, the overarching process of humanization entails various other sub-processes such as recognition, understanding, listening, forgiveness, empathy, trust, renewed connections, harnessing inclusive narratives, all-encompassing collective memory and non-violent communication (Gitau, 2018). First and foremost, the trauma needs to be recognized as such. It is in the lack of this recognition, where both the collective trauma and of the structures that allow it to persist, that trauma is perpetuated and transmitted over generations (Leisey & Lewis, 2016). Recognition of the trauma form the foundation from where lived experiences of the trauma can be validated, thereby allowing spaces for collective trauma to be included in communities that live and carry them (Leisey & Lewis, 2016). In a similar vein, it is essential that victims and perpetrators see each other as above all as "human", and this recognition contributes to the processes of re-humanization (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2008). Another essential process in humanization and trauma healing refers to forgiveness between the different groups. Tongeren et al. (2013) revealed that trust, intergroup forgiveness and collective guilt are the strongest facilitators of forgiveness, whilst ingroup identity and negative emotions are the strongest obstructs in processes of forgiveness (Van Tongeren et al., 2013). Additionally, forgiveness holds the potential to enhance the empathic sensibilities damaged by violence both between individuals and within communities. Namely, recovery from trauma can only take place within the context of relationships, it cannot take place in isolation. A survivor only re-creates psychological faculties that were damaged by traumatic experiences, by renewed connections with others. This incorporates basic capacities for autonomy, trust, competence, identity, intimacy and trust, and considering these capacities originate from

relationships with others, reforming them must occur within social relationships (Gitau, 2018). Furthermore, collective memory, particularly from the victim's side, resides in these spaces, and is closely interrelated with truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, the traditional elements of transitional justice, and are also fundamental in processes of trauma healing. It is also in these spaces where local communities can express their emotions, tell their stories, and in this way, resist, challenge and transform official narratives of memory (Gomez, 2022). Furthermore, provided that these spaces are well-guided and stimulated to be enacted with non-violent communication, spaces allow empathy, the ability to feel and understand the emotions of the other, to develop and evolve between different opposing groups. These practices of empathy are vital to the re-humanization processes, in situations where opposing groups caused each other extreme violence through dehumanization mechanisms (John, 2021).

Besides the processes that fall under humanization processes, a number of specific variables appeared to be highly conducive to the process of trauma healing, these include: resilience, creativity, spirituality and religion. Resilience within individuals refers to the capacity to withstand the negative consequences of experienced traumas, to recover rapidly from any symptoms of pathology that may develop, to demonstrate commitment, engagement and enthusiasm in productive tasks, and ultimately, to thrive. Community resilience can be understood as a community's capacity to withstand collective trauma, to identify and mobilize its resources to deal with trauma and engage in positive outcomes (Gitau, 2018). Resilience entails a focus for recovery to prior functioning accompanied by the identification and mobilization of resources to deal with traumatic experiences and thrive. Furthermore, among resilient individuals, a set of frequently occurring characteristics can be identified: selflessness, inner strength, positive attitude, faith in God, community support, vision and long term mission and personal responsibility. These characteristics are mutually reinforcing and interconnected. Another variable, that seems to be inherently and very closely connected with the elastic and flexible components of resilience, refers to creativity. Creativity is associated with divergent thinking, awareness of self, expressiveness, and may be deployed in adapting, adjusting or problem solving, and is commonly viewed as a strength (Gitau, 2018). The use of humor is one of the creative expressions that can help in dealing with extreme situations such as conflict and war. It exposes the twistedness of the situation, and in this way, upholds the human capacity to understand and survive the incomprehensible, and hence, facilitates the adaptation to difficult situations (Williams, 2001). Furthermore, creativity incorporated in peacebuilding practices has shown to help to reach a depth in learning that is essential in response to the deep trauma and pain experienced in situations of violence and conflict. It bears potential to find creative, viable and sustainable alternatives, and hold potential to go beyond conventional language, as pain has the tendency to destroy language (Ayindo, 2008). Lastly,

trauma causes people to question their assumptions about life, purpose, the world and spiritual life. Hence, there appears to be a strong link between trauma, and spirituality and religion (Van Hook, 2016). Spirituality is described by Van Hook (2016) as people's sense of meaning, morality and their relationship to the world and the transcendent around the, and can be expressed in different religions such as Christianity or the Islam. Studies have linked trauma with both an increase in spirituality and religion, hypothesizing that trauma works as a catalyst for spiritual growth. Van Hook (2016) argues that spirituality can contribute to resiliency, as well, as intensify the pain and stress. Additionally, other scholars have articulated that religion can help addressing the problem of human insufficiency (Van Hook, 2016). Spirituality bears the potential to allow people gaining recognition that despite the traumatic experiences cannot be undone, people still can heal emotionally and spiritually from their past traumatic experiences (Van Hook, 2016). Considering the prominent role religion and spirituality play in many human lives, and how resilience and creativity are promotive to trauma healing processes, trauma-informed peacebuilding should include space for religion and spirituality, and nurture both resilience and creativity in trauma-survivors (Gitau, 2018).

Spaces of healing

"Peace is to have space within myself. To be able to observe within and outside with contemplation. Observing what to release, rather than projecting all my fantasies, fears, desires or anything."⁵³

As captivating described by Maria Andrea above, space has a pivotal role in peace and healing. Space appeared to be fundamental in healing processes of the armed conflict in different dimensions. Based on the empirical findings, spaces can be roughly categorized in three types: the larger spaces (e.g. museums and exhibitions), spaces that can arise within a conversation or dialogue, or spaces within peacebuilding practices (e.g. Bunsichari project). This section aims to delve deeper on what space means in my empirical findings, and will reflect on which healing processes occur within the observed spaces. The first type of space refers to the many spaces throughout Colombia that I encountered, where the sad stories and memories of Colombians are remembered through memory centers, exhibitions, murals and museums. Colombians can visit these spaces, to absorb these memories, and thereby, interaction processes start between these stories and the recipients. In this way, stories of the armed conflict increasingly gained the right to exist within the Colombian society, allowing narratives on war and peace to be revised and expanded. Various interviewees also visited the earlier mentioned exhibition *El Testigo* and shared with me how this space allowed them to sincerely experience what has happened in the past and to process parts of it. Maria Alejandra Rodriguez, who is a project coordinator at BogotArt, shares: *"I think the first time I saw the*

⁵³ Maria Andrea Garcia (Facilitator Dunna Corporacion), in interview with author, dated on May 17th 2022

exhibition, I cried a lot, and a lot of people cry when they are there for the first time. It is so hard to actually see what happened during the conflict."⁵⁴ Here, meanings of the past start to alter and to be incorporated in the prevailing discourses on war and peace, and get to be spatialized in palpable tears and to become part of renewed identities. From my own experience, I obviously held a relative large body of knowledge on the conflict when I started the actual field research. Yet, it was only after entering these spaces, that I was able to truly ingest the impact of the conflict on the Colombians, allowing me to briefly tap into the massive reservoir of collective trauma that resides in Colombia⁵⁵.

