

# Reconciliation as social pedagogy: restrictive and alternative models to deal with past and present injustices

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## *Introduction*

The practice and theory of social change and the transformation of structures of violence, inequality and injustice, are full of powerful ideas. When societies commit to deal with past and present wrongs, a number of key concepts are discussed in legal and social arenas. Terms such as conflict resolution, reparation, or reconciliation, are often used to sign the beginning, the conditions and the results of new social pacts. Those ideas are deployed through sophisticated policy tools for planned social change and in instruments for planning, accountability and evaluation. These technologies for change are translated and reproduced globally by international organizations, state institutions and social mobilizations. Dealing with past and present injustices is a complex machinery of discourses and practices.

In these complexities, reconciliation is one of the most elusive and contested ideas, Reconciliation has several meanings and is applied through a disparate set of practices in countries recovering from socio-political conflicts and violence. In some cases, such as South Africa or Northern Ireland, religion played an important role in the meanings given to reconciliation. There, reconciliation was interpreted in terms of truth-telling and healing through forgiveness. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was the laboratory in which several methodologies for reconciliation, memory and truth-telling were tested and later on exported globally, becoming a template for national reconciliation processes. In other cases, reconciliation comes associated with reintegration of illegal armed actors, legal truth-telling mechanisms and a focus on the rights of victims as in Colombia.

Reconciliation has been also applied in countries not often pictured in accounts of socio-political conflict. In Australia, reconciliation is associated with injustices against Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islanders and Pacific Islanders that were embedded in the racial, gender and sexual order imposed by colonisation. There, reconciliation intends to rebuild relation-

ships, promote respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The politics of apologies have been a key instrument for reconciliation purposes in Australia.

Such extensive use could make reconciliation an unquestionable ideal. However, reconciliation is a contradictory mechanism to deal with past wrongs, negotiate the present and imagine possible futures. It attempts to resolve conflicts bringing them to public arenas. The policies deployed to deliver reconciliation such as truth telling, official apologies, compensation, and reparation of victims' risk imposing a unilateral and restricted agreements over past wrongs. Under the call for reconciliation as the requirement to new social pacts, several social justice issues stay unresolved or are displaced to other arenas. The same idea of 'pact' is problematic from the perspective of those in subordinated power positions. The politics of reconciliation not necessarily imply a balance of power between social actors and may end up maintaining them.

Acknowledging the problems of the concept of reconciliation but also its centrality in dealing with past wrongs, this contribution offers a discussion of the concept as a way to transform previous violent conflictive patterns of interaction and learning new non-violent ones. In practice, reconciliation is social pedagogies for change. The chapter presents preliminary results from a comparative study on the politics and pedagogies of reconciliation in Colombia, South Africa and Australia. The main goal of this project is to explore what is done under the name of reconciliation as a way to promote social change<sup>1</sup>. The chapter is organised in six sections. The first two sections offer a theoretical discussion of the two main concepts: reconciliation and pedagogy. The third section introduces the concept of 'social pedagogies of reconciliation' as the working notion that leads the chapter. The next sections present the cases of Colombia and Australia as examples of two different types of social pedagogies of recon-

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1 This project was drafted in 2017 thanks to a *Thomas and Ethel Mary Ewing Postdoctoral Fellowship* granted by The School of Education and Social Work of the University of Sydney. The fellowship facilitated writing a first version of the project and some initial explorations of the topic in Australia and South Africa. The project was updated and started its implementation in 2018 at Universidad de los Andes, Colombia with resources of *Fondo de Apoyo para Profesores Asistentes*, FAPA. What is presented here are its first preliminary findings. This project have had the participation of Tatiana Bonilla, Carlos Andrés García, Lucía Guerrero and Juliana Hincapié, students of Universidad de los Andes, as research assistants. The statistics presented here were processed by García.

ciliation. The chapter finishes with some conclusions on the possibilities and limitations of reconciliation as social pedagogy.

Before continuing, I would like to introduce a note on positionality and briefly talk in first person. The project on which this chapter is based continues a long-term interest on the studies of violence and the studies of peace. For a while I lived those areas of academic expertise as separated fields. I have tried to put them together in a broader discussion on the contradictory forces that produce social change and the struggles for social justice. This interest raises political, methodological and ethical challenges that are permanently interlinked in my work. My research has a permanent discussion on what kind of knowledge is produced and for what purposes. The study of violence, structural inequalities or long term injustice may end up supporting forms of violence, including epistemic violence (Fricker, 2007), if it does not maintains a permanent dialogue with the struggles for social justice. The study of social change implies not only the documentation of experiences of suffering, initiatives for change and social creativity, but also the ways in which individuals and collectives narrate and represent themselves with those experiences. I am also concerned with who is represented or underrepresented in knowledge and under which forms of representation. In my long-term research, representing someone as victim and someone as perpetrator, for example, results from a regime of representation under which we are allowed to exist. These issues underline the chapter and my positionality in the topic.

### *Reconciliation: empty signifier or social practice?*

When talking about reconciliation, there is a reference to its theological and philosophical meaning. The core role of reconciliation in truth commissions, in particular the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, exemplifies also the translation of such underlying references into global strategies to deal with protracted conflicts. That translation has been the matter of intense academic discussions (Arneil & Tockman, 2015; Fassin, 2008) that vary from the call to consider its multiple meanings to suggest that it has not particular meaning at all.

