

Producing Citizenship in Contexts of Conflict: Citizenship  
Practices Among Youth Participating in Save the Children's  
Media Production Programs in Colombia

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## Abstract

This MA thesis explores the emergence of new citizenship practices among youth participating in two school-based media collectives in areas of Colombia marked by violence and conflict. I draw from Rodriguez's (2001, 2011) citizens' media theory, which highlights the role of performance in communication processes as a mechanism for social change, to study media products created by youth participating in two school-based communication groups, one in the city of Tumaco and one in the city of Pasto. These two groups are part of the *Paco* project, an initiative of *Aprendiendo Crecemos*, a Canadian-funded education program operated by Save the Children International and the Norwegian Refugee Council in the Nariño department of Colombia, an area facing high levels of violence and internal displacement. These media collectives are spaces where youth produce different forms of media, such as television, radio, and press, on topics related to children's rights and local issues. In this context, this MA thesis explores the ways in which youth use these media production opportunities to negotiate, perform, and learn their roles as citizens whose voices matter and whose political actions can lead to social change. I argue that youth participation in these media collectives contributes to the internalization of understandings of citizenship based on pluralism, dialogue, and relationships with public institutions based on accountability and transparency.

## Résumé

Cette thèse explore l'émergence des nouvelles pratiques de citoyenneté chez les jeunes participant à deux collectifs de médias en milieu scolaire dans des régions de la Colombie touchées par la violence et le conflit armé. Je me base sur la théorie des media du citoyens de Rodriguez (2001, 2011), qui met en évidence le rôle de la performance dans les processus de communication, cela pour étudier les produits des médias créés par les jeunes participants en ces deux groupes. Ces deux collectifs font partie du projet Paco, une initiative de Aprendiendo Crecemos , un programme de formation financé par le Canada et géré par Save the Children International et le Norwegian Refugee Council dans le département de Nariño en Colombie, une zone faisant face à des niveaux élevés de violence et du déplacement forcé interne. Ces collectifs de médias sont des espaces où les jeunes produisent différentes formes de médias, comme la télévision, la radio et la presse, sur des sujets liés aux droits de l'enfant et des problèmes locaux. Dans ce contexte, cette thèse de maîtrise étudie les façons dont les jeunes utilisent des opportunités de produire des medias pour négocier, apprendre, et avancer leurs propres rôles en tant que citoyens. Je soutiens que la participation des jeunes dans ces collectifs des médias contribue à mieux et à internaliser un concept de citoyenneté qui s'appuie sur le pluralisme, le dialogue, et les relations avec les institutions publiques fondées sur la responsabilité et la transparence.

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## Preface

The writing of this thesis took from the comfort of my life in Canada to a confrontation with the realities of my country of origin, Colombia. I grew up in Bogotá until I was fifteen years old, and have lived in Canada, in Toronto and in Montreal, ever since. For me, this translated into what I felt was an insufficiently nuanced understanding of Colombia's conflict, perhaps a bit too influenced by diaspora politics. At the same time, my experiences as an immigrant in Canada made me aware of the benefits and pitfalls of the development model so many developing countries tirelessly pursue. It was this set of experiences that pushed me into the study of international development, which for me has always been a way to bridge my identities as a Colombian, as a Canadian, and as an agent of social change.

Therefore, this thesis on the relationship between communication, citizenship, and social change, is not simply an academic or theoretical exercise, as often happens in academia. Rather, it is an attempt to contribute to real and tangible social change in the lives of real people in a country to which I have a multitude of affective connections.

## Introduction

This MA thesis explores the emergence of new citizenship practices among children and youth participating in school-based communication collectives in southwestern Colombia, specifically in the cities of Pasto and Tumaco. The communication collectives, called *Paco* (an abbreviation for *participation* and *communication*), are part of *Aprendiendo Creecemos*, an education program operated by Save the Children International and the Norwegian Refugee Council and funded by the Canadian International Development Agency that ran in 22 public schools of the department of Nariño from 2008-2013. *Paco* collectives operated as extracurricular activities meant to foster citizenship and participation among participating children and youth (Save the Children International 2013).