Another form in which space ensued in my research, is the space that can arise within a dialogue or conversation. Nearly all my interviewees mentioned how deeply important it is to have space in order to heal from past traumatic experiences. Besides, I meticulously paid attention to ensure that my interviewees felt heard and seen during the interviews. Over the course of my field work, I witnessed how this intention laid groundwork for healing, allowing the interviews to become a space in which healing can occur and to become themselves part of the healing processes. One exemplary interview was the one with Albano Crespo⁵⁶. Daniel, my research volunteer and I were invited to his house. After entering, we sat down in his small living room that was dusky illuminated. Albano's family was also present in this living room. In a way, the atmosphere was fragile, yet, at the same time warm and beautifully intimate. After Albano's mother brought us three little cups of coffee, she took the seat just behind me. Albano Crespo seemed to be slightly at unease, but despite his timidity, he was very willingly to answer the questions that I asked him. When I ask him about how he copes with his own pain, he tells me: *"No one ever asked me about my feelings and emotions, this is the first time. I am valuing that a lot (...). I feel like the secrets of the conflicts are very difficult and hard to face, and sometimes you do not want to go there, because it is really tough to remember. So remembering is difficult, but at the same time I feel like this is really necessary for both us, the ex-combatants and the victims. We have to throw everything out what is inside of us and we need these spaces to do it."*⁵⁷ Daniel and I both noticed how attentively and curiously Albano's family was listening to our interview. After leaving Albano's house, we both felt how profound and significant this interview must have been for both Albano and his family. We agreed on that this interview must have created openness within the family, and that this hold the potential to instigate profound changes within their family. Later, these thoughts were confirmed in some messages that I received from Albano, in which he tells me how special this conversation was for him, because he could finally start to let go of his suppressed emotions. He expresses his gratitude for giving him the feeling that peace is worth to fight for, because

⁵⁴ Maria Alejandra Rodriguez (director BogotArt), in interview with author, dated on April 7th 2022

⁵⁵ From Fieldnotes dated on March 26th 2022

⁵⁶ From Fieldnotes dated on May 12th 2022

⁵⁷ Albano Crespo (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 12th 2022

for the first time he felt that there are people out there that do not see him for what he was once in the past. To me, it was clear that new spaces were opened during this interview, allowing emotions, stories, memories and meanings to start transforming, and allowing Albano and his family to heal from what happened in the past. Naturally, it will remain unknown to me what exactly has been arising in these spaces, but I experience full trust in what Albano and his family will do with the space. The experience I had during the interview with Albano Crespo finds a lot of resonance in other interviews that I conducted. Space appears to be a precondition to for processes of healing.

The third type of space that I studied refers to the spaces within peacebuilding practices, specified to the Bunsichari project. Many of my interviewees stressed the importance of those spaces for both individual and community healing. Additionally, it appears that these spaces need to comply to certain features. The communication within these spaces needs to be horizontal and depart from a baseline of safety. Alejandro, one of the facilitators explains: *“Spaces from official institutions tend to be more official, but then them come to our spaces and find themselves in a circle. They find a way of communicating that is more informal, less vertical, more horizontal. It is a safe space, in which people who had very traumatic experiences with violence, like people from the guerilla, victims, police or army, coming together in the same space, and can feel safe in each other’s presence.”*⁵⁸ Everything that occurs within these spaces need to be facilitated in a knowledgeable and experienced way. Carina, one of the participants in Venecia, reflects on this: *“I have learned that in order to heal you need professional help. It needs to be a person who understands, who know how to talk about it (...). Dunna is helping us to heal that pain that is inside of us, that we do not know how to deal with. These spaces are an opportunity to heal, to learn how to deal with the pain very deep inside of us (...). And the learnings that we learn here, we can apply them, replicate them in other contexts. For example, in our homes, the ways that we relate to our families and close ones (...). In this way, it contributes to inner healing and outer healing.”*⁵⁹ Considering the social leaders that I spoke to appeared to be the most traumatized individuals, it is presumable that their trauma has a larger influence on the communities they lead, and synchronously due to their role model, their individual healing would have larger impact on the community as well. Moreover, by observing the spaces within the Bunsichari sessions, I witnessed the bodies of the Bunsichari participants starting slowly getting less tensed, getting more on ease, and the attitudes of the participants transformed from closed to more open⁶⁰. Nora, one of the participants in Fusagasugá, reflects: *“I was carrying the world on my shoulders, and my arms and back were hurting all day (...). And after the yoga, it did not hurt for a bit.”* Several studies demonstrate that body-focused interventions such as the practice of yoga, could contribute

⁵⁸ Alejandro Gomez (facilitator Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on May 24th 2022

⁵⁹ Carina Josefina (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 13th 2022