Discussions can be approached considering what is expected to be obtained with reconciliation as the final steps of conflict resolution processes. Then, reconciliation is associated with the reconstruction of war-torn societies (Moon, 2008), the transformation of long-term social injustices (Humphrey, 2005), the rebuilding of social relationships after protracted conflicts (Lederach, 2001) or the strategies implemented to reconstruct the

public sphere fractured by violence (Murillo Amaris, 2017). In these cases, the interest on reconciliation is based on recognising the importance of rebuilding social relations or create new ones.

The agreement in the extensive literature on reconciliation seems to be the lack of agreement about what is 'reconciliation'. The confusion of the term seems to be a taken for granted consensus and point of departure for analyses. Due to this ambiguity makes sense the argument that defines reconciliation as an empty signifier, a vehicle that carries a whole diversity of meanings that vary according to context and political culture. Discussing the South African case, German political scientist Judith Renner (2014, 2015) argues that reconciliation emerged as a universal signifier, a vague but powerful social ideal. She bases her argument on the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) on the struggles for hegemony and political contention. In her argument, the vagueness and flexibility of reconciliation, is not a problem but a potential. Because of that, it could be embraced by antagonist parties such as the apartheid regime and the African National Congress and allowed their articulation for a new collective purpose. Reconciliation replaced apartheid as the key hegemonic discourse on social political order. However, it was a contingent articulation and its limitations are still haunting South African society.

Renner's argument is powerful. It allows to understand how discourses on reconciliation facilitate the creation of new social agreements. Embracing reconciliation as empty signifier allows accepting the theological and philosophical background of the concept and its multiples understandings and deployments in the peacebuilding industry. Locating reconciliation in disputes for political power would explain its importance to amend political polarisation or social fragmentation caused by violence. However, it is based on a dualistic model of political dispute and directs the attention to those in opposite positions in the political landscape. As it will be illustrated for the cases of Colombia and Australia, reconciliation is not an empty signifier able to be filled with meanings from antagonist parties but a signifier with restrictive and localised meanings.

This chapter takes a different approach in the discussion. Reconciliation is not just a discourse negotiated between political antagonist parties. It is also a complex set of social practices lead by social actors not only in antagonist positions in struggles for power but articulating<sup>2</sup> on the promotion of social change. Those practices include the interpretation,

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2 Here articulation is defined in the perspective of cultural studies theory (Clarke, 2015).

translation and contestation of knowledge about how to produce social transformations, as well as their embodiment and incorporation into the everyday practices of many social actors with limited presence in political debates. From this perspective, reconciliation is not a vague concept but an ecology of epistemologies about how to deal with conflicts, produce social change and create social pacts. Learning from a bottom-up perspective and looking more from a pedagogical approach rather than a philosophical or political sciences definition, there are possibilities for critical and alternative approaches to reconciliation. This approach allows also for new forms of contestation.

### *On reconciliation, education and pedagogies*

A common element in the diverse definitions of reconciliation in relation to peacebuilding is its association with a time device. Reconciliation is pivotal in dealing with the past for its role in channelling change toward a different future. Reconciliation is the seal that signs a new social pact as result of commitments and planning. However, to reach and keep the pact, new ways of interaction are required to transform previous violent conflictive patterns of relationship and to learn new non-violent ones. In practice, reconciliation is social pedagogies. Even in the more theological and philosophical perspectives, reconciliation implies a call for education and learning.

The place of reconciliation in education and peacebuilding can be approached from two perspectives: one, from the importance of education in the removal of structural causes of conflicts and its consequences (Lerch & Buckner, 2018; Nelles, 2004; Schulz, 2008; Zembylas, Charalambous, & Charalambous, 2011); the other, from how is it included in specialised fields of expertise such as peace education (Jares, 1999; Ospina, Alvarado, & López, 1999; Salomon, Cairns, & ebrary, 2010). Both perspectives are complementary and give shape to the idea of education as a way to obtain reconciliation and to reconciliation as pedagogy.

About the first perspective, Sarah Dryden-Paterson (2016) claims that concerns about education, the causes of conflicts and its key role in peace have a long history. During World War II humanitarian organizations erected schools to attend children affected by war. However, it is until the 1990s that several long term concerns such as the enactment of education as human right, increasing interest in children in war settings, the creation of international standards on basic education needs, made education a particular field of attention in international organizations dealing with

conflicts. Education and peace are not in a self-evident connection but are the result of accumulated efforts to make them a relevant issue when dealing with conflicts. This has also an impact on how much and in which ways reconciliation became a matter of consideration in education as part of conflict resolution agendas, as will be illustrated below for the cases of Australia and Colombia.

On the second perspective, peace education is already a complex and highly specialised field of expertise with its own paradigms and methodologies to teach non-violent ways to deal with conflict (Fisas & Armengol, 1998), promote tolerance and non-discrimination (Lerch & Buckner, 2018), deepening democracy and citizens' participation (Ospina et al., 1999) or facilitate conviviality living (Comisión Internacional sobre la Educación para el Siglo, Delors, & Unesco, 1996), among other topics. As part of public policies for peace, peace education is seen as a field that offers diverse tools to learn conflict management in positive ways and to avoid its violent resolution, as illustrated in a recent document by the Colombian High Commission for Peace (Arboleda, Herrera, & Prada, 2017), for example.