I was primarily interested in citizenship practices based on the notion of *cultura ciudadana* (or culture of citizenship) as articulated by Rodriguez (2011). I focused on the emergence of citizenship practices that foster peaceful coexistence, strengthen public spheres, contribute to the legitimization of different identities, normalize non-violent conflict resolution, and promote citizen-state relationships based on accountability, transparency, and the right and responsibility to oversee public institutions. In light of this, I drew from Rodriguez's (2011) theory of citizens' media in contexts of armed conflict as my main theoretical framework. Rodriguez argues that, in contexts of armed conflict, citizens' media are successful in countering violence because they understand

communication as performance, as 'more than simply listening or seeing a message, performance participants experience a multiplicity of messages in a multiplicity of sensorial events' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 255). Therefore, I examined whether *Paco* collectives work as spaces where participants can experience and learn citizenship practices based on *cultura ciudadana* in ways they are be unable to do in their everyday lives.

*Paco* collectives operate in a context marked by violence, armed conflict, and internal displacement that prevent the effective exercise of citizenship. The department of Nariño where *Paco* collectives operate is a region of Colombia that has seen high rates of violence in the past few years as the country's armed conflict and drug economy have converged in the area, creating what Galtung (1991, 1998) defines as a "culture of violence", or a context that legitimizes violence as a way to solve conflict (Rodriguez 2011). In addition, years of state abandonment stemming from the region's geographical location away from centres of political and economic power, have added to the region's problems. Therefore, citizens in the Nariño have limited opportunities to effectively exercise their rights as citizens in ways that lead to social change in the region.

In this context, I see communication initiatives such as the *Paco* collectives as possible ways to reinvigorate the exercise of citizenship in contexts marked by conflict such as Colombia's. In my view, this type of communication initiatives can contribute to the normalization citizenship practices that foster

increased advocacy, voting and participation in the local and national political system, a decrease in power and legitimacy for illegal armed actors, restored trust between citizens and government institutions, and a richer political culture. Such communication initiatives are particularly important now given the fact that Colombia, which experienced drastic changes in security and strong economic growth over the past decade, is going through a peace process that could put an end to the ongoing armed conflict. From my perspective, success in the peace process will create opportunities for Colombians with a clear understanding of citizenship practices based on *cultura ciudadana* to increase their participation in the political system in a post-conflict context.

The *Paco* project was an ideal site for the study of citizens' media as communication processes and structures that stimulate the emergence of new citizenship practices. First of all, the fact that the *Paco* project takes place in a region of Colombia where violence, displacement, and a history of state abandonment are part of the context, allowed me to apply Rodriguez's theory of citizens' media in contexts of armed conflict (2011). Furthermore, *Aprendiendo Creecemos'* concern with issues of citizenship, participation, and peacebuilding closely align with Rodriguez's theory. For instance, I found that *Aprendiendo Creecemos'* conceptualization of citizenship and participation is closely linked with the idea of *cultura ciudadana* articulated by Rodriguez (2011). I found that documents produced in the context of *Aprendiendo Creecemos* reflected a strong

concern with more active understandings of citizenship based on active participation, dialogue, reflection, peaceful conflict resolution, and democratic practices. I saw a strong relationship in the citizenship practices the project hopes to trigger, and the type of practices grouped under the concept of *cultura ciudadana* commonly promoted by citizens' media leaders in Colombia described by Rodriguez (2011).

I also view the *Paco* collectives as an experiment in education for contexts marked by violence. As I outline in my conclusions, media production can be a useful mechanism for educators and students to engage in dialogue, as well as to help prevent the recruitment of young people into armed groups. Additionally, the fact that this communication project took place in an education context meant that project participants were able to access school space, funding for equipment, and that the large number of people in schools that can become both participants and audience members.

Additionally, applying Rodriguez's theory of citizens' media to a case study functioning within the international development paradigm was thought provoking. As Rodriguez herself has pointed out, citizens' media initiatives in Colombia have evolved without much help from international donors. As a result, Colombian citizens' media have grown without the "frequent toxic dependence from international donors so common in other regions of the world" (Van Kalternborg-Stachau 2008, pg. 20 quoted by Rodriguez 2011, pg. 183). In this



sense, I explored whether the kinds of communication processes that Rodriguez (2011) found in grassroots citizens' media experiences in Colombia can be also found in the *Paco* project, and whether this type of international development project can foster organic communication for social change.

