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Cultural damage and reparation of victims in the Colombian armed conflict. The case of the black peasant community of San Cristóbal (Montes de María – Colombia)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify and analyze the cultural damage caused by the armed conflict in the black peasant community of San Cristóbal, in Montes de María, one of the regions most affected by the prolonged conflict in Colombia. A conceptual and methodological framework is proposed to address, from a interdisciplinary scope, culture in victim reparation processes, based on the systematization of the conflict effects. Thus, by synthesizing community knowledge and experience on how cultural assets and practices have been affected by violence, capability and asset planning approaches are applied to discuss how the cultural dimension of development should be incorporated into collective reparation measures that are being executed by the Colombian State. It was found that the action of armed groups affected popular feasts, traditional medicine, agriculture and community social capital in the broad sense. Hence, the reparation actions that are built under the state initiative consider the cultural dimension, for which they must directly involve the affected community and recover the social capital associated with traditional festivals, where multiple oral traditions and expressions, music, dance and communication were severely damaged for more than two decades of armed disputes in the area.

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Armed conflict; cultural damage; cultural dimension of development; rural development; capabilities; cultural assets

1. Introduction

Victims' reparation is one of the greatest challenges of the territorial peace building process promoted by the Colombian State. In Montes de María, a subregion in northern Colombia that encompasses 15 municipalities¹ extend in 2677 km², the conflict generated not only a notorious forced population displacement, but also a severe social and productive deactivation that reduced the quality of life of populations (Alvis, 2017; Arrieta, 2019). With the implementation of Law 1448 of 2011 (known as the Victims and Land Restitution Law, LRVRT, for its acronym in Spanish) and its regulatory standards, and more recently on the occasion of the signing of the Havana Agreement (in 2016) with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC, for its acronym in Spanish), a space has been

opened for a better understanding of the multiple dimensions that this repair should incorporate.

This research work is set in the realm of the relation between development and culture. This entails, first of all, recognizing the value from the contributions of culture to human development, not only to support processes of symbolic and material reparation, but also as an asset related to other dimensions of community life. Secondly, it implies making visible and promoting the empowerment of the communities that need to be repaired by the State and by individuals, considering the fact that the armed conflict and its devastating effects occurred in specific cultural environments.

Addressing this issue requires understanding a set of conceptual references and practices suggested in the regulatory framework, in order to give contents and praxis to the recognition and compensation of the victims of the armed conflict. In this sense, the LRVRT establishes that the measures for prevention, attention, assistance, integral reparation and restitution of lands and territories for the communities 'will be designed jointly and in accordance with their ethnic and cultural characteristics, thus guaranteeing the right to cultural identity, autonomy, own rights, material equality and the guarantee of physical and cultural survival' (art. 1).

This aspect – ethnic and cultural characteristics – is partially corrected with the development of the LRVRT, Decree Law 4635/2011, which incorporates the cultural dimension mainly through the category of *damage to cultural integrity*. The damage is manifested 'in the loss or deterioration of the capability for cultural reproduction and the intergenerational conservation and transmission of their identity or the impossibility of developing and transmitting their ancestral knowledge' (art. 8). This damage can acquire nuances of *collective cultural ethnic damage* when 'territorial rights, cultural and symbolic heritage of communities, original forms of organization, production and representation are compromised, as well as the material and symbolic elements on which the cultural ethnic identity is based' (ibid.).

Conceptually, this cultural vision is unaware of the starting point of communities as victims of conflict, the different levels of social functioning required for capability deployment, and community resources to meet their needs and envision the type of life they want. Besides, it avoids the connections between the cultural dimension and other facets of development that, like the economic one, predominate in the reparation measures implemented. In general, this vision places little emphasis on cultural life as an expression of cultural freedoms, and on cultural assets and practices as resources and mechanisms for the preservation of life and memory, the promotion of development and well-being in communities.

As for methodology, following the provisions of the aforementioned Law, the National Center for Historical Memory (CNMH, for its acronym in Spanish) – created to contribute to the integral reparation and the right to the truth of the victims- proposes a roadmap to identify material and immaterial damages caused by war. However, this approach lacks tools as well as methodological strategies to determine the nature (and not just the identification) of the damage, the degree of risk and vulnerability of cultural rights and assets, and especially, the connection of cultural features with other aspects of community development. A broader approach is then required to document how violent actions depreciated assets and practices (cultural and other kinds), and how, against these, communities adopted strategies to address them (L+iD, 2015; Moser & Stein, 2014).

The objective of the study is to identify and analyze the cultural damage caused by the armed conflict in San Cristóbal, in the Montes de María subregion, where the State currently implements eight collective reparation processes, one of them in this community of Afro-descendant peasants who suffered the presence of armed actors in their territory since the 80's. A conceptual and methodological framework is proposed to interdisciplinary address culture in victim reparation processes. Capability and asset planning approaches are applied to discuss how the cultural dimension of development should be incorporated into collective reparation measures which are currently carried out in this community.