In the richness of the peace education field, it is possible to trace multiple strategies to incorporate topics related to reconciliation such as coexistence, citizenship, non-violent conflict resolution or diversity in formal curricula. Following the contact hypothesis, the idea that bringing together divided communities with continuous educational exchanges has proved effective for building sustained relationship in cases from Palestinian and Israeli communities (Schulz, 2008) or Turkish and Greek communities in Cyprus (Zembylas et al., 2011). These strategies are widely promoted by international organisations and are common in post-conflict reconstruction agendas. They have been also under permanent critique, mostly because of the set of values promoted and for their positivist approach to education and pedagogies. Incorporating topics of peace and reconciliation in formal curricula does not imply changes in patterns of coexistence. As Beckman and Zembylas argue, the potential productivity of peace education is reduced when presented as universal utopia (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012).

In the two perspectives mentioned above there is the risk of an instrumental and mechanic relationship between education and reconciliation. There, education is a mean, tool or mechanism to obtain peace or reconciliation. This use has two subsequent implications: education in itself brings reconciliation; and if reconciliation fails or is not obtained, education is to be blamed. In order to deal with this challenge, this chapter suggest

discussing the relation between education and reconciliation as social pedagogy.

The idea of social pedagogy as the acknowledgement that individual education is a social process and is connected with social determinations has several roots and multiple developments and applications. With an European context in mind, Juha Hämäläinen (2019) traces a genealogy of social pedagogy in XIX concerns on shaping societies to face the challenges of modernization, industrialization and urbanization. The German philosophers Paul Natorp and Herman Nohl for example, connected social pedagogy and educational philosophy to help society facing the challenges of political reforms.

Here social pedagogy is not seen in such axiological or normative approach, but in connection with perspectives from critical pedagogies (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007), cultural studies (Giroux, 2004; Kellner, 2005) and Latin American popular education (Cendales, Mejía, & Muñoz, 2016), that emphasise the role of pedagogy in social transformation. Based on the work of Stuart Hall, Henry Giroux (2000) brings pedagogy to the centre of political agency and to its possibilities for promoting social change. Not all pedagogical practices intend such goal since some in fact intend to reproduce the status quo rather than create radical democracy.

This idea has direct implications to the field of peacebuilding when discussing the type and amount of change promoted by peace and reconciliation practices. It is also of relevance to expand the connection between education and reconciliation to a variety of social and cultural practices not restricted to formal education or instrumental use. As the case studies will illustrate later, reconciliation is implemented using informal, non-schooling education and social transformation practices, such as the promotion of community dialogues or the facilitation of encounters among opposing groups. In Australia and Colombia civil society organisations, religious-based groups and women's organisations have been key activists and leaders in formulating reconciliation policies and pedagogies.

The expansion of the connections between reconciliation and education implies a constant discussion of interactions between politics and culture. The pedagogies of reconciliation are not just about the teaching of reconciliation topics such as historical facts or conflict management strategies but also the transformative, emancipatory destabilizing power of its pedagogical practices. Reconciliation deals with the emotions and feelings that surround suffering and belonging. Trust, respect and rebuilding of relationships are embodied processes. The pedagogies for reconciliation are also pedagogies of collective emotions, such as mourning, forgiveness, affiliation and identity. One example of those ideas can be found in the 'dis-

comfort pedagogies' applied by Zembylas and McGlynn (2012) in Cyprus and Northern Ireland in order to destabilise hegemonic representations of subordinated groups or issues of social justice and to facilitate behavioural and attitudinal change. A similar use of those pedagogical strategies is illustrated by Zinn and Porteus (2009) in South Africa when exploring the emancipatory role of education in contexts of extreme inequalities. The section on Colombia will illustrate and expand this discussion.

### *Construction a working definition for pedagogies of reconciliation*

Between September and December 2019, we explored databases and websites in order to collect a diversity of projects and initiatives that were illustrative of different ways to implement reconciliation. This search did not intend to be exhaustive but to offer a landscape of the diversity of reconciliation in practice. As a result, we obtained a collection of 122 initiatives for reconciliation in 25 countries globally. From each initiative, we made a description as close as possible of their own definition of reconciliation. Definitions were reviewed, classified and numbered in order to obtain a set of general categories and subcategories that constituted what we called a Thesaurus of Reconciliation. This Thesaurus became the raw material for our working definition of reconciliation.

Using different quantitative and qualitative strategies to process information, including word count analyses in Atlas.ti, we obtained a discrete set of categories to define reconciliation. We coined a working definition of pedagogies of reconciliation in three dimensions: as the practices that intend to transform and promote the learning of ways to live together, as new forms of communicating and as strategies to deal with the harms of protracted conflicts and injustices. These working categories will lead the description of the two case studies that will be expanded next.

### *Colombia: reconciliation as dealing with present injustices and forging better futures*

In terms of the politics of reconciliation, Colombia exemplifies a process lead by civil society in which a diversity of issues associated with reconciliation has been deployed to recreate relationships among those most affected by socio-political violence and armed conflict. Reconciliation has been a social practice that has occurred long before its inclusion as a



topic of attention for public policies. Civil society has displayed an intense and creative range of initiatives not only to deal with the past, but also to reshape the present and imagine possible futures through social pedagogies. Since most of these initiatives has been based in decades of intense social mobilizations for peace as documented by García-Durán (2013), there is also a connection with critical pedagogies and the Latin American tradition of popular education.