It is worth noting that funding for most *Paco* collectives ended in 2013 when *Aprendiendo Crecemos* came to an end. Despite the fact that the program has been renewed to continue operating in Nariño and to expand to the neighbouring department of Cauca until 2018 with new Canadian funding, it will operate under a different name and in different educational institutions. This means that it is not the schools' responsibility to keep these communication collectives alive as extra-curricular activities. Fortunately, most of these collectives have continued functioning thanks to school support or other sources, though not always as organized as they might have been under *Aprendiendo Crecemos*. The exception to this situation are the *Paco* collectives in Tumaco, which continue to receive support, though now from the recently renewed program and from the Walt Disney Foundation.

### **Hypothesis and Research Question**

My hypothesis starting this research was that *Paco* collectives are communication spaces where participating youth engage in processes of collective reflection, decision-making, and expression on personal, collective, and

public issues, and acquire a series of communication, critical-thinking, and advocacy skills. I expected these processes to allow for the emergence of new practices of citizenship, which Rodriguez (2011) groups under the notion of *cultura ciudadana*, based on peaceful coexistence, the strengthening of public spheres, the legitimization of different identities, the normalization of non-violent conflict resolution, and a citizen-state relationship based on accountability, transparency, and the right and responsibility to oversee public institutions. In this context, I also expected *Paco* collectives to be spaces where youth have the opportunity to experience these new practices of citizenship in their own flesh, a process Rodriguez (2011) calls performance, which allows them to internalize these practices and ultimately identify as citizens.

In light of this, the main question guiding this research was:

*Do television and web video programs produced by Paco collectives reflect the emergence and internalization of citizenship practices based on the notion of cultura ciudadana, as defined by Rodriguez (2011), on the part of youth? If so, how?*

I broke this question down into a series of sub-questions that specify the kind of practices I was looking for:

1. Do the television and web video programs reflect citizenship practices that foster the strengthening of public spheres? If so, how?
2. Do the television and web video programs reflect citizenship practices that foster the legitimization of different social identities? If so, how?
3. Do the television and web video programs reflect citizenship practices that foster the normalization of non-violent conflict resolution? If so, how?
4. Do the television and web video programs reflect citizenship practices that foster a citizen-state relationship based on accountability, transparency, and the right and responsibility of citizens to oversee public institutions? If so, how?

## **Methodology**

I relied on the analysis of media products created by youth participating in *Paco* collectives and on two weeks of participant observation in Colombia as the main tools to conduct this analysis. Media products included videos uploaded to Youtube and created by two collectives in Tumaco, and footage from television programs created by students in a *Paco* collective in Pasto. My analysis consisted primarily of drawing connections between content in each of these

media products and citizenship practices based on *cultura ciudadana* as a way to understand how citizenship practices manifest themselves in the media products. My analysis shows that the performance of citizenship practices based on *cultura ciudadana*, as defined by Rodriguez (2011), which in the case of the *Paco* collective occurs through media production, is reflected in media products.

I analyzed the media products using a number of steps. With my research questions as a general guide, I went through the media products at least twice as a way to get familiar with my data. I proceeded to describe some of the citizenship practices I observed and connect them with my research questions. I then analyzed the citizenship practices I found and compared them to practices based on *cultura ciudadana*, as described by Rodriguez (2011). Some of the media products reflected practices or understanding of citizenship that differ from the notion of *cultura ciudadana*, which I also included in my analysis.

The time I spent in Colombia provided me with a better sense of context in order to understand the communication processes behind these media products. I was also able to visit schools where communication experiences have continued operating, even after the funding from *Aprendiendo Crecemos* ended. I was also able to meet some of the students participating in *Paco* collectives, as well as some of the teachers and educators supporting these initiatives.

However, I faced a number of limitations that prevented me from spending more time at schools with *Paco* projects and from conducting in-depth interviews.

First of all, I had limited time to spend with each of these collectives due to logistics and timing issues, both in Canada and in Colombia. Secondly, when I visited Colombia in February 2014, many of the schools where the *Paco* collectives operate were only starting to get organized as the school year in Colombia usually begins in February. This meant that when I visited, most of these groups did not have a clear plan of work and I was unable to see them in action. Thirdly, despite having the support from Save the Children International staff for me to be able to visit different schools, the fact that *Aprendiendo Crecemos* ended in 2013 meant that there was no program staff in the city of Pasto, while I was there. This made it much more difficult to contact school officials and access some of the schools, many of which are in marginalized areas of the city with limited public transportation or with security issues. Lastly, travelling to the city of Tumaco, where I was told the *Paco* collectives have been quite successful, became impossible due to the cancellation of one of the two daily flights to the area, and a transportation strike the week I was planning to travel there by land. In any case, I benefited enormously from the insights of Save the Children staff in Bogotá, in whose offices I wrote a portion of this thesis.