⁶⁰ From Fieldnotes dated on May 13th 2022

in creating openings for re-connection to the bodies, sometimes followed by catharsis of the bottled up bodily tensions. It appears that what Nora experienced due to the yoga practices fits within the findings of these studies (van der Kolk, 2015). Gabriella, the academic director of Dunna elaborates: *"(...) From the body layer, it is working through the tensions, that creates a space of openness, allowing you to really listen (...). It is about the other person seeing the other one really. To connect from a deeper space, and to see the other one from that space. His pain, his being, to see what he has been going through, or what he has inside of him (...). And then everything changes. Relationships start to change."*⁶¹ Having more openness within the space, also allowed for moments of catharsis of the bottled up feelings that the participants were carrying, and created spaces for the tears that needed to be cried. Benito, one of the victims participating in the Bunsichari project in Fusagasugá, shares: *"(...) My inner emotions have been touched by hearing the other stories (...). What makes one heal, is to take out what has been very deep inside of you and to put it out (...). I have cried by hearing the stories of the other participants, I have cried on my own stories. It has been a really emotional and healing process."*⁶² This resonates with Maria Andrea's earlier experiences as a facilitator: *"What I see is a lot is a discharge of emotional charge. They discharge because they speak out things that they have had on their chest (...). And then, when you can be more compassionate with your feelings and yourself, then you start building a relationship with yourself that is different, and you can also start to see and approach others in the same way."*⁶³ Concurrently, the dynamics between the participants also started to flow differently and sincere connections gradually started to unfold between them. The atmosphere became candidly lighter, allowing space for genuine laughter and joy. This is reflected by Jose: *"I am impressed by the speed of the process, because at the beginning, I felt like we were really tensed, but quite soon, we were already close to each other, hugging each other, which was really impressive. Then in the second session, when the people from the military and police joined, we even laughed, we had jokes, and at the end we even hugged. I am just really amazed by the speed that the process has, I cannot believe it."*⁶⁴ Alejandro adds: *"Having all those persons coming in the space and having that experience that is light, playful, enjoyable and fun... That is powerful and very healing. It strengthens links."*⁶⁵

Synchronously with my observations of the sessions, participants told me during the interviews how the safe spaces within the Bunsichari project contributed to their inner peace and accelerated processes of individual healing, as well, as healing processes on a community-level. Evidently, individual and collective healing relate to each other in both directions, meaning that when one heals, this contributes to the healing of its community, and vice versa.

⁶¹ Gabriela Martinez (academic director Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on April 7th 2022

⁶² Benito Álvarez (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on May 19th 2022

⁶³ María Andrea Garcia (facilitator Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on May 17th 2022

⁶⁴ Jose López (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 12th 2022

⁶⁵ Alejandro Gomez (facilitator Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on May 24th 2022

Maria from Fundación Prolangar recognizes this within her earlier experiences: *"It is quite obvious that if we are still broken inside, how can we then build better relationships? The individual and collective are connected, and need to be addressed at the same time."*⁶⁶ Thus, when healing happens within individuals, healing in some form occurs simultaneously on a broader collective level as well, and when collective healing occurs, the individual within the collective heals along as the environment is becoming a safer and healthier space. Apparent small changes bear the potential to unfold endlessly within the systems of people that surround a single individual. Benito explains: *"There has been change. I see that in the family of all the participants. I share with my family, but also with the other participants, how I have met people that thought I would never meet. How I am talking to perpetrators in a way that I never would have expect. It is definitely impacting the people around me, and I am certain that this is also happening with the other participants."*⁶⁷ Ariel, one of the participants in Fusagasugá, echoes this as well: *"I feel like that I have been building on my inner peace (...). I feel that this is contributing to the bigger peace, the community peace. In this way, we are able to see each other, work with each other, look beyond the labels that we are carrying (...). This process gives more than only inner peace."*⁶⁸ Angela, one of the facilitators, elaborates on this: *"This process is for them to have this little experience, a little bit different than their previous one (...). It changes something, just arriving a bit more friendly to your home, or remembering that time that you really paid attention to the other person and listened to that person. I think we give like little changes that could be really healthy and useful for the participants, the people surrounding them and their lives."*⁶⁹ The larger part of processes occurring within the spaces of the Bunsichari project relate to the more overarching process of humanization which will be taken under scrutiny in the next section.

"The other is human too"

The processes of re-humanization appears to be central to the process of collective healing and peacebuilding. Alejandro shares what he experienced during his earlier work for Dunna Corpóracion: *"People had a lot of hate and resentment towards other people, but after sharing some time together, they realized that the other is just as human like as oneself, and that maybe situations of life took them to that contexts of violence and to do horrible things. But then, they started to recognize their common humanity. This happened and was a very sincere process."*⁷⁰ Maria from Fundación Prolangar echoes: *"We focus on our shared humanity, we really try to bring them to that level of what we share as human beings, and that fosters the process of rebuilding trust."*⁷¹ The recognition of the pain of the other forms a fruitful

⁶⁶ Maria Reyes (Methodologies director Fundación Prolangar), in interview with author, dated on April 26th 2022

⁶⁷ Benito Álvarez (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on May 19th 2022

⁶⁸ Ariel Sanchez (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on May 19th 2022

⁶⁹ Angela Cortez (facilitator Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on April 27th 2022

⁷⁰ Alejandro Gomez (facilitator Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on May 24th 2022

⁷¹ Maria Reyes (Methodologies director Fundación Prolangar), in interview with author, dated on April 26th 2022

breeding ground on which many processes of healing and re-humanization can unfold. One of the UN employees in the peacebuilding mission explains: *"First, they need to recognize each other, to understand each other's context for when they went to war and why they went (...). Then, they might start to understand that the other only had the choice between joining the guerillas or dying from hunger, dying from the paramilitaries, or going to jail. By recognizing the other, knowing their stories, creates closeness, brings people together."*⁷² This also resonates with what Maria Andrea shares: *"It is necessary to reinforce channels of communication, reinforce trust and solidarity. What I have seen is that people start to see other been that have been invisible to them. Just this idea of being seen, heard and recognized. That is huge."*⁷³

Within the processes of re-humanization, many sub-processes simultaneously occur which I will illustrate with testimonials of my interviewees. Marco, who participates in the Bunsichari project in Fusagasugá, expresses: *"Openness in people allow them to be open to listen, to receive, to learn that we are different, and that we still need to learn a lot of different things."*⁷⁴ Regarding vulnerability, Marco explains: *"When you want to talk to someone, you have to get yourself naked. That is what the facilitator did yesterday, and that gave us trust."*⁷⁵ When I ask Viviana, one of the co-directors of Respira, how to heal a traumatized society, she reflects: *"There is this word of awareness. But it is so hard to look at pain and violence in its face (...). So many people just decide to look away, so that they are not feeling it anymore, because it is way too much. So that is why community-based approaches are so beautiful and so healing, because they come in other languages that are in itself already seeds of transformation (...)"*⁷⁶ Processes of awareness, vulnerability are essential towards seeing each other as an equal human and to building healthy relationships with others. Gabriela, the academic director, explains how in these processes, relationships can start to be rebuilt: *"Putting yourself in the shoes of the other, and to hear how his or her life has been, that brings people closer. Suddenly, there is a sense of connection."*⁷⁷ Benito expresses: *"The social tissue was completely broken, and what we are doing right now with Dunna, is starting to heal that social tissue that was broken by the violent conflict, and Dunna is helping us to even become siblings."*⁷⁸ Albano reflects on how since the Bunsichari sessions friendship bounds have been starting to grow within Venecia, and tells me: *"Since the sessions, I feel like it is possible to build friendships bonds with the others. I do not feel resentment anymore. It makes me think that it is possible to have reconciliation between people in Colombia, and that it is possible to have that forgiveness in a way."*⁷⁹ When I ask