Reconciliation, as a topic in public policies, arrives after this long history and can be traced to early negotiations between state and illegal armed actors. Its content has been related to the type of negotiations implemented in each moment. Therefore, reconciliation as state lead policy has been an idea mostly subordinated to issues of peacemaking and peacekeeping, and less associated to long-term peacebuilding policies. A Council for Reconciliation, Normalization and Rehabilitation (*Consejería para la Reconciliación, Normalización y Rehabilitación*) functioned from August 1986 until August 1994 as an office dependant of the President's Office to lead peace and negotiation policies. In its early stages, the Commission continued a previous policy, the National Plan for Rehabilitation (*Plan Nacional de Rehabilitación*) oriented to increase state presence in regions highly affected by armed conflict. It was mostly a policy to increase investment in rural areas where guerrillas had territorial control in order to reduce their support by civil society. In late 1980s, under Virgilio Barco's presidency, reconciliation was seen as a strategy to gain state acceptance, legitimacy and reducing social tensions to facilitate negotiations with guerrillas such as M19 and other small groups.

Increasing waves of violence in the 1990s and a focus on procedures to negotiate with guerrillas reduced the space for long term public policies for reconciliation. This situation did not improve but worsened in the 2000s, first with the failure of negotiations between Andrés Pastrana's government and FARC and then the arrival of Democratic Security (*Seguridad Democrática*), the Democratic Security Policy led by President Alvaro Uribe. This period inaugurated a dual strategy focused on defeating guerrillas and negotiating the demobilisation of paramilitaries. The enactment of Law 975 of 2005, known as Justice and Peace, offered a legal framework for negotiations, reintegration of individuals who were part of illegal armed groups of full groups and victims' rights for truth, justice and reparation. Both in its legal definition and its policy design, reconciliation was the final step of a long line of procedures for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. In this frame, reconciliation was the last and accumulated result of stabilisation through legal frames and building institutions. Law 975 created an institutional infrastructure for

peace that included a National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (*Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación*). Of its seven main functions (Article 51, Law 975), one was related to the promotion of reconciliation initiatives to prevent the return of violence. Reconciliation at this moment was defined as an extension of negative peace, a peace mostly understood attacking the violent expressions of social conflict. The struggles for a more positive peace, a peace understood in terms of social justice, will characterise the subsequent approaches for reconciliation.

The Peace Agreement between the Colombian State and the FARC guerrilla offered a more positive and expanded approach to reconciliation not simply associated with negative peace but with for the creation of conditions for expanded political participation of diverse social sectors. Reconciliation was included as political reconciliation in the Point Two of the Agreement as a mechanism for more political participation and part of the conditions for ending the conflict, in particular securing participation in the implementation of the Agreement through a Program for Reconciliation, Coexistence and Prevention of Stigmatization – Point 3.4.7.4.4. For giving content to the program was created in 2017 the National council for Peace, Reconciliation and Conviviality (*Consejo Nacional de Paz, Reconciliación y Convivencia*), a national advisory body constituted by institutions and 67 civil society representatives. Civil society representatives include, members of churches; trade unions; economic sectors; Afrocolombian, Indigenous and Roma communities; women organizations; victim's of conflict, demobilised and peace organizations; LGBTI, disabled, student and community-based organizations, among others. Most of the 16 duties of the Council as advisory body are related to social pedagogies. At the moment of writing this chapter the Program is still under design.

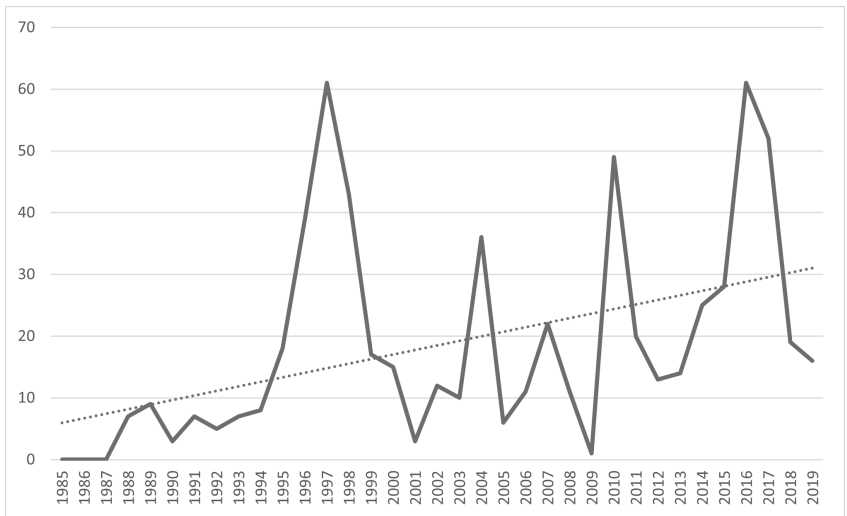
In this legal and policy frame for reconciliation, mostly subordinated to negotiation among antagonistic powerful actors, there are other histories for reconciliation in the diverse social mobilizations for peace. For this research we explored the database Collective Actions for Peace (*Acciones Colectivas por la Paz* - ACP), an extensive documentation of peace mobilisations in Colombia since 1981 organised by Center for Research and Popular Education (*Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* – Cinep). Of the full database a selection of those actions classified as 'positive peace' from April 1981 until December 2019 was made, obtaining a universe of 2864 events. A first finding showed that 66% of those events were related to educational activities. Promoting positive peace from the perspective of social mobilizations highly involves education in a broad sense.