I organized my analysis into two case studies. The first one focuses on citizenship practices reflected in web video products created by participants in Tumaco. For this case study I analyzed a total of 16 clips, all of which are available on Youtube, that profile the work of *Paco* collectives in Tumaco. The

second one focuses on citizenship practices reflected in television programs created by youth in Pasto. I found these two case studies to be quite different from each other, one of them produced mostly short video campaigns for the web while the other producing more traditional television programs, despite being processes catalyzed by the same program and drawing from the same workshops.

For the purpose of this thesis, my definition of citizenship follows Rodriguez's understanding of citizenship as a political identity that is acquired and enacted through everyday practices. In this sense, I do not understand citizenship simply as a legal status through which people become mere recipients of rights. Rather, I view citizenship as a set of everyday practices through which people take ownership and participate in their communities and in their society. In my view, the performance of these practices contributes to people seeing themselves as citizens. The citizenship practices I explore in the chapters below are precisely examples of the practices that, in my view, contribute to the emergence of citizenship as a social and political identity. I delve deeper into Rodriguez's views on citizenship in Chapter 3.

Ultimately, I expect that this thesis' findings will contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which youth-led communication processes can allow young people living in contexts of violence, conflict, and internal displacement to become central participants in the construction of peace and

democracy in their communities. I am hoping that my findings will assist both grassroots initiatives and international development initiatives in working in these types of contexts.

## Chapter 1: The Blockage of Citizenship in the Colombian Context

### Citizenship and Armed Conflict

In Colombia, armed conflict between the state and a number of illegal armed actors, as well as the prevalence of the drug economy, has historically prevented the effective exercise of citizenship. Much of Colombia's conflict has its origins in the exclusion of certain political groups from the political arena. For instance, the current conflict in Colombia can be traced back to the assassination of liberal popular leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan in 1948, an event that marked the beginning of *La Violencia*, a violent period of armed confrontation between liberals and conservatives that left an estimated 200,000 dead (Uribe Alarcon 2007 pg. 63). Though the conflict was officially ended in 1957 in the form of an agreement between liberals and conservatives for the alternation of power, a number of political actors, particularly peasant-based guerrilla movements fighting for a more equal distribution of land, were excluded from the settlement and continued fighting the Colombian state (Uribe Alarcon 2007 pg. 63). Over time, some of these guerrilla movements, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the group currently engaged in peace negotiations with the government, evolved to become structured military organizations that control large portions of territory (Uribe Alarcon 2007, pg. 190).

Conflict dynamics have changed significantly over the past 30 years as paramilitary violence and drug trafficking became important factors as well,



further diminishing the power of Colombian citizens to shape their society. The continued insurgency of groups such as the FARC into the 1970s and 1980s led some sectors of landowners to organize private armies, many of which enjoyed the approval of official security forces, in an effort to secure their claims of land ownership. In the 1990s, paramilitary groups organized themselves into a single organization, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) (Leal Buitrago 2004, pg. 90). Both guerrilla and paramilitary groups are documented to have engaged in human right violations such as massacres, kidnappings, and acts of terrorism over the course of the conflict (*Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica* 2013). Additionally, a number of Colombian criminal organizations entered the global drug trade during the 1980s by importing coca paste from Peru and Bolivia and exporting as processed cocaine to the United States and Europe (Holmes 2003, pg. 88). Though most of the drug economy was initially controlled by the Cali and the Medellin cartels (Felbab-Brown 2010, pg. 72), other actors in the armed conflict, such as the FARC (Gonzalez Bustelo 2005, pg. 220), and paramilitary groups (Gutierrez & Baron 2008, pg. 16), eventually became part of the drug economy. In such a context of armed conflict, the possibilities for Colombian citizens to exercise their rights are severely limited.