⁷² Anonymous (UN employee), in interview with author, dated on May 11th 2022

⁷³ Maria Andrea Garcia (facilitator Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on May 17th 2022

⁷⁴ Marco Valencia (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on April 23rd 2022

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Viviana Gamboa and Paula Andrea Ramirez (Co-directors Respira), in interview with author, dated on May 18th 2022

⁷⁷ Gabriela Martinez (academic director Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on April 7th 2022

⁷⁸ Benito Álvarez (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on May 19th 2022

⁷⁹ Albano Crespo (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 12th 2022

Maria Andrea about how to foster a process of forgiveness, she explains to me: *“You forgive by understanding. I believe that you can only forgive when you kind of understand where the other is coming from and what happens within them. It is not forgetting. It is trying to leave the idea of anger and revenge. Because, when you want to take revenge, then, the cycle of violence perpetually continues.”*⁸⁰ She reflects as well on how a healing community looks like: *“I think the essence of a broken community is how distrust, envy, difference and individuality is nurtured. So what I see in healing communities is the reinforced channels of communication, and how trust and solidarity are becoming larger.”*⁸¹

During one of the sessions, Marco explicitly experiences humanization and shares: *“(…) To have members of the military present, allowed us to talk to them, and tell them that even though we were on opposite sides during the war, we were not monsters. We have feelings too.”*⁸² In the same session, the group was split up in smaller groups. Daniel, my research volunteer, joined a group with one ex-combatant and one woman from the army. After this, he elaborately told me how those few moments carried out the dehumanization during the war, followed by the essence of humanization processes. Specifically, the ex-combatant shared a story about a boy from his town, who always told his father that he wanted to meet a guerilla-fighter. The boy truly expected the guerilla-fighter to be a robot or an alien, and then the day the boy finally met a guerilla-fighter, he was intensely disappointed as the guerilla-fighter just turned out to be a normal human being. The women from the military reacted on this story by sharing how her grandmother was killed by the guerilla, and how that motivated her to join the army. Consequently, both of them started to understand how both of them embodied the other as the evil during the conflict. This conversation transformed into a process of humanization when the ex-combatant mentioned: *“We all have a mother, who will cry for our death”*.⁸³ Despite both being on different sides during the war, both of them started to understand that they were just as human as the other one was. What Daniel experienced entails a pure process of humanization that is fundamental to healing and rebuilding broken communities. Concludingly, recognition allows a space to become more open, and here, awareness and vulnerability can slowly enter the space, strengthening the human connections. Human beings in these spaces start to truly listen to each other, and by that, to see, hear and understand each other. It is within vulnerability, that sincere connections can be built, laying the foundation for the reparation of broken social tissues. On healed social tissues, the full spectrum of what constitutes a human being can shoot roots and thrive. Feelings of joy, love, hope, trust and laughter flower from these fruitful soils, bringing communities that once were broken even closer

⁸⁰ Maria Andrea Garcia (facilitator Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on May 17th 2022

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Marco Valencia (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on April 23rd 2022

⁸³ From Fieldnotes dated on May 21st 2022

together, to kindle processes of forgiveness, to restore a sense of solidarity, to look beyond the past labels that they carry, and finally, to see each other as a human being, just like oneself.

Sources of support: Spirituality, religion, resilience and creativity

The Bunsichari project incorporated several components rooted in spirituality. The sessions were centered around an altar holding several personal objects of the facilitator. On arrival, the participants were strikingly curious about the altar and asked many questions about it. In a later session, the participants were asked to bring one meaningful and symbolic object to add to the altar. Whilst putting these objects on the altar, many personal, intimate and touching stories were shared. Some of the stories related to the loss of loved ones, and came with a flood of sadness and tears. Tactilely, these stories moved the other participants and contributed to more closeness and connection within the group. Establishing this ritual of the altar also helped the group to remember the past and the loss the community has suffered, and in this way, contributed to acknowledging and healing a part of the collective trauma. The altar also allowed the group to communicate in symbols, and hence, to convey messages with multiple interpretations. Next to the altar, the sessions were set up in a circle, allowing a safe space to arise where the participants could meet each other, learn, share, have dialogues, as well, as strengthen their social relationships. The power of the circle was notably prominent during the session of María Andrea⁸⁴. She opened the session by instructing the attendees, including Daniel and me, to stand in a circle and to hold hands. This immediately created a strong sense of vulnerability, connection and intimacy. Particularly, everyone in the circle was reminded of our shared humanity. Palpably, this opening laid down solid foundations for the rest of the session, and subsequently, I witnessed more emotions getting discharged than in any other session.

The practices of the altar and the circle, repeatedly opened a group conversation about the subjects of spirituality and religion. In these conversations, many of the participants revealed how deeply important spirituality, but also religion, has been in their processes of healing and finding inner peace. This resonates largely with the findings from the interviews. Lilia, one of the ex-combatants participating in the Bunsichari project in Fusagasugá reflects: *"I think that when we touch the extremes, when you experience war at fullest and you know the magnitude of pain and suffering, then you realize that there must be another way of doing things. That other way is spirituality and love."*⁸⁵ Gabriela, Dunna Corpóracion's academic director, explains the role of spirituality in trauma healing: *"We are a community-oriented continent. Everything used to be solved within the community, the pain, the grief and the celebration (...). Our spirituality was based on our relationship to earth and nature (...). Our work is rooted in spirituality. That*

⁸⁴ From Fieldnotes dated on May 20th 2022

⁸⁵ Lilia de la Cruz (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on April 9th 2022

division with the spiritual world is part of the collective trauma.”⁸⁶ Viviana, from Respira Fundación, echoes this as well: “Latin-America has a lot of ancestral wisdom and spirituality, that has incredible keys for restoration and healing as well (...). If we go back to these indigenous thoughts, you have the power of the collective, you have the connection to nature, you have all the understanding to heal trauma, and what the body means in a social context (...).”⁸⁷