Using the working concept described above, of the 2864 actions we found 443 initiatives that could be considered as social pedagogies for

peace. We used the concept and its categories to identify which actions fit with our definition. This first finding was relevant. If we would explore the original database using ‘reconciliation’ as descriptive term, there would be just 36 actions, which would have offered a restrictive approach to reconciliation.

This broader approach produced three main findings: (i) reconciliation has been a long-term social practice, but with moments of more and less concentration; (ii) the meanings and practice of reconciliation are heterogeneous; (iii) actions related to reconciliation are less confrontational than other collective actions for peace. Next, these preliminary conclusions will be illustrated.

*Graphic 1: Number of actions for reconciliation as social pedagogy from 1985 to 2019*



This graphic illustrates the evolution of the pedagogies for reconciliation in time. On the left is the number of actions according with our definition. It shows two tendencies: the pedagogies for reconciliation are a constant an accumulative practice; however, their intensity varies. One possible interpretation of the periods of increasing actions for reconciliation is its connection with moments of more intense organizational peace activity and more massive mobilizations for peace. If we compare these peaks with the analysis provided by Mauricio García-Durán (2006: 239) they overlap with what he describes as the ‘waves of organizational convergence’ or

moments of more intense organizational alliance building for peace. The period 1993-1998 is when two broader alliances for peace mobilisations emerged in the country: Redepaz, The National Network of Citizen's Initiatives for Peace and Against the War (*Red Nacional de Inicitativas Ciudadanas por la Paz y en Contra de la Guerra*), emerged in 1993. The Permanent Assembly of Civil Society for Peace (*Asamblea Permanente de la Sociedad civil por la Paz*) was consolidated between 1996 and 1998. In 1996 occurred the Children's Mandate for Peace (*Mandato de los Niños por la Paz*), a massive national mobilization lead by girls and boys and in 1997 the Citizen's mandate for Peace.

Another wave of convergence described by García-Durán occurred during the peace talks between president Pastrana and FARC in early 2000s. A diverse range of NGO collided in Peace Colombia (*Paz Colombia*), a second level umbrella organization for other human rights, development, environment and social organizations, in order to coordinate the participation of social organizations in peace negotiations and peace building. This is also the second period of intense reconciliation pedagogies we identified. As it was suggested before, the practice of reconciliation, at least in early stages, is more an effort of civil society organizations than the result of state led policies.<sup>3</sup> Who were those organizations and why they decided to position reconciliation as a topic in public agendas requires further discussion.

García-Durán's analysis of peace mobilizations covers the period 1978-2003. Two other periods we identified, 2009-2011 and 2015-2018, coincide with the beginning and resolution of peace negotiations between President Santos' government and the FARC guerrilla. They represent a parallelism between the changes in state policies for reconciliation described above and new waves of peace mobilizations.

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3 This conclusion is still under testing in the research that supports this chapter. The conclusion could be result of the fact that we are using the same database than García-Durán. Currently we are doing another level of analysis in which we go to the original description of those actions for reconciliation in order to explore in more detail its context of emergence, main actors and purposes.

Table 1: Meanings of the pedagogies of reconciliation

| <b>Reconciliation as social pedagogy: three main categories</b> | <b># of repetitions</b> | <b>% of repetitions</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Living together                                                 | 292                     | 60.8%                   |
| Dealing with the harms                                          | 98                      | 20.41%                  |
| Communicating                                                   | 54                      | 11.25%                  |
| Other                                                           | 36                      | 7.5%                    |
| Totals                                                          | 480                     |                         |

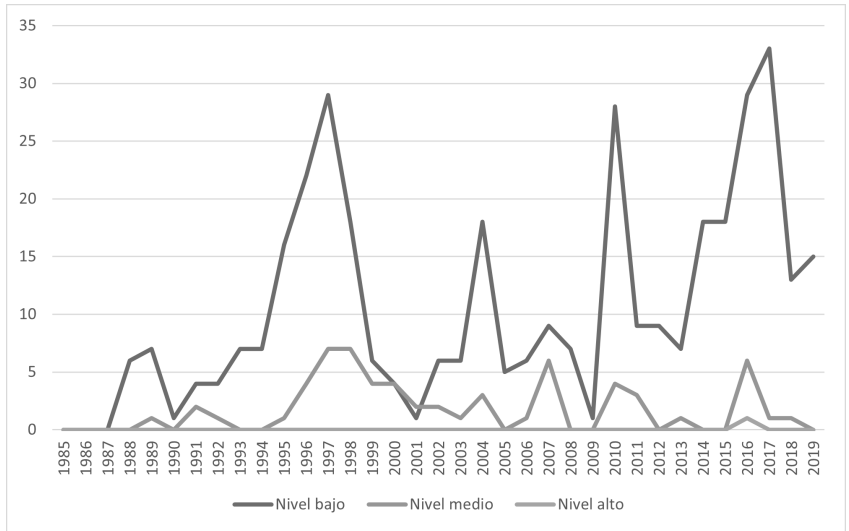
The numbers in Table 1 result from reading the data base ACP with the working definition explained before. We applied the three main categories of our working definition to classify the corpus of reconciliation actions identified in ACP. We tried to use just one of them for each action. In spite of this decision, some actions were not possible to define just with one criterion. Therefore, the number of repetitions shortly exceed the number of actions. Result of such analysis showed that an important number of the actions for reconciliation intended to transform ways or relating to others or produce new ones. “Living together” was a criterion presented 60.8% times, while the next most used definition was about dealing with harms and with promoting different ways of communicating. In order to explain these differences it is useful to start with the second and third categories.