The conflict has had a very high human cost. According to Colombia's *Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica*, the conflict has left approximately 220,000 dead since 1958, including both civilians and combatants. There have been

27,023 kidnappings since 1970, 25,077 forced disappearances and 10,189 mine victims since 1985 (BBC News 2013, quoting *Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica* 2013). Internal displacement is also a salient humanitarian issue, with an estimated 3-5 million internally displaced people since the mid-80s (UNHCR 2012c; Mendoza Pineros 2012, pg. 173, quoting CODHES 2009), many of whom are peasants, Afro-Colombians, indigenous people, women, and youth (Mendoza Pineros 2012, quoting CODHES 2009; Dawson and Farber 2012, pg. 155). In the realm of media and communication, journalists often experience violence at the hands of armed actors as some paramilitary groups 'impose a reign of terror, killing independent journalists or forcing them to censor themselves or flee the country (Reporters Without Borders 2012). Issues such as child soldiering are also relevant as in 2004, the estimated number of combatants under 18 ranged from 6,000 to 14,000, making up at least one out of every four irregular combatants in the conflict (Alvis Palma 2008, pg. 233, quoting Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2004). These numbers make Colombia the third country in the world with the most child soldiers after Congo and Liberia (UNICEF 2005, quoted in Save the Children International 2013, pg. 11). As Rodriguez points out, violence stemming from the conflict not only limits the ability of unarmed citizens to engage in political action, but also creates a general climate of mistrust and a fear in affected communities (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 4).

## The Cultural Consequences of Armed Conflict on Citizenship

Rodriguez argues that armed conflict and violence has a cultural impact on the effective exercise of citizenship. She points out that 'the combined effects of patron-client relationships, a state unable to guarantee civil rights, widespread bribery and corruption, and the presence of armed groups and their territorial control create and normalize a culture in which grabbing as much power as possible (with the help of money, political connections, and weapons) becomes common sense (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 115). As a result, 'absent, weak or corrupt judicial systems and/or local governments undermine the rule of law and often engender social contracts based on military might and wealth' (ibid., pg.250). In some cases, 'state institutions, such as armed forces, the police, and/or their paramilitary allies terrorize the communities they are supposed to protect and defend' (ibid., pg.250).

For Rodriguez, these types of relations between state institutions and citizens results in 'people hav[ing] little or no trust in the fair functioning of state institutions and rel[iance] on personal networks: tribe, clan, family, religious group', which often engage in violence as a means to solve disputes (Van Kalternborg-Stachau 2008, pg. 5 quoted by Rodriguez 2011, pg. 163). The result is a cultural context that legitimizes violence, 'a set of relationships and discursive practices that legitimate violence and or make violence seem an acceptable means of responding to conflict' (Galtung 1991, 1998, quoted by

Rodriguez 2011, pg. 254). Importantly, for Rodriguez, 'a culture permeated by violence and aggression' not only legitimizes the use of violence, but also 'fosters the idea that difference is the primary axle around which power is distributed'. This means that for many people, 'encountering any type of difference in everyday interactions triggers the impulse to overpower the other simply because they are different and thus threatening' (Rodriguez 2011, pg.119). The legitimization of violence and the rejection difference erode the ability of people to engage in peaceful debate, thus limiting the effective exercise of citizenship.

### **Citizenship and National Identity**

In Nariño, the region where the *Paco* project operates, national identity discourses, in addition to armed conflict, have traditionally excluded Afro-Colombian and Indigenous groups from full participation as citizens. The region has traditionally been on the margins of political and economic power due to its location far from industrial and economic centres (Save the Children 2013, pg. 11), and has a large indigenous and afro-Colombian population, two of Colombia's largest minority groups. The presence of these minority groups in Nariño is particularly relevant because discourses of national identity in Colombia have traditionally been marked by racial and ethnic difference. Dennis (2012) argues that Colombia's export-oriented economic model has historically shaped discourses of identity and belonging because, as early as in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the

Spanish colonial system constructed racial categories that “were then organized into social hierarchies for the purpose of socio-political subordination and labour exploitation” (ibid., pg. 3). The post-independence period, however, brought about important changes in terms of national understandings of race and ethnicity as the state introduced a discourse of *mestizaje* as a way to define itself as a nation with a homogenous culture and a common Colombian identity (ibid., pg. 5). *Mestizaje*, however, resulted in an empty rhetoric of tri-racial (indigenous, European, and afro-descendant) homogeneity that actually favoured a ‘whiter’ and Hispanicized mestizo and excluded Afro-Colombians and indigenous people from the national project, turning them into second-class citizens (ibid., pg. 5). Afro-Colombian communities, for instance, still experience higher than average levels of poverty, and are generally located in the least developed areas of the country in terms of infrastructure and state presence (Lezama 2012, pg. 183-184).