As mentioned earlier, spirituality can express itself in different forms of religions. Albeit that some of the participants adhered to a non-specified form of spirituality, most of them considered themselves Christian. Many of them shared with me how religion has formed the largest part in their healing process. Evelia explains how her faith healed her from her traumatic experiences: *“They took us out of our territory, we had to leave everything, my dad was dead, my stepmother got so sick, my little brother got raped, we were hungry and exploited. Then my small girl poisoned herself. It was God that gave me so much strength to survive this. The only one who can heal is God, and he has healed me for the most part. If it was not for God, I would be dead by now (...).”⁸⁸* For Carina as well, faith has played a major role in her process of healing, as she describes: *“God is the only one who can help me. Yes, I have many friends, many people around me, but they will never be enough to help me to deal with this weight. They are present, but they cannot be present for a 100%, so the only person who is truly there for me is God.”⁸⁹* Later in the interview, Carina describes how her faith supports her through the nights: *“Particularly In the nights, I connect a lot with my angels. I feel them hugging me, I know they are really there for me. Even though the pain is hard, I know they are looking out for me.”⁹⁰* Benito shares a similar experience: *“God has healed me, when no one else could do that. He is the only one who can heal the past. I would not be here if it was not for God (...). I also think that everything that has happened is not only bad. If everything that happened, would not have happened to me, I would maybe not have found God. Maybe I would have a home, a family, children, but I would not have God, and I could not live without that.”⁹¹* Camila Perez is another one of the victims of the armed conflict. Her father was forcibly disappeared and killed. Currently, she is participating as a victim in the Bunsichari project in Fusagasugá. Camila stresses as well how essential faith has been in her recovery: *“(...) My faith in God has healed everything in me, all the empty spaces that my dad left were filled by God (...). I am in a very different place now, my faith in God has made this all possible.”⁹²* Evidently, religion and spirituality may provide a great source for healing past traumatic experiences. However, it is

⁸⁶ Gabriela Martínez (academic director Dunna Corpóracion), in interview with author, dated on April 7th 2022

⁸⁷ Viviana Gamboa and Paula Andrea Ramírez (Co-directors Respira), in interview with author, dated on May 18th 2022

⁸⁸ Evelia Meléndez (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on April 8th 2022

⁸⁹ Carina Josefina (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 13th 2022

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Benito Álvarez (participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on May 19th 2022

⁹² Camila Perez participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on May 20th 2022

important to note that risks exist in leaning excessively towards religion and spirituality, as explained by Maria from Prolangar: "(...) *It makes a lot of sense that spirituality becomes a big thing, especially with religion. Because it is like, what else do you do? You need to ask for help somewhere to feel like a little bit better. And this is a complicated subject, because of course, there are groups of people that are very extreme in their beliefs when it is related to religion. So you have to be very careful in how to address this within groups of people.*"⁹³ One can also overly clutch onto religion or spirituality, and either lose oneself in this process, creating a disconnecting between the common shared reality and their own reality, or inducing a form of avoidance that bypasses the past traumatic experiences. In such a case, a traumatized person remains in a state of spirituality in which the underlying traumas remain unaddressed.

As Hook (2016) argues, spirituality and resilience are intimately interlaced. Some characteristics found in resilient people by Hook (2016), particularly selflessness, inner strength and a positive attitude, strongly resonate with what I observed in my interviewees. When I ask Camila what is necessary for the process of collective healing, she conveys this message of selflessness and positivity: "*We need to have this attitude of being available to each other. I am always available, and if I am not for a moment, I will tell them to call me later, or that I will call you back. If God brought us here to life, it has a meaning, we have a purpose, and we have to live that.*"⁹⁴ During Carina's interview, I am profoundly impressed by how extraordinarily strong, hopeful and resilient she appears when she tells me how she has dealt with her past experiences and how she is approaching life. Carina shares: "*I find shelter in helping other people. Helping them makes me happy, to see them achieve their goals, that makes me really happy. Because I am understanding their pain, and we are missing that a lot in this town. We have to help each other (...). For example, if I see an old lady who wants to have lunch, and her children cannot take her out, I will go with her to have some lunch. I really try to be present to them.*"⁹⁵ Closely linked to resilience, there is creativity, and I found the Bunsichari project participants remarkably creative, particularly when I observed them executing the various exercises of the sessions⁹⁶. Nora, for instance, showed us her bag after concluding our interview, and shared with us how she knits her thoughts and feelings into these kind of bags and how this contributes to her processes of healing⁹⁷. Thus, resilience, creativity, religion and spirituality have appeared to be mutually reinforcing and interconnected, and particularly significant to the process of healing, and hence, require thoughtfully carved spaces within processes of collective healing and peacebuilding.

⁹³ Maria Reyes (Methodologies director Fundación Prolangar), in interview with author, dated on April 26th 2022

⁹⁴ Camila Perez participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá), in interview with author, dated on May 20th 2022

⁹⁵ Carina Josefina (participant Bunsichari project Venecia), in interview with author, dated on May 13th 2022

⁹⁶ From Fieldnotes dated on April 22nd 2022

⁹⁷ From Fieldnotes dated on April 23rd 2022

Chapter conclusion

The goal of this chapter was twofold. On the one hand, it aimed to expose obstacles in the process of healing collective trauma by delving into the abundant structural problems and deprivation of human needs. Several interviewees stressed how the state is abandoning many Colombians, and how many needs are left unfulfilled. Thus, despite manifest violence has reduced somewhat over the past years, many forms of structural and cultural violence continue to exist in Colombia. In this way, the need deprivation and abundant structural problems sustain and cultivate the massive reservoir of collective trauma in Colombia. On the other hand, by scrutinizing the problematic Colombian context and how this encapsulated the war-induced collective trauma, this chapter imposed the question what constitutes peace, thereby marking a point of departure in understanding collective healing and peacebuilding. Consequently, the second part of this chapter aimed to gain a deeper understanding of trauma healing on both individual and collective levels within the Bunsichari project, built on the corner stones of *spaces*, *humanization*, and *religion and spirituality*, followed by an empirical illustration. Importantly, many interviewees referred to the interconnectedness between individual and collective healing, and reflect that both processes seem to occur simultaneously and in a mutually reinforcing way.