The study provides, on the one hand, a contextualized analysis of the LRVRT, and on the other, methodological inputs to improve the implementation of the actions to which LRVRT obliges. These two elements can contribute -from the methodological perspective- to the process of integral reparation of the victims of the armed conflict.

In the section that follows this introduction, the conceptual references and the review of the literature related to this study are presented. In the third section, the fundamentals and the methodological strategy applied to identify the cultural damage caused by the armed conflict are raised; in the fourth section the results of the investigation are exposed, and in the last one the main findings are discussed and the conclusions are presented.

2. Literature review

2.1. Culture, development and reparation of victims

This paper addresses the damage generated by the armed conflict and its effects on human development, using the conceptual references of capabilities and rights. To articulate them, the cultural approach to development is used, which deals with cultural assets and rights, and dialogues with the conceptualization of reparation, transitional justice and public reparation policies.

The cultural approach to development values the cultural dimension of development and the different contributions of culture to the generation of human capabilities and opportunities. It suggests that development is a contextualized process, built at different levels, that takes place primarily at the local level and deals with the realizations of people (Espinosa, 2017). Likewise, it proposes to defend their right to decide and select their own cultural needs, according to their values and principles, in a facilitating environment that respects cultural diversity and freedom. It implies being able to choose the type of cultural life that is desired, which becomes a fundamental capability/freedom (Martínez, 2013).

According to Barreiro (2013), cultural rights are no less traditional than civil and political rights; On the contrary, they have always been part of human rights. Under the notion of rights as freedoms to choose and express identities, it could be noted that the study's attention is directed to determine the way in which the cultural life of the inhabitants of San Cristóbal was affected as a result of the actions of armed actors (Meyer-Bisch, 2009).

Cultural life is defined as 'the first level of social functioning of a community, a society or a State where people share any type of expression, creative phenomenon, shared

memory and ways of life' (Martinell, 2013, p. 30), so that violent actions not only presuppose a material but also symbolic affectation of the communities.

In this sense, the cultural life affected by the Colombian armed conflict can be framed in the relationship between cultural rights and human development. The armed conflict as an expression of the lack of freedom, involves the ability to access both cultural references and the resources required for their identification.

2.2. The armed conflict and cultural practices

International evidence shows how violent groups affect not only heritage (Brosché et al., 2017) but also cultural practices in armed conflicts, with ethnic communities being severely affected. In Mali the rebels banned traditional women's hairstyles; in Nepal feasts and festivals were affected, while witch wedding celebrations, dances and songs were suspended (Mouly & Giménez, 2017). In Guatemala, the military regime repressed the population, affecting the cultural dynamics of the Q'eqchi 'communities, whose social, symbolic and material world succumbed to the violence (Flores, 2004). However, in post-conflict period these practices constituted means of reparation, as in Burundi and Rwanda, where cultural cohesion and unity were relevant for policies of territorial peace's construction policies (Vandeginste, 2014).

From an historical perspective, the transformations and losses suffered by Afro-Colombians due the armed conflict have increased the complexity and degree of exclusion of these communities. For centuries, their territorial domains were denied and their demographic, cultural and historical presence was hidden (Arocha, 1998). Although the conflict in Colombia significantly altered land ownership and use, the damage is also reflected in the abrupt change in their relations with the territory, which constitutes the basis of their existence as collective subjects (CNMH, 2013). In addition to the damage to its production and normative systems, the interruption of key learning for social performance, and the large disappearance of members of its community, armed violence negatively affected cultural practices.

The CNMH describes this set of events as socio-cultural damages and defines them as 'the injuries and alterations produced in the bonds and social relations'. Additionally, it states that the aggressions 'include the violation of the beliefs, social practices and ways of life of the communities'. The damages collectively affect the communities and result from the explicit prohibition or the impediment and the difficulties that they and their members experienced in maintaining their relationships, links and exchanges. According to the CNMH, these actions affected the dynamics of group and collective identity construction (CNMH, 2013, pp. 36–37).

The CNHM has ample evidence on the effects of the armed conflict, however the cases of sociocultural damage that it analyzes are scarce (Table 1). One of these, in northern Colombia, occurred in the Montes de María subregion, in the community of El Salado (in the municipality of El Carmen de Bolívar), where one of the most heinous massacres was executed during the year 2000 amid the conflict: in less than five days 60 people were killed by about 450 paramilitaries. There the most affected daily practices were music and the party. El Salado became a silent town and the survivors 'denote the inability or difficulty of the people to recover and express their joy' (CNHM, 2009, p. 159).

Table 1. Armed actions in the conflict and cultural damage caused.