Similarly, indigenous Colombians have historically had to defend their rights to land ownership and a distinct culture, which have been threatened since the post-independence period (Sanders 2010, pg). Today, Nariño is an area particularly hard-hit by armed conflict, as well as by poverty – more than 27% of people in Nariño lives in extreme poverty - and social exclusion (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 7, 11). The region’s climate also attracts people involved in growing and commercializing illegal crops, and its geostrategic

location makes it an area of troop and drug transit (UNODC 2009, quoted in Save the Children International 2011, pg. 11).

Nevertheless, debates around identity and belonging in the national project have been productive realms for the exercise of citizenship. For instance, Afro-Colombian political organizations began organizing in the 1970s around the rejection of the notion that Afro-Colombians were incapable of contributing to the country, which have been historically prevalent in Colombia (Reales Jimenez 2012, pg. 122). Afro-Colombian groups responded to these ideas with *Cimarronismo contemporaneo*, an ethno-political ideology to unite all Afro-Colombians that took inspiration from human rights struggles taking place in the United States and South Africa (Reales Jimenez 2012, pg. 122). Similarly, the 1970s were also an important decade for indigenous peoples in Colombia, as communities in the Caribbean coast and in the southern part of the country began organizing politically to fight for land rights (Chaves & Zambrano 2006). Organizations such as the Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca, one of Colombia's most significant indigenous organizations today, have been instrumental in creating a strong indigenous movement in Colombia that gave visibility to issues of self-governance and land rights (Rappaport 2005).

The challenges to *mestizaje* described above influenced Colombia's official discourse on identity and citizenship, though structural constraints continue to prevent the effective exercise of citizenship among many

Colombians. As Chaves and Zambrano explain, Colombia has been moving away from a simple discourse of *mestizaje* that promoted racial mixing as a way to fully enjoy belonging in Colombian society, and towards a discourse of pluralism and multiculturalism that allows for multiple racial and ethnic identities (Chaves & Zambrano 2006). The most evident example of this shift is the 1991 Colombian constitution, which uses language such as multicultural and pluriethnic to describe the country's identity, and granted the indigenous and afro-descendant population special political, economic, cultural, and self-governance rights (Chaves & Zambrano 2006.) The 1991 constitution also created structures such as *resguardos* (collective property holdings) and *cabildos* (indigenous townhalls), and introduced mechanisms such as affirmative action (Reales Jimenez 2012, pg. 128). Nonetheless, issues stemming from the conflict, such as internal displacement, have disproportionately affected indigenous and afro-Colombian communities in areas such as Nariño (Dawson and Farber 2012, pg. 155), shedding light on the barriers that these groups still face.

### **Citizenship in the Current Peace Process**

The current peace process between the government and the FARC presents an opportunity for the conflict to end, and for unarmed citizens to become engaged in shaping a post-conflict Colombia. It is worth noting that the current peace

process is the most recent attempt at reaching a negotiated end to hostilities, as various Colombian governments have engaged in peace processes in the past. For instance, the Barco, Betancur, Gaviria, and Pastrana administrations all negotiated with guerrilla groups, which resulted in the demobilization of a number of smaller groups, but not to peace settlements with the FARC (Bouvier 2009, pg. 9-10, 39-64).

More recently, the Uribe administration negotiated a peace pact with paramilitary groups in the 2000s, though many demobilized paramilitary have since regrouped into dozens of new criminal and drug-trafficking organizations (Bouvier 2009, pg. 10, quoting Haugard 2008). The peace process unfolding today, however, comes after more than a decade of intense armed confrontation between the FARC and Colombian government, whose military capacity was boosted United States' Plan Colombia (Crandall 2008 pg. 91-93; Saab & Taylor 2009, pg. 463). This increased military capacity on the part of the state has translated into heavy military and moral blows to the guerrillas (Bouvier 2009, pg. 12), making the possibilities of military victory for the FARC very slim.

A success in the current peace process, which counts on significant international support and is centred on fundamental issues such as agrarian reform, political participation, drug trafficking, and victim's rights (Presidency of Colombia 2012, BBC News 2012), would improve conditions for citizen engagement as citizens would be able to mobilize without being associated with



illegal armed groups. For instance, citizen groups could mobilize to demand changes in agricultural policies, an issue that received quite a bit of attention in 2013 resulting from small-scale farmers' mobilization against current agricultural regulations (Crowe 2013), without being labelled as terrorists for advocating for the kinds of reforms traditionally pursued by guerrilla groups.