I identified three types of spaces, the larger spaces (e.g. museums), spaces that can arise within a conversation or dialogue and spaces within peacebuilding practices. Provided that these spaces are well-guided, safely embedded and depart from openness and awareness, various processes conducive to healing can evolve. People can finally start to sincerely listen to the other, and through reciprocity, a feeling of being heard, seen and understood can arise. Then, the spaces become a place where heavy long-carried emotions can discharge, where silenced past memories and stories gain right of existence, giving new shared collective meanings to these narratives. In this way, the collective memory becomes more inclusive and more truthful to the wider collective, and subsequently, processes of forgiveness start to unfold. Accompanied by bringing past memories and stories back, people become more vulnerable, and within this vulnerability, genuine connections start to be built and grow, slowly contributing to the repairment of the broken social tissues. Within such healing communities, a whole spectrum of human life, including love and joy, starts to flourish. Albeit people may have been on opposite sides during the conflict, these processes allow them to see each other as equal human beings. Sources that support these processes within both individuals and collectives are religion, spirituality and resilience, as these have appeared to be highly conducive to trauma healing, provided that they are directed in a prudent way, so that they do not fuel extremism or further polarization within communities. Concludingly, trauma-informed peacebuilding should centralize carving these suitable spaces that incorporate religion, spirituality and resilience, and are favorable for the outlined processes to arise.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the wake of the armed conflict, Colombia is still suffering from a colossal reservoir of collective trauma. In this thesis, I presented the cases of Venecia and Fusagasugá within the Bunsichari project of Dunna Corpóracion in the light of collective trauma, ongoing structural problems sustaining and fueling the collective trauma, and the processes of the healing of collective trauma. Throughout two chapters I have presented the corresponding theoretical foundations, followed by an analysis of the collected qualitative data to answer the following research question: *How do healing experiences of trauma-survivors participating in bottom-up trauma-informed peacebuilding initiatives promote collective healing, and subsequently, sustainable peace in Fusagasugá and Venecia in Colombia from 2016 to the present day?* In answering this research question, I aimed to, on the one hand, gain a deeper understanding of how both individual and collective trauma manifested itself in Venecia and Fusagasugá and the larger context of Colombia. On the other hand, my objective was to thoroughly understand the processes of individual and collective healing of trauma in relation to peace, and to scrutinize what is considered both obstructing and prospering towards the healing of trauma. In doing so, it soon became clear that abundant structural problems incite the collective trauma, and in this way, obstructs the path to healing and sustainable peace in Colombia. This concluding chapter reflects on the empirical findings and the broader implications of this research and will close with suggestions for further research.

Research findings

Chapter three delved into individual trauma and the larger body of collective trauma. Albeit most of my interviewees did not explicitly label their past experiences as trauma, clearly, many suffer from trauma and trauma-related symptoms, such as hypervigilance, intrusion and avoidance, and somatic complaints. Yet, many of them appeared to barely recognize trauma as such, suggesting different perceptions in trauma and/or avoidance of trauma. This symptom of avoidance was evidently present in individuals, as well, as in the collective body of the Bunsichari participants. Understanding individual trauma laid the groundwork that allowed me to step towards the collective layer of trauma. By collectively avoiding trauma, community-members of traumatized communities moved cautiously on the upper layer of social dynamics, avoiding the hidden collective trauma and the social fabric that it once broke, and that has nested itself under this layer of avoidance. In Venecia and Fusagasugá, these broken social tissues are discernable in the fragility of social dynamics and processes, weakened cultural practices and infirm social relations and networks. As demonstrated, collective trauma is stored in the collective memory which plays an essential role in the ongoing processes of shaping identities of both the victims and the ex-combatants. The process of identity formation takes place through the dynamics of recognition and attributing new meanings to memories, that I

observed starting to unfurl and transform within the Bunsichari project, denoting its significance towards healing and building peace. Drawn on the ideas of Rinker and Lawler (2018), I sought to reveal how unaddressed collective trauma continues to inflict renewed cycles of conflict through mechanisms of avoidance and silence, hypervigilance and collective fear, institutionalized structural violence and unaddressed dynamics between the oppressors and the oppressed. As Audergon argues, a traumatized collective body holds many hotspots, in which the collective trauma lives under the flimsy surface and can flare up at any moment, reverberating with several illustrations within the Colombian case. Regardless of the erratic character of these hotspots, it is precisely here that sincere conflict transformation can ignite.

Chapter four sought to, on the one hand, expose hindrances in the process of collective healing by first scrutinizing the abundant structural problems and deprivation of human needs that appeared to have enclosed the body of collective trauma, and on the other hand, to gain a more thorough understanding of trauma healing on both individual and collective level in Colombia. Several of my interviewees emphasized that the state fails to meet the needs of many Colombians. In this way, the deprivation of human needs and abundant structural problems sustain and cultivate the massive reservoir of collective trauma in Colombia. Regarding nurturing variables towards collective healing, the second part of the chapter is built on three corner stones: *spaces*, *humanization* and *religion and spirituality*, falling under the overarching framework of collective healing and trauma-informed peacebuilding. Similar to individual and collective trauma, individual and collective healing are inextricably interconnected, and hence, both appear to be mutually reinforcing. Regarding spaces, I designated three types, the larger spaces such as museums, spaces within peacebuilding practices and the spaces that find their origin in a mere dialogue or conversation. These spaces need to be safely embedded and well-guided, and depart from awareness, openness and vulnerability. Within these spaces, recognition of the trauma and the other can emerge, allowing people start to truly listen to each other, and through that, feelings of being heard, seen and understood start to emanate. Subsequently, catharsis of heavy emotions can occur, silenced memories and stories can gain right of existence, allowing new shared collective meanings to be attached to these narratives. Then, a process to humanization starts to kindle, in which one realizes that the other is just as human as oneself. Individual healing simultaneously takes places concurrently with collective healing, sincere connections can be formed, thereby repairing the broken social tissues. By allowing space for the difficult emotions, the strong positive emotions, such as joy, love and laughter, also regain space in the lives of trauma-survivors. Throughout the entire process of healing, religion, spirituality and resilience have appeared to be highly conducive to trauma healing, provided that they are conducted judiciously.