Cases	Characteristics of the victimizing fact	Assets affected	Affected cultural assets	Collective reparations process
Bojayá (Chocó)	<p>Typified as massacre. 98 people murdered between April 20 and May 7, 2002, in clashes between FARC and AUC. It subsequently triggered forced displacement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households Church Streets and alleys of the local community. Schools Loss of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rites and customs. Prohibition of mortuary rites (wakes, novenas, praises, prayers, flatterers, gualí and responsory). Hunting and Fishing. Restriction of hunting due to the 'selva adentro' clashes. Farming. Restriction of access and circulation of food. Loss and theft of crops. Social capital. Murder of leaders, midwives and singers. Modification in collective social relations: fragmentation of family nuclei and kinship networks. Death of the elderly. Changes in organizational dynamics and traditional forms of leadership. Communication. Restriction of open and spontaneous communication. Territory. Injury to territorial autonomy. Limitation of mobility by the river. Modification in territorial relations. 	<p>Comprehensive collective reparation plan. Does not specify strategy per affected asset.</p>
El Salado (Bolívar)	<p>Massacre perpetrated by 450 paramilitaries, which occurred between February 16 and 21, 2000. It also reports episodes of sexual violence against women. It was characterized by violence and terror exhibition strategies generating forced displacement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disappearance of paths Households. Loss of household godos Loss of animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rites and customs. Associated with the parties (parties of corralejas, cockfights. Football championships. Popular dances, parties of San Juan, patron saint festivities of the Virgen del Rosario) and music. Cultural accesses. Alteration in access and enjoyment of sociocultural spaces. Social capital. Annihilation of community leaderships. 	<p>Comprehensive repair plan. Strategies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The formation of the community organization 'Mujeres Unidas de El Salado'. Recovery plan for the patron saint festivities of the Virgen del Rosario, supported by community actions since October 2005. In 2009, they recovered the festivities of San Juan. Plan for the rehabilitation of public space through the itinerant cinema club of the XXI Century Communications Collective of El Carmen de Bolívar.
San Carlos (Antioquia)	<p>Mass exodus: forced displacement of approximately 20,000 people. 33</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of crops and planting. Cattle theft. Looting of houses and community stores. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rites and customs. Associated to religious practices and celebrations (Christmas) and Water Festival. Cultural accesses. Alteration in access and enjoyment of public spaces through curfew. 	<p>Comprehensive collective reparation plan. Does not specify strategy per affected asset.</p>

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Cases	Characteristics of the victimizing fact	Assets affected	Affected cultural assets	Collective reparations process
El Tigre (Putumayo)	<p>massacres that caused 215 victims. 126 selective killings. 156 forced disappearances. 78 people affected by mines.</p> <p>In general, civilian population affected by eviction, extortion and armed incursions.</p> <p>Massacre perpetrated by the AUC on January 9, 1999, left 28 victims and 14 missing. It produced forced displacement, selective killings and scenarios of sexual violence during the period that this community was affected by the conflict (1997–2008).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of solidary economy alternatives (fish ponds, small panelists, marraneras, etc.) Loss of land, equipment, housing, animals. Damage to local infrastructure (bridges, roads, schools, hospital). Loss of the municipal tax collection capability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affectation to productive practices. Loss of household goods. Housing destruction. 	<p>Restriction of the use of spaces such as the river, the reservoir and the creeks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social capital. Affectation in relations of solidarity and trust. Affectation to leadership, organizational dynamics and political bets. Change in family structure. 	<p>Comprehensive collective reparations plan. Does not specify strategy per affected asset.</p>

Source: own elaboration based on CNMH, different years.

For 2010, the massacre of the black population of Bojayá (Chocó, on the Pacific coast, western Colombia), which occurred on May 2, 2002, is documented. About 80 people died, after FARC guerrillas launched a bomb against the church of the town where the population took refuge, during a confrontation with paramilitaries (CNMH, 2011a). The recognition as an ethnic group, linked to indigenous cultural patterns, with their history and identities, received the impact of violent acts. An example of this is that in the black communities of the Pacific, women are the center of the family structure, many of them 'were midwives, singers and community leaders; and their death has meant remembering them with nostalgia, and therefore the impact of these sociocultural damages is greater' (CNMH, 2010, p. 95).

Finally, the CNMH addresses two processes of communities affected by the armed conflict in the south of the country, in the urban area of the El Tigre Police Inspection, in the lower part of Putumayo (Guamuéz Valley), and in the Antioquia East, in the municipality of San Carlos (department of Antioquia).

The damages were evidenced in the paralysis of certain religious and festive practices. According to the CNMH, the effects were collective and altered social relations (neighborliness, respect), collective values and practices (rites, celebrations) and basic social structures (authorities, social groups, belonging). There the festivities of Black and White traditions ceased to be celebrated and the residents avoided public meeting spaces: the river, the park, the school and the marketplace (Table 1). Unlike the other investigations carried out by the CNMH, this, in particular, does not delve into the network of damages and cultural impacts; on the contrary, it leaves gaps that prevent understanding aspects of the social and cultural dynamics of this locality.

In the Antioquia East (in the center of Colombia), cultural damage was generated, on the one hand, in the inability to return to certain places or to attend some religious celebrations; an effect that arises 'in the field of certainties of protection and well-being that results from the spiritual dimension and faith' (CNMH, 2011b, pp. 250–251). And, on the other hand, in traditional practices around the Fiestas del Agua, the most representative of the community.