Forgiveness is one of the common definitions of reconciliation. Still, it was not the most common meaning in the actions for reconciliation pedagogies we found. Less than a fifth part of them we mainly associated with forgiving. A few others included issues of healing or transforming conditions that facilitated harms. Promoting dialogue and trust building between antagonist parties was also found in our sample, in a discrete number of cases.

A significant part of the pedagogical practices we identified intended to promote new ways of interaction not only among antagonist parties but among different member of society from micro to macro levels: between neighbours; with former armed actors; intra and inter communities; between civil society and institutions; inter regions in the country; at national level. This would be related with the connection between pedagogies of reconciliation and peace social mobilizations but suggest also a need to materialise reconciliation not just in relation with armed actors, but

with most social actors. The pedagogies of reconciliation we found include political reconciliation but are not limited to it. From these results, the pedagogies for reconciliation are an intense project of social creativity.

Graphic 2: *levels of confrontation in reconciliation pedagogies 1985-2019*



The database we analysed classifies actions for peace according to its level of confrontation. High levels are those in which tension between antagonist parties is explicit and includes actions such as strikes, occupying roads or public spaces among other strategies. Medium levels could involve some level of tension, but without ending in violent actions. Low levels are given to actions that intend to produce change by consensus or by creating awareness on issues. Interestingly, most of the actions we classified as pedagogies for reconciliation were in the low level of confrontation, supporting the idea of their attempt to produce change by long term social pedagogies.

In terms of the pedagogies of reconciliation, Colombia exemplifies a model driven mostly by civil society initiatives with a broader agenda than often illustrated in political reconciliation between antagonist parties. It is not just dealing with a past signalled by conflict and violence, but a civil society enterprise to create a better present and future. On the other side, Australia represents a model in which long terms struggles for Indigenous

communities' sovereignty was substituted by an agenda of state-controlled reconciliation.

*Australia: reconciliation as a state driven project to deal with the past*

In terms of the politics of reconciliation, Australia exemplifies a case of a state lead process in which reconciliation was used as national policy to deal with past and present injustices against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. From the perspective of the pedagogies of reconciliation, Australia exemplifies a case of how to teach about past wrongs and finding a frame for its teaching in curricula and social pedagogies. The overlapping of the teaching of reconciliation with the teaching of Aboriginal history and culture displaced the pedagogical responsibility to promote change to one sector and one topic of Australian society. Besides, reconciliation policies and pedagogies reflected contested ideas on how to address injustices between state and Indigenous Australians.

Reconciliation has been the key idea to manage the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians since late 1980s and early 1990s in pragmatic and restrictive ways (Burridge, 2007; Little & McMillan, 2016). Nina Burridge (2007), who has studied extensively the role of education in Australian reconciliation, argues that as a formal policy term, 'reconciliation' dates from the Federal Labour policies from the 1980s. She suggests that 'reconciliation', in terms of political relations, was a solution to the lack of support for a treaty with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As public rhetoric and as a public policy device, reconciliation has been deployed to deal with injustices of colonization and to create a narrative of building relationships, respect and trust. Its emergence in public and policy discourses is embodied in the creation of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation – CAR by the Hawke Labour government in 1991, after the publication of the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. With the establishment of the CAR, reconciliation was an idea embraced by some Indigenous activists and different sectors of non-Indigenous Australians, but contested by others.

The creation of the CAR inaugurated what some have called the formal reconciliation process, a process led by government interference and connected with nationalist discourses around the call for a unified nation (Gunstone, 2007). According to this author, in early 1990s formal reconciliation was oriented by three goals: educating Australian society on Indigenous issues; addressing major socio-economic disadvantages that affect

Indigenous communities; developing a framework document for reconciliation that could lead further legal and policy changes. The restrictive use of reconciliation in the 1990s by Labour government was continued and strengthened later by Liberal Prime Minister John Howard and his distinction between 'practical reconciliation' and 'symbolic reconciliation'. For him, the first was related to addressing the economic and social causes of Indigenous disadvantage such health problems, lack of housing, under-education and unemployment; the second was associated with discussions on autonomy and sovereignty. Reconciliation, from opposite political parties regulated the management of Indigenous struggles amid a very unequal balance of power. Howard's policies focused on the 'practical' dimensions of reconciliation, gave less attention to their 'symbolic' dimensions and reject any attempt to make an official apology to Indigenous Australians for past wrongs.