### **Media and Citizenship**

In this context marked by conflict, media can play an important role in the emergence of new understandings and practices of citizenship. In Colombia, media is marked by a contrast between high levels of media ownership concentration in private mass media, a weak public broadcasting system, and a strong community media sector. In terms of radio, for instance, there are currently 656 commercial stations, 167 public interest stations, and 651 community radio stations, 26 of which are indigenous stations (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 25-26, 28). In terms of television, there are two major private channels, three minor public channels, and 553 community television channels (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 28, quoting Comision Nacional de Television 2006, pg. 8). Community media has had a particularly strong presence in Colombia over the years. For instance, *Radio Sutatenza*, a radio station that emerged in the 1940s, is considered, along with Bolivian miners' radio stations, one of the earliest experiments in alternative media in Latin America (Rodriguez 2012, pg. 27; Gumucio-Dagron 2001, pg. 6).

In Bogotá alone, there were 47 community television radio stations, 7 audiovisual collectives, 110 community newspapers and magazines, at least 25 web-based communication platforms, 7 community radio stations operating on the radio spectrum, and 10 community radio stations operating online as of 2012 (Red de Comunicacion Comunitaria 2012).

However, in contexts of peacebuilding such as Colombia's, media have traditionally been seen as 'a tool for mass persuasion' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 21), a view that ignores the potential of other forms of media, such as community or citizens' media, to stimulate more productive forms of communication.

### **Citizens' Media**

In my view, citizens' media, a form of media that is 'embedded in communities in ways that create opportunities for networking, reaching, communicating, and connecting' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 21) can contribute to the emergence of new citizenship practices and understandings. The citizens' media movement in Colombia has taken a number of multiple forms. Ranging from more traditional community radio stations, to youth-led 'communication campfires' where young people regularly meet by the fire to discuss politics and art, and more recently to audio-visual initiatives using the internet as platform, the citizens' media movement in Colombia is vast and diverse.

According to Rincon (2007), in the case of Colombia, citizens' media has evolved as a form of communication that articulates new types of citizenship that underscore trust and dialogue, that draws from a strong tradition of narrative to tell relevant stories where people's lives become the material for stories and characters, and where media producers are fighting for a place in the media sphere' (Rincon 2007, pg. 9). Rodriguez (2011) argues that many citizens' media projects in Colombia have also have a history of involvement in peacebuilding by stimulating, through communication, social and cultural scenarios where people can experience the normalization of non-violence. 'Instead of sending messages describing non-violence trying to persuade people to live non-violently, the great potential of citizens' media is in their ability to allow people to a lived experience of non-violent ways to manage conflict, deal with difference, and interact with one another' (Rodriguez 2011, pg.254). However, as I have addressed in previous work (Vargas 2013), citizens' media initiatives usually suffer from sustainability issues, which often leads to problems in replicating experiences in different contexts

Among youth, citizens' media projects can stimulate local dialogue and new citizenship practices. A relevant example from the Colombian context is *Suacha Informa*, a communication initiative led by youth that produces a radio show and a newspaper in Soacha, a city neighbouring Bogota that faces a number of social issues, such as being a frequent destination for forcibly

displaced families. *Suacha Informa* was initially a communication initiative run by young people at an arts' centre, *Promotora Cultural Creer*, but it eventually developed into a larger project that delved into discussions of issues such as drug trafficking, local and national politics, free trade policies, among others. The project's objective is to provide more knowledge and awareness to citizens in a city where often 'citizenship is for those who sell their votes, not for people with social responsibility' (Villegas et al. 2007, pg. 121-126). The inclusion of youth in citizens' media projects is particularly important in Colombia's current conjuncture of peace dialogues between the government and the FARC, as youth are often ignored as key actors in processes of peace-building (McEvoy-Levy 2006, pg. 7). As McEvoy-Levy points out, youth play a key role in the sustainability of peace agreements because, in the long term, 'a peace agreement's endurance depends on whether the next generation accepts it or rejects it, on how they are socialized during the peace process, and on their perception of what the peace process has achieved' (McEvoy-Levy 2006, pg. 7).