From this research exploration, common points can be identified: the first, in these stories, victims mention the destruction or loss of meeting spaces and dynamics, associated with parties, celebrations, commemorations and other activities of collective life. Also, they highlight the loss of jobs in production and exchange activities, due to the interruption of agricultural work and economic activities resulting from war. The second, the logic of the conflict imposed distrust, silence and isolation, and deteriorated fundamental social values such as solidarity and participation, which guarantee security, personal development and are fundamental for coexistence and social cohesion.

This inventory of cultural activities and expressions that constitute cultural life tends to separate cultural damage from other dimensions of human development; In addition, it takes communities as mere subjects receiving the damage, deepening little in their reaction to conflict. This suggests for dimensioning the incidence of the conflict and broadening the community's vision of the damage, motivating the comprehensive approach to cultural assets and rights for the victims' reparation processes.

3. Methodology

The methodology that is applied is aimed at documenting the damage through a cultural approach to development, which proposes that culture, in all its expressions and dimensions, is an area of social and political life with a wide potential for direct and indirect impact on development (Martinell, 2013). From a practical point of view, this route was complemented by the methodology proposed by the assets approach proposed by Moser and Stein (2011), adapted to perform a participatory evaluation of cultural assets.

This methodology seeks to: (i) identify the main impacts, opportunities, resources, capabilities and strategies of cultural assets that the community possesses; (ii) identify external organizations with direct or indirect influence on the conditions of accumulation, reconstruction or adaptation (preservation) of these assets, and (iii) identify the way in which communities have been affected by the conflict, how they have adapted their cultural assets and what strategies they have adopted for their preservation and protection. In addition, this approach aims to identify opportunities for affected groups to strengthen, accumulate, rebuild and adapt the broad and complex portfolio of assets they own and have transmitted for generations (Moser & Stein, 2011).

The study was attended by 50 members of the community – out of a total of 350 – of San Cristóbal, during 16 months that took the investigation. In the participatory sessions the members of the Community Council, the Community Action Board and other actors of the territory contributed. A sample was applied according to the distribution of criteria by gender, age group and social actors.

The selection and application of the approach provides a definition of cultural assets that is not exclusive to social capital (Moser & Stein, 2011), that is, it adds the notion of culture as expressiveness and creativity. Therefore, it is proposed to broaden the concept of cultural assets, defining them as a set of material and intangible resources that may be appropriated by individuals and collectivities, strengthening their identities and recognition as culturally differentiated groups. Cultural assets combine with each other and integrate with others to generate autonomy in the choice of the type of life that people want and create a collective sense of well-being and solidarity. Likewise, they allow us to face risk and vulnerability, and intervene in the configuration of contexts, helping to adapt, protect and reproduce cultural resources or other nature (L+iD, 2015).

The phases of the work are shown in Figure 1. It begins with the approach to the community and its involvement. The first techniques are aimed at identifying the cultural assets of the community and locating their impact on a timeline, determined in turn by the milestones of armed actions in the territory. In this phase, the application of techniques such as the general data matrix was decisive, with which a focus group of community leaders directly generated information about their history and their present. Similarly, participatory mapping, prepared by a mixed group of leaders and people in the community with the objective of identifying the spatial characteristics and the location of cultural assets in the territory, and other assets of the population.

The methodology not only aims to identify cultural damage, but to document the set of vulnerabilities and adaptation strategies based on cultural assets. The methodology has the advantage of connecting armed actions with the affected cultural assets in a single

analytical field, constructing a vulnerability matrix of cultural assets and a causal flow chart to identify the nature of the damage caused according to the asset and population group affected.

Finally, given that these additional costs of violent confrontation between armed groups are rarely taken into account in the analysis of reparation processes, the methodology aims to incorporate them into the construction of localized visions of human development. In our case, this is achieved through solutions and prioritization matrices that allow for proper asset planning. In addition to the participatory workshops, the in-depth interview method was used. This individual technique was applied to leaders and key cultural actors in the territory to investigate with greater depth and precision relevant aspects on the topics analyzed in the workshops.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. San Cristóbal: history and context

The corregimiento of San Cristóbal is located in the Caribbean region, north of Colombia. It is part of the municipality of San Jacinto, in the department of Bolívar, one of the 15 municipalities that make up the subregion of Montes de María. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), in 2016 San Jacinto had 21,570 inhabitants, of which 1.6% resided in San Cristóbal. San Cristóbal occupies about 707 hectares of the rural area of San Jacinto, which covers 44,200 hectares (Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos, 2013).

San Cristóbal has 314 inhabitants (55% men and 45% women), less than half of what it had before the forced displacement due to the armed conflict. 96% of the population recognizes themselves as Afro-descendants. More than half (53.2%) of