Healing Colombia's reservoir of collective trauma: paving a path to peace

So, what can we learn from the Colombian case in the larger context of collective trauma, healing and peacebuilding? First and foremost, the individual and the collective level are mutually reinforcing and strongly interconnected, denoting that individual and collective trauma and the healing from it are inextricably akin. This means that when scrutinizing collective trauma, one also needs to take individual trauma under scrutiny at the very same moment. In this thesis, I attempted to shed light on both types of trauma, yet, due to their entanglement, it appeared difficult to clearly separate them. Hence, through the empirical findings, we gained a more comprehensive image of how individual and collective trauma is embodied throughout the Colombian society, and how trauma-related symptoms are visible. Clearly, the collective body has been wounded and carries many broken social tissues, translating to a fundamental fragility in social relations and processes and cultural practices. As known, memory and knowing the truth holds a central role in trauma recovery. Despite the fact that spaces in which the past can be actively remembered do occur in Colombia, the overarching tendency appears that much of the past is still hidden away, hindering processes of discovering the truth that are essential to reconciling with the past. Silence and avoidance about the violent past uphold Colombia in a state of hypervigilance, causing it to be covered in a heavy blanket of hopelessness. Ostensibly, the emanations enunciating from the reservoir of trauma cause repeated cycles of conflict, and leaving the collective trauma unaddressed obstructs the transformation from conflict to sustainable peace. Moreover, the container of collective trauma seems to be enclosed in the abundant ongoing structural problems and need deprivation, leaving it on the one hand encapsulated, and on the other, further inciting the collective trauma. Unaddressed trauma bears the potential to be passed horizontally in vivo and through media, and vertically over generations, through neurobiological and psychological mechanisms and even through cultural processes. In this way, collective trauma gradually becomes even deeper rooted in Colombian society, and consequently, it becomes a structural problem in itself.

Suffering from continuing structural problems and having an open-ended container of collective trauma, leaves Colombia in a state of negative peace, in which structural and cultural violence continue to exist. This type of peace does not resonate with the meanings that Colombians attach to peace, as well, as how peace was described by them throughout this research. Their meanings on peace resonated strongly with Galtung's notion on positive peace. Moreover, inner peace appeared to come together with individual healing, which at its turn, has a direct influence on collective peace. To transform negative peace towards positive peace in Colombia, Colombians need to heal from their past traumatic experiences, and find their inner peace, and synchronously, this opens the path to building a state of collective, positive peace. Despite the copious structural problems existing in Colombia, this

research exposed how much healing can still take place within Colombian individuals and their communities. Most importantly, suitable spaces need to be carved throughout the Colombian society, and from these spaces a boundless array of healing processes can depart. In order to achieve this, it is required to provide knowledgeable guidance, create a sense of safety, address the healing and peacebuilding practices from bottom-up, adjust to the local and cultural context, engage with the local communities and genuinely listen to their needs and wishes. Processes of recognition, awareness, openness and vulnerability originate in these spaces, allowing long suppressed emotions to come to the surface. People start to truly listen, feel, and understand, and processes of humanization ignite, conveying the vigorous message: "the other is human too". Despite the apparent unsurmountable reservoir of collective trauma enclosed in the abundant structural problems that seem to be strenuous to solve any time soon, this research unmistakably revealed how one should not underestimate apparent small actions, as they may have unforeseeable far-reaching influence through the constant dynamics and inextricably connections between the individual and the wider structures in which the individual is embedded. Continuously endowing small pieces of effort to the healing and peacebuilding process will increasingly heal the emotional legacy that occupies the pathway to peace.

Contributions and suggestions for further research

This research departed from the body of trauma-informed literature, aiming to scrutinize individual and collective trauma, and mostly, how both these types of trauma interact with each other in post-conflict Colombia. With relatively little research conducted on collective trauma, particularly to the case of Colombia, this thesis had contributed to the existing academic debates by exploring how collective trauma manifests itself in the municipalities of Fusagasugá and Venecia and the larger context of Colombia. This was accompanied by giving voice to both victims and ex-combatants of the armed conflict, allowing them a safe space for their experiences and narratives, that in itself appeared to be healing. Moreover, this thesis enhances literature on collective trauma and conflict transformation, by integrating trauma-informed literature into the work of Rinker and Lawler, followed by a bottom-up examination of individual and collective healing. Through bringing in the illustrative cases of Venecia and Fusagasugá, the bridge between psychology and peace and conflict studies has been strengthened. In doing so, this thesis illustrates the structural complexities that Colombia is facing, encapsulating and inciting the reservoir of collective trauma. Although this thesis once again demonstrates the complexities within peacebuilding and the need for a broad-based approach concurrently targeting multiple levels, it also discloses the tenacious potential of spaces within peacebuilding. By providing refined and alternate practices regarding space, this thesis contributes to the further conceptualizations of space within peacebuilding practices.

Although this research sought to reconcile the gap between conflict transformation literature and psychology literature, the scope was limited to the municipalities of Venecia and Fusagasugá. Due to the timeframe, this research solely included the first part of the Bunsichari project and did not include all the participants of the projects. Therefore, it would be insightful to expand the timeframe of the research, including a more diverse and larger participant group, and in this way, capturing the entire project and process more comprehensively. Additionally, follow-up research on projects is recommended, as that provides insight in the actual long-term influence of peacebuilding practices on the reservoir of collective trauma. As peacebuilding projects are often only attributed a limited amount of budget, their presence in a certain territory is also limited, and follow-up engagement is commonly lacking. Hence, follow-up research would not only yield more encompassing empirical findings, but would also contribute to the continuity of such projects in these territories.

To gain a more profound understanding in how collective trauma interacts within individual trauma and how to include it in an adequate way within peacebuilding processes, requires further sophistication and widening on the notion of collective trauma in other contexts. On the one hand, it is suggested to delve deeper into the case of Colombia, and explore collective trauma in other Colombian geographical locations. On the other hand, it would be valuable to bring the scope of the research to the international context, and extending the knowledge on collective trauma in post-conflict countries other than Colombia. In this way, a comprehensive map of conceptualizations and patterns surrounding the notion of collective trauma can be evolved, contributing to a broader knowledge in the academic landscape of collective trauma and conflict transformation and strengthening the bridge between the fields of psychology and conflict transformation.