I believe that participation in citizens' media projects provides Colombian youth with an opportunity to negotiate, imagine, perform, and ultimately internalize citizenship practices based on peaceful dialogue, pluralism, and political engagement. The performance and internalization of these practices allows youth media makers with an opportunity to identify as citizens whose voices matter and whose political actions can lead to social change.

Understanding communication as the performance of these practices within citizens' media projects is a fundamental aspect of this process because, as Rodriguez (2011) has argued, citizens' media projects become communication spaces where youth can experience what this type of citizenship feels like, something they can't always do in their everyday lives. In the section below I delve into Clemencia Rodriguez (2001, 2011)'s theory of citizens' media in contexts of armed conflict, particularly as it relates to performance.

## Chapter 2: Rodriguez's Theory of Citizens' Media in Contexts of Armed Conflict

### Theoretical Context

Rodriguez's citizens' media theory is one of many academic perspectives studying alternative media. For instance, Downing has characterized the field of alternative media as defined by a radical political, social, or cultural agenda, alternative to the mainstream's agenda, in his study of 'radical media' (Downing 1984, quoted by Couldry 2009, pg. 25). Downing is concerned with the possibilities that radical media create in bridging different struggles against oppression, as well as in the everyday processes occurring in radical media that disrupt immediate reality (Downing 2001, quoted in Bosch 2009, pg. 72).

On the other hand, Couldry is concerned with the idea of media power, which is based on the rejection of liberal understandings of the media as a 'fourth power' that acts as a watchdog to keep different forms of power, such as state power, in check (Couldry & Curran 2003, pg. 4). Rather, Couldry sees media power as an emergent source of power in its own right that is embedded in a society's power structures. The power of media power lies primarily in its representational power, or the ability to represent social reality, which makes it a central form of power in contemporary societies (Couldry & Curran 2003, pg. 3).

Another perspective is Atton's, which views alternative media as an opportunity for the 'other' to represent itself in opposition to the mainstream, which leads him to use the term 'alternative' as a key to understanding the role of alternative media (Bosch 2009, pg. 72).

Rodriguez's theory emerges from this field in terms of its concern with alternative media as a communication structure, but her theory also deals with the communication processes occurring within these structures.

Citizens' media theory also hails from the broader field of development communication and communication for social change, a field with greatly varying definitions (Melkote & Steeves 2000, pg. 39). Servaes (2006) views development communication as 'the sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs, and capacities of all concerned' (Servaes 2006, pg. 15). Wilkins (2000) defines it as the strategic application of communication technologies and processes to promote social change (Wilkins 2000 pg.197).

The field of development communication is marked by very different understandings of communication. Melkote and Steeves (2000) point out that one distinguishable position is viewing communication as 'a linear process of information transfer that causes social change in terms of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours' (Melkote and Steeves 2000, Servaes 2006, pg. 16, 17). This view of communication, which draws from the 'development as modernization

and growth' paradigm (Servaes 2006, pg. 17), gave way to the 'the dominant paradigm' of development communication. This 'dominant paradigm' consists essentially of the mere transmission of prepackaged development messages prepared by development agencies or governments (Melkote 2000, pg. 39, 40) to people in the developing world. In this context, the role of communication is the transmission of development messages, which should in theory facilitate the adoption of technologies and help in inculcating certain values and behaviours in the population (Melkote & Steeves 2001, pg. 38). Broadly, this dominant paradigm was influenced by Lerner's (1958) work on mass media in developing societies, and the work of Rogers (1962, 1983) on communication in agricultural extension. For Melkote & Steeves (2000), information diffusion can be traced back to the earliest models of media effects theory, often referred to as the 'bullet theory' (Schram 1971) or 'stimulus-response theory' (DeFleur and Ball-RoKeach 1975), which viewed mass media as powerful, direct, and uniform, and audiences as passive and defenceless (Melkote & Steeves 2000, pg. 105, 106). Approaches such as entertainment-education and social marketing in areas such as HIV and health communication can also be linked to the same model of one-way, top-down, source to receiver transmission models (Melkote 2001, pg. 135-137).

Melkote and Steeves (2000) highlight that there are other views of communication that contrast the diffusion models mentioned above. These



positions view 'communication as a complex process that is linked to culture, and that is connected global and local economic, political, and ideological structures' (Melkote & Steeves 2000, pg. 33, Servaes 2