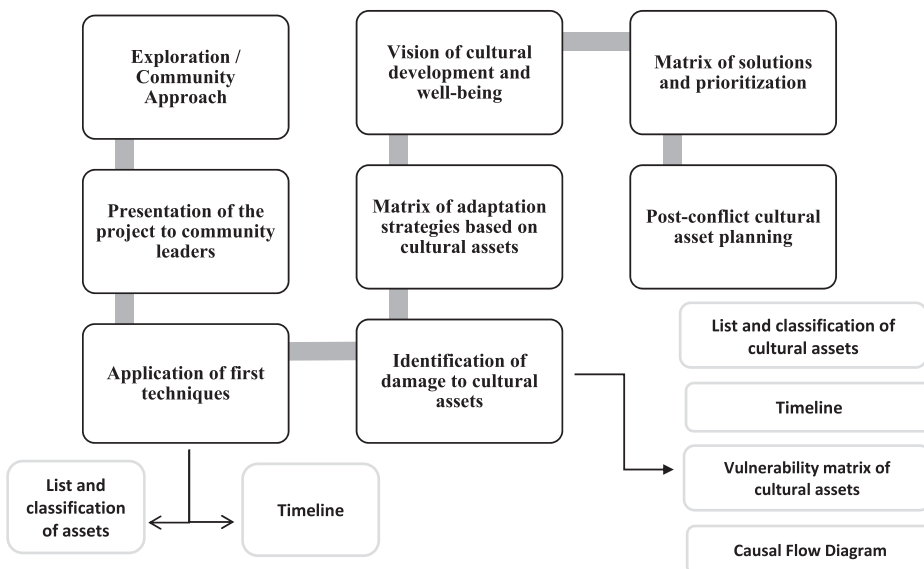


Figure 1. Methodological scheme for participatory evaluation of cultural assets. Source: own elaboration based on Moser and Stein (2014).

the population is young (0–24 years old) and has a high level of illiteracy (38.5% of the population over 15 years old) and school absence (44.3% do not study). The conditions of material poverty in the locality are reflected in the quality of housing and access to household water and sewerage services. The lack of infrastructure in the provision of sanitation forces its inhabitants to use alternative means to meet their needs, which implies health risks (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana and Community Council José Eladio Ariza, 2013).

The community is located in the area of influence of the Playón dam, which occupies about 19,000 hectares, forming an irrigation district of the neighboring municipality of Maríalabaja. The access to the water of this dam for consumption and activities such as agriculture and fishing represents today a point of maximum tension for the communities of its area of influence such as San Cristóbal. In fact, in the last 15 years the monoculture of oil palm has displaced the production of vital crops such as irrigation rice, beans, guava and mango (Arrieta, 2019; Arrieta et al., 2016).

One of the most relevant cultural and environmental assets identified by the community is Cerro Capiro, which the community protects. On the hill they carry out the most representative economic activities thanks to the agroecological conditions of their soil; freshness and oxygenation favor the development of crops such as yams, corn, avocado, bananas, cassava and sapodilla, among others, that do not grow or can be sown successfully in the lower part of the territory.

4.2. The armed conflict and cultural damage in San Cristóbal

The most notorious impacts of the armed conflict on the territory are evidenced by a reduction close to 50% of its population. At the beginning of the 80s, the population of San Cristóbal was almost 700 inhabitants, but since 1987 the military activity between the illegal armed groups (guerrillas and paramilitaries) and the Military Forces intensifies, displacing 70% of the population (Arroyo Landero et al., 2016).

The massive displacements occurred in two periods: between 1987 and 1995, with flows towards the town center of the district; and during 1999–2004, when the mass expulsion of population to nearby municipalities and cities such as Cartagena and Barranquilla occurred. This was the period of greatest violence and fear in San Cristóbal (Figure 2). The conflict produced changes of different orders in the locality. In its economy, the main activities affected were agriculture, fishing, handicrafts, cattle raising, hunting and traditional medicine. The presence of armed groups during the conflict and, more recently, pollution caused by palm crops and the construction of dams has limited the performance of these activities (Arroyo Landero et al., 2016).

In San Cristóbal, about 720 hectares of land are in use, 87% are owned and 8% leased. 18% of its total goes to crops (corn, plantain, yam and avocado, etc.), 21% to pastures (livestock), and 61% are stubble land, without any exploitation. In addition to these activities, others such as handicrafts, hunting and fishing are carried out. The effects of the conflict on the economy were also reflected in the reduction of income generation opportunities. 85.2% of people receive less than half of a monthly minimum wage (US 86.6) and only 3.7% earn income above 2.5 Colombian minimum wages, equivalent to US 288.8 per month (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana and José Community Council Eladio Ariza, 2013).

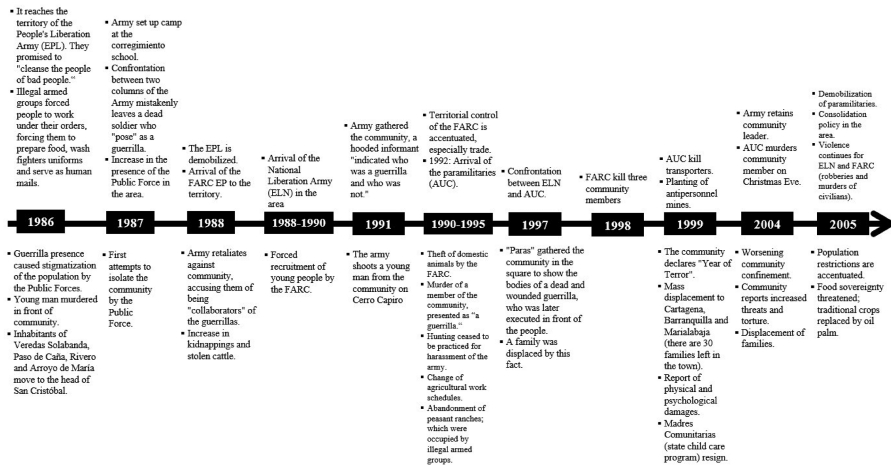


Figure 2. Timeline of victimizing events in San Cristóbal. Source: own elaboration based on community interviews, Eladio Ariza Community Council of San Cristóbal and Defensoría del Pueblo (Bolívar).