Since the field of trauma-informed peacebuilding is relatively understudied, there is limited literature existing on what exactly drives the healing of trauma within these peacebuilding practices. Albeit this research aimed to study the link between individual and collective healing, this connection needs further research, and it would be interesting to systematically take mechanisms of healing on individual and collective level under scrutiny. For that, scholars could draw upon the vast body of literature on individual healing and corresponding psychological therapies, and bring effective working mechanisms to the level of collective healing. Such research would bring scholars closer to the development of solid theories on healing and peacebuilding that could be applied in Colombia, and in contexts other than Colombia.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Topic guide for interviews of Bunsichari participants

Introduction to the interview

1. What is your name?
2. Do you consent to participating in this interview and having it recorded?
3. Am I allowed to use your name in my master thesis, or would you prefer for me to use a pseudonym?
4. Do you understand that you can decide every moment to stop the interview at any time?
5. Do you have any questions for me before we start the interview?
6. What is your occupation?
7. What is your age?
8. What is your gender?
9. What region of Colombia do you come from?
10. Where do you live now?

Core of the interview:

1. How have you experienced today? How have you experienced the sessions so far? Do you have any thoughts on it? Is there anything that you noticed?
2. What impact did these sessions have on you? Have you noticed any physical, emotional or social benefits from these sessions? Do you think these sessions contribute to building peace within yourself?
3. Do you think these sessions have influence on your family or community that you are living in? Do you think these sessions contribute to building peace within your community?
4. Can you tell me what life circumstances have brought you here (more specifically: to the Bunsichari project)? What happened in your life? How did you end up here?
5. What are your thoughts on the conflict in Colombia? What was your role during this period of conflict and violence?
6. How has the conflict affected you, your friends and family? How is the conflict still affecting you? What did it do to your body, mind, feelings, thoughts?
7. How are you dealing with this the pain, suffering and/or trauma? Do you think it is possible to heal from your past experiences?
8. What did the conflict do to the community that you are living in? How do you experience living in this community (co-existence)? For Ex-FARC combatants: How do you experience your reincorporation in this community?
9. Do you think it is possible to heal the community? What is necessary to heal the collective pain, suffering and/or trauma? What do you think that needs to happen?

10. What do you think about the peace process in Colombia? Do you think it is possible to establish peace in Colombia? What next steps do you think should be taken towards peace in Colombia? Are you doing something that helps this process?
11. What do you think the value is of creativity in peacebuilding? What do you think of creative approaches in peacebuilding, such as music, dance, yoga, visual arts and theatre? Do you think it could help in healing from individual and collective pain, suffering and/or trauma?
12. What does peace mean to you personally?

Closing of the interview

1. Is there anything else you would like to add to what you have told me in this interview? Do you have any other ideas that you want to share with me?
2. Do you have any questions for me about this process or about the research process in general?

Appendix II: List of Informants

Date	Name	Gender	Role	Platform	Language
7 April 2022	Maria Alejandra Rodriguez	Female	Project Coordinator BogotArt	In-person	English
12 April 2022	Gabriela Martinez	Female	Academic Director Dunna Corpóracion	In-person	English
22 April 2022	Evelia Meléndez	Female	Victim / Participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
22 April 2022	Lilia de la Cruz	Female	Ex-FARC combatant / Participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
23 April 2022	Marco Valencia	Male	Ex-FARC and ex-M-19 combatant / Participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
23 April 2022	Nora Pinto	Female	Victim / Participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
26 April 2022	Anonymous	Female	Employee ARN / Involved in earlier Dunna project	In-person	English
26 April 2022	Maria Reyes	Female	Methodologies director Fundación Prolangar	Microsoft Teams	English
27 April 2022	Anonymous	Male	U.N. employee	In-person	Dutch
27 April 2022	Angela Cortez	Female	Facilitator Dunna Corpóracion	In-person	English
28 April 2022	Anonymous	Male	U.N. employee	Microsoft Teams	English
11 May 2022	Ana Maria Hurtado	Female	Facilitator Dunna Corpóracion	In-person	English
11 May 2022	Anonymous	Male	U.N. Employee	In-person	English

12 May 2022	Jose Lopéz	Male	Victim / Participant Bunsichari project Venecia	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
12 May 2022	Albano Crespo	Male	Ex-FARC combatant / Participant Bunsichari project Venecia	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
13 May 2022	Carina Josefina	Female	Victim / Participant Bunsichari project Venecia	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
13 May 2022	Libertad del Olmo	Male	Ex-FARC combatant / Participant Bunsichari project Venecia	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
13 May 2022	Isa Rivero	Female	Victim / Participant Bunsichari project Venecia	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
17 May 2022	María Andrea Garcia	Female	Facilitator Dunna Corpóracion	Zoom	English
18 May 2022	Viviana Gamboa and Paula Andrea Ramírez	Female and Female	Director Respira Fundación	Zoom	English
19 May 2022	Ariel Sanchez	Female	Victim / Participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
19 May 2022	Benito Álvarez	Male	Victim / Participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
20 May 2022	Camila Perez	Female	Victim / Participant Bunsichari project Fusagasugá	In-person	Spanish / English (via translator)
24 May 2022	Alejandro Gómez	Male	Facilitator Dunna Corpóracion	Zoom	English

Appendix III: Overview of the sessions of the Bunsichari project

Sessions	Venecia	Fusagasugá	Themes of session
Session 1	1 April 2022	8 April 2022	Communication, Collaboration, Circle
Session 2	15 April 2022	22 April 2022	Stress management, Emotion Regulation, Self-knowledge, Openness
Session 3	29 April 2022	6 May 2022	Communication, Collaboration, Circle
Session 4	13 May 2022	20 May 2022	Communication, Collaboration, Circle
Session 5	27 May 2022	3 June 2022	Communication, Collaboration, Circle
Session 6	10 June 2022	17 June 2022	Openness, Creativity
Session 7	24 June 2022	1 July 2022	Stress management, Emotion Regulation, Self-knowledge, Empathy
Session 8	8 July 2022	15 July 2022	Creativity, Safety
Session 9	22 July 2022	29 July 2022	Empathy, Creativity
Session 10	5 August 2022	12 August 2022	Empathy, Creativity
Session 11	19 August 2022	26 August 2022	Creativity
Session 12	2 September 2022	9 Sept 2022	Creativity