As result, the 2000s were marked with disputes on the intensity and reach of reconciliation as policy frame, represented in a variety of terms used to classify types of reconciliation: 'practical' and 'symbolic', 'hard' and 'soft', 'genuine' and 'substantial'. This use of reconciliation did not facilitate mutual engagement between contention sectors in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. It continued what Damien Short (2008) has called the 'colonial ceiling' in Australian reconciliation, a ceiling that controls and manages what is acceptable in terms of social demands for change. Adrian Little and Mark McMillan (2016) argue that while reconciliation addressed some past colonial injustices and dramatic events such as the Stolen Generation, it did not face core reasons for conflict, its permanency and contemporaneity in Australian society.

The official apology delivered by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 13 February 2008 installed another moment in the politics of reconciliation. Rudd regretted the government policies that encouraged forced removal of Indigenous children from their families, widely known as the Stolen Generation. Rudd's apology marked a clear difference with Howard's refusal to apologise. It is still remembered as a pivotal moment in changing the path of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians interactions. Still, Rudd's apology was also framed in limited terms. Reconciliation not only leaves violence as a matter of colonial past and pictures Indigenous subjects as passive victims, but also erases conflict as core topic in public narratives. Because of that, the possibilities of reconciliation as a public space to deal with conflicts were reduced. The result is a still unresolved agreement on the causes of the conflict and on the ways to deal with it that impedes the possibilities of reconciliation in terms of relational engagements.



Since its early definition, reconciliation was connected with social pedagogies and formal education. Education was understood in terms of offering non-Indigenous Australians an understanding of Indigenous issues. One of the earliest attempts to give shape to the social pedagogies for reconciliation was a national strategy to increase awareness on Indigenous Australians history and culture. In collaboration with the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education the Study Circles Project developed a pedagogical strategy for small community groups of study in the early 1990s. The methodology intended to motivate neighbours, community-based interest groups and local actors in regular meetings to discuss a set of topics on Indigenous past and present issues. By 1994, around 2000 Study Circles emerged and by 1998 there were groups of Friends of Aboriginal Reconciliation in most large towns in the country (McCallum, 2003).

In the informal conversation I sustained in Sydney and in Darwin with academics who participated in the Study Circles, the activity was remembered with contradictory memories. On one hand, it was an excuse to join with friends and peers to create awareness on a known topic with limited discussion before. The dialogical methodology nurtured conversations, exchange of information and collective knowledge. Since the methodology also invited to meet regularly at the houses of participants, it was the opportunity to raise solidarity and join interests in support of Indigenous communities. Interest groups were not only formed due to community proximity but also for sharing common agendas. In Melbourne for example a Study Circle of lesbian women was formed. Still, the strategy seems to have attracted more publics with some kind of social and political involvement or intellectual interests, rather than general publics.

If Reconciliation Study Circles were targeting small groups of reflection at a micro level, other strategies intended to reach massive audiences. On 28 May 2000, 250.000 Australians walked across the iconic Sydney Bridge in the name of reconciliation. The walk was headed by several well-known Indigenous activists and some victims of the Stolen Generation. The walk was a display of national symbols with Australian and Aboriginal flags and key public figures walking together. The walk occurred a day after CAR presented in a ceremony at the Sydney Opera House a document with the key results of its ten years of work. The ceremony was a display of Indigenous Australian rituals and culture that closed CAR's work. The walk was represented in the media as an intense moment of public celebration in which the writing in the sky of the word 'Sorry' was a key milestone. After Sydney's walk, similar events occurred in other major and middle cities in Australia.

Study Circles and Bridge Walks could be seen as strategies for social pedagogies since they intended to raise awareness, inform audiences and construct public opinion on Indigenous issues. While the first acted at a local level and through close relationships build upon several times, the second were specific short-term events with massive impact in public opinion. Still, they can be connected in the same narrative of reconciliation but were answers to quite different political contexts. Positive media coverage of the walks run in parallel with suspicions on the work of the CAR after the end of its period and permanent representations of reconciliation in association with Indigenous crime, violence and divisions (McCallum, 2003). This author also found that at local levels events were memorialised more in relation to issues such as the increasing awareness on the Stolen Generation or discussions against or in favour of public apologies rather than in the frame of reconciliation. In spite of its impact on collective imaginaries of the moment, walks were a collective performance that exposed several cultural negotiations under the umbrella of reconciliation with limited outcomes in terms of change due to its own nature as performative acts (Casey, 2006).

Going back to Nina Burridge's study, by the early 2000s reconciliation was still a vague concept in education policy documents in Australia with no clear unit of work in curricula. Yet, reconciliation was seen as an integral component in education policies and was an expected outcome of teaching. Since reconciliation was associated with past and present injustices against Indigenous Australians, it was located in the teaching of Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal history and culture, an area that dated to early 1980s. As result of this, the educational outcomes of one area of teaching overlapped with another. In practice, the teaching of reconciliation became the teaching of Indigenous culture and history. Implicit was the idea that educating younger generations of mostly non-Indigenous Australians will provide the expected change in prejudice and attitudes.