... we had to stop working in the way we worked, we had to be in the house more concealed, we stopped going to the mountain as we did before, we stopped taking the children to the mountain, sometimes we used to take them to accompany us there. These people would come and say, "Do you hear what they are doing here?" Then we would tell them that we were working our crops, cassava, rice, corn, yam, banana and stuff. Then they would tell us: "Well, we give you two hours to vacate" ... There were times when we were running out of provisions and I had to go up there to the Capiro to seek some while my partner was working elsewhere. When I got up there to the land, I got afraid and thought, I'm going to find those people around here on the road and I'm going to have to go back, while regretting that I had no food in the house (Nancy, 2016)

The armed conflict caused effects on cultural life in San Cristóbal. The analysis of the cultural assets approach values the cultural damage caused and offers valuable information to design actions within the framework of the current collective reparation plan for that locality. However, its descriptive nature limits the interpretative scope, so the interrelation of the cultural assets of the territory with other community assets must be sought. In this way, with the prioritization of cultural assets affected by the conflict, it is possible to start defining an intervention route in San Cristóbal to support its collective reparation plan.

The analysis of cultural assets identified and prioritized by the community shows that four of these, with their respective assets and associated resources, have been the most affected: (1) traditional festivals, (2) traditional medicine; (3) agriculture; and (4) social capital. Figure 3 identifies these assets and includes the involvement of the armed conflict.

The cultural and related damage caused by the armed conflict in San Cristóbal is reflected not only in the decline in cultural practice but also in what the population calls a 'temporary crisis' to enjoy cultural and social life. However, the population tried to maintain a cultural scenario of community interaction so as not to lose the relationship with its history, and to reactivate the identity processes and the economy of the region.

In everyday life, the presence of armed groups altered the dynamics of agricultural activities. According to Ariza,

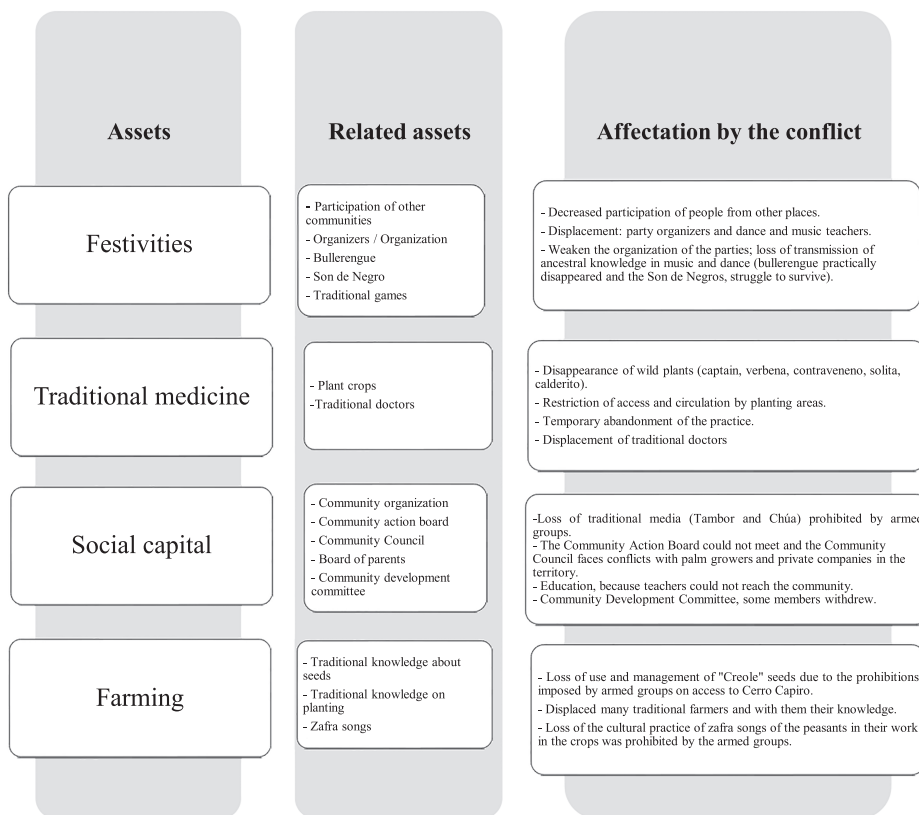


Figure 3. Vulnerabilities of cultural assets prioritized by the community of San Cristóbal. Source: Own elaboration based on a workshop with the community. Field visit (October 31/2016).