As much as it is useful to give a place in formal education to reconciliation and Indigenous history, this idea is also problematic. Studies for Australia and Canada have found that knowing the causes of present conflict on colonization does not cause automatically changes in attitudes toward those in subordinated positions, nor transform power relations (Maddison, Clark, & de Costa, 2016). Neither does it motivate or involve those not affected by such colonial past to feel committed with change. At least in those cases, the use of education to promote social involvement and solidarity with those facing long term injustices proves to frequently fail.

Reconciliation is still a contested idea in Australia. It has run in parallel with other Federal Government policies such as the Northern Territory National Emergency Response, popularised as "The Intervention". In 2007 after realising a report on child's abuses in the Northern Territories, the Howard Government enacted a package of measures to restrict different aspects of Indigenous lives, such as alcohol or pornography consumption and to deploy armed forces and federal functionaries to take control of some managerial aspects of Territories. In spite of some adjustments in the governments after, the Intervention is still on as initially deployed. Up to now, there has not been yet a treaty between Australian Federal Government and Indigenous Australians authorities as in many other Commonwealth nations. While Indigenous Australians claim sovereignty and autonomy and have resisted colonisation policies, the government has answered with reconciliation policies.

### *Conclusion*

Reconciliation is often pictured as key element of dealing with the past in personal and societal level, especially in association to forgiveness and healing wounds and harms. In the more sophisticated peacebuilding industries, reconciliation is the orientation point for transitional justice, memory work, compensation and some of its other key concepts. This underscores the importance of exploring reconciliation policies and practices as a mechanism to generate social change.

This chapter started calling attention to the problems of embracing the impossibility of a definition of reconciliation, its vagueness or emptiness. The two cases offered, showed that in spite of such problems reconciliation is not only an idea or value with a complex set of political practices with clear social pedagogy dimensions. They also illustrate different deployments of those practices useful for exploring in more detail the meanings of reconciliation as social pedagogy.

In Australia, reconciliation has been used in precise and restrictive ways as state strategy to manage the dealing with the past. Therefore, the path for reconciliation pedagogies overlapped with indigenous education. This makes sense if we agree with the idea of locating the pedagogies of reconciliation in the broader field of peace education. Peace education is a way to deal with a conflictive past and present. There are many elements of that dealing in indigenous education such as issues of access, quality, memory work, the teaching of histories of indigenous communities and exchanges of epistemologies. It is important what has been done in terms of teaching

history and the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Islander people in Australian society. This is pedagogy in terms of knowledge. However, there is also a problem about for whom that dealing with the past is and who benefits from it. Many of those social pedagogies are about inclusion and addressing ignorance assuming that knowing about the past will change present attitudes but not changing structural power relations.

In Colombia, reconciliation has been part of the repertory of core ideas for social mobilizations for peace, intended not only to generate an impact on the state and illegal armed actors as main actors in dispute for political power, but also to articulate disparate publics for peace building. If in Renner's analysis (2014) the empty signifier of reconciliation articulates antagonist parties, the analysis presented here suggests how the meanings given to reconciliation constituted social mobilisations as a third actor in struggles for negotiated peace. The pedagogies for reconciliation have taken shape in a diverse and rich set of social pedagogies. This has implied that most of the efforts have laid on the shoulders of civil society actors and organizations. The implementation of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian state and FARC has opened the space for a possible connection between the accumulated knowledge of social pedagogies for reconciliation and public policies. Current limitations in the implementation of the Agreement raise questions on the possibilities of such promise.

Reconciliation is also a field of contestations. Peace education has many examples of the conflicts faced when contentious narratives of past and present injustices enter in educational settings. Reconciliation, as a call for unity and harmony, imposes substantial demands on communities affected by long term injustices. The rational and legal language of state action that frames reconciliation as social policy says a lot about certain topics and imposes silence on others, as suggested in the two cases discussed here. With reconciliation, some racial issues stay unresolved or are displaced to other arenas as illustrated in the case of Australia and deserve to be more explored for Colombia. In spite of several differences between the two countries, their policies for reconciliation run in parallel with forms of state and para-state violence: reconciliation policies in Australia happen at the same time of criminalisation of Indigenous Australians; reconciliation policies in Colombia evolves at the same time of increasing prosecution of social leaders in Colombia.

In both cases, for a reconciliation process to have lasting effects, it must have a large presence in education systems. When connecting pedagogy and reconciliation, both at the formal or informal level of education, there is tendency to focus on the instrumental dimension of pedagogies: education as a tool to promote or obtain reconciliation. Another way to

understand such connection is the assumption that education in itself will bring reconciliation. Therefore, if reconciliation is not yet obtained, education is to be blamed. In some of the practices of reconciliation mentioned above, particularly those lead by community-based actors, the pedagogical outcome is in the experience in itself. The educational outcomes of these experiences can be difficult to evaluate but are no less relevant to be considered as pedagogy.

This is difficult, partly because of continuing divisions in the society which cannot be removed in the short run by the peace-making efforts. And it is difficult to evaluate, because the wide range of topics and contexts for peace education and reconciliation makes it difficult to measure their contribution to social change. There is even a bigger question if in fact reconciliation can be teachable or it is the result of other accumulated processes. Especially if we consider reconciliation not just as about dealing with the past but as a clear commitment to make real present and future possible, it needs to be an enabling space for diverse and creative life project in dignity and social justice. This is at the end, what reconciliation should be about.

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