Note: non-prioritized assets were: Oral tradition; Myths and legends; Rites, customs and games; Spaces and places; Gastronomy; and hunting and fishing.

the processes of territorial invasion and 'argued' violence can be defined not only as an intentional social representation that affects the physical territory, trying to cover the space of the other, but as a series of behaviors generated by facts and actions that they compromise the culture and knowledge of a community. (Ariza, 2016, p. 25)

San Cristóbal does not deviate from this logic: the violence generated by these groups caused effects on the behavior of the population and their culture.

This happened with practices such as agriculture. In San Cristóbal, agriculture contains experiential knowledge, historical planting practices transmitted by generations that also dialogue with the cycles of nature (rainy seasons, drought periods, harvest times, among others) and with other practices associated with environmental care. Likewise, it is closely linked to the development and maintenance of related cultural practices, such as the chanting of crops – seedling rhymes – of the community and establishes modes and devices of interaction between the members of the community.

There were times when one arrived at work and met with the armed actors, many times they were very close to the crops and this gave us a lot of fear to get there. I was one of the most affected, at that time there were paramilitaries here on Capiro hill, I was one of the ones that sowed the most, I had about 7,000 plants, a great amount of seeds without starting and I could

never do it. That affected us because I had to leave everything thrown, ‘they wanted to use us to run errands (carry messages or perform tasks) from there to the community. (Ariza, 2016)

4.3. Adaptation of cultural assets

Given the cultural damage caused by the armed conflict, the community adapted its cultural assets to the new circumstances generated by the presence of armed actors. In this

Table 2. Adaptation of cultural assets prioritized by the community of San Cristóbal

Cultural assets	Before	During	After
Festivities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Community Action Board (JAC) organized the party; collected money among the community to finance it; People came from other places. Bullerengue and Son de Negros groups from the community participated. Games were organized in the town square. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only invitations were made internally (locally). Few visitors. Groups of bullerengues and Son de Negros do not participate; many moved. The games were in front of the houses during the day. But many of these leaders moved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Council and the JAC organize the party. Management before municipal mayor and external people are invited. The Bullerengue practically disappeared. There is effort to recover Son de Negros. Teachers and JAC, organize games for recovery.
Traditional medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plants were kept in the houses and were obtained in the Capiro Hill with freedom and without risk. Chemical-free plants. Traditional doctors freely exercised their practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They stored plants in their homes; and planted in the yards. They replace distant plants with others closer to their homes. Abstinence (although within the community they continued to practice, especially to care for family members). Displaced doctors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater mobility through the territory. Fear has subsided and tranquility has returned. Less number of traditional doctors.
Social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the community met to solve problems related to their locality (JAC, Board of Parents, Community Development Committee). There was no Eladio Ariza Community Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings of any kind were suspended, for fear of being considered ‘risk’ by armed groups in the territory. JAC meetings were suspended, no session from 1999 to 2004. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Eladio Ariza Community Council was established for the defense of ancestral territory. The JAC has been reorganized, meetings are held. Teachers attend their classes, there is no fear. Only road problems (access) sometimes hinder school activities.
Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transmission of knowledge about seeds from generation to generation. Selection and protection of ‘Creole’ seed to renew crops. Territory as a place of planting and interaction, meeting, cooperation and sharing of people. Example of this: The Capiro Hill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of important ancestral knowledge and seed preservation (due to displacement). Limited schedule imposed by armed groups to attend their crops. Few do crop activity. Some kept ‘Creole’ seeds to preserve them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under the use of ‘Creole’ seed, there are legal restrictions. Defense of the territory (Eladio Ariza Community Council since 2008). Few who follow the tradition; harvest song has been lost. Expansion of monocultures of oil palm, and pineapple, with pollution effects (air, soil and water).

Source: Own elaboration based on a workshop with the community. Field visit (October 31/2016).

way, their forms of organization, the elements that constitute it and even their social meanings were modified during and after the conflict. Table 2 shows the different strategies for adaptation, reconstruction, administration and rearrangement of cultural assets developed by the community before, during and after the strongest period of the conflict, in order to mitigate their effects and regain control over them.

In the first place, the community was able to adapt the festivities to the damage caused by the conflict, in particular, to the permanent presence of armed actors. The schedules and modalities of celebration were adjusted to avoid the disappearance of the celebration. The strategy evidenced the level of management and defense of community cultural assets against adverse events. According to the community, a vital action to recover cultural life will be the revitalization of its popular-religious celebration linked to its patron saint San Cristóbal, and in particular to the practice of the *Son de Negro* – musical air that combines song and dance – and the expressiveness.

It should be stressed that, during the armed conflict, particularly during the second stage of displacement (1999–2004), the locality underwent an accelerated process of transformation of its natural ecosystems that resulted in the loss or decrease of biodiversity in flora, the consolidation of business monocultures and the use of agrochemicals for their production. These facts played an important role in the affirmation of the damage and in the strategies of adaptation indicated.

Secondly, after the presence of the actors in the conflict, the silencing of medical practice contributed to the ignorance of its strategic potential for the maintenance of collective well-being. Due to the cultural damages caused to traditional medicine, the bearers adopted a series of silent resistance strategies during the conflict, displacing the conservation work of medicinal plants and their replacement to home yards. In order to face the risk and the diseases, they changed the species that grew in places far from the urban center – where the armed actors reduced the circulation – by closer species. In sum, the presence of armed actors managed to silence the practice and self-recognition, but did not prevent the care of medicinal plants.

After the conflict, these tactics allowed traditional doctors to maintain interest in the activity and expand the number of plantations in areas such as Capiro hill (Castellar, 2016; Barrios, 2016). Modifications in the practice of traditional medicine reflect the agency capability of traditional knowledge bearers and the resilience of this cultural asset and its related resources in the face of imminent situations of risk and vulnerability.

Thirdly, the community recognizes the importance of social capital in the repair of cultural damage. The intervention of the community organizations of San Cristóbal will be key to facilitate the restoration of community bonds of trust and cooperation, which will depend on the strength of these organizations and the willingness to participate in matters that concern the common welfare, a relationship consistent with the one raised by Hanifan since 1916, and by Wallis, Killerby & Dollery in 2004, authors cited by Forni et al. (2004, p. 2).

In this sense, the cultural damage in the social capital caused by the violence of the conflict is assimilated to the breakdown of trust and community cooperation that prevents the management of collective processes of a cultural, economic and social nature. In San Cristóbal, social relations, social networks of mutual support, dialogue around the activity of the crop, were truncated, as well as communicative resources such as *chúa* – a horn used to convene meetings and promote trade between

neighboring communities – that facilitated these relationships. These effects were reflected in the loss of the harvest songs and the traditional knowledge of planting, which in a space like Cerro Capiro, of high symbolic community significance, affected the cultural life of the community. As armed groups restricted access to various areas of the territory, expressiveness, communication and creation were affected, just to name a few aspects of cultural life.

The effects on the agricultural activity not only damaged the family economy after the appropriation of land and displacement, impacting food security, but also reduced its importance as a space for expressiveness and creativity with cultural assets such as zafra singing, transmission of knowledge and cultivation techniques.

5. Conclusions

Although the literature on the impacts of armed conflict on ethnic territories is broad and varied, it's generally focused on the consequences of war on people's lives and the economic dynamics in territories. This study shows how in the Afro-descendant peasant communities armed conflict also affected cultural life, and damaged cultural assets and resources closely linked to production processes, the environment, health and, in general, the well-being of its members. The study contributes to the literature in two ways; in a practical sense, insofar as it validates and proposes a route path to follow in order to identify the damage in ethnic communities and the subsequent construction of collective reparation plans; and in the sense of community empowerment, since it offers inputs for a more holistic and inclusive construction of the truth that governments and territories are currently building.

According to this research, the armed conflict not only affected cultural life but also a significant set of cultural assets in San Cristóbal, among which the patronal feast, music, dance and oral tradition stand out. In the same way, it deactivated the economy (especially agriculture and fishing), traditional medicine and social capital (self-esteem and mistrust, social networks and communication resources), and with them, a set of related assets whose damages and adaptations were documented by the community.

The community of San Cristóbal deployed a set of strategies for the protection, transformation and conservation of its cultural assets against the armed conflict. This paper helps to make these strategies visible and proposes that they should be included in the interventions carried out in the territory for their human development. Also enriches the existing methodological framework for identification of cultural damage in reparation processes and invites reflection on the current approach to cultural damage repair policies.

This conclusion is then presented to validate the cultural approach to development as a conceptual framework and the approach to cultural assets as a methodological route of action. However, the challenge in the immediate future is to insert the experience and learning of the community of San Cristóbal onto the construction and management of the Repair Plan that they are currently building with various State agencies. The task is complex since, as it has been shown, there are close connections between the cultural assets of the community with other essential assets to dignify the lives of its inhabitants, as with the economic ones (labor force and productive assets such as land and financing).

Another level of this work's results is observed at the impacts generated by its completion, which can be classified into two fronts:

First, in the community of San Cristóbal: this work identified cultural and related capabilities and assets that should be strengthened with a view to the collective reparation process of the San Cristóbal community, and identified what type of actions should be promoted to strengthen the individual and collective agency. This was achieved through the participatory construction of a diagnosis and the use of the results of the work which are qualified instruments of social and political negotiation of this community.

And second, considering the information made available to decision makers at the municipal (San Jacinto) and departmental (Bolívar) levels. With the results of the work, an action framework is offered for governments and local, regional and national actors on how to incorporate culture into victim reparation processes, particularly in communities that have been recognized as victims by the State and that initiate construction of repair plans as it happens with San Cristóbal.

Note

1. Seven of these municipalities are located in the Department of Bolívar and eight in the Department of Sucre. In Bolívar these are: San Juan Nepomuceno, Carmen de Bolívar, San Jacinto, Zambrano, El Guamo, Marialabaja and Córdoba. In Sucre: Ovejas, Los Palmitos, Morroa, Colosó, Chalán, Toluviejo, San Onofre and San Antonio de Palmito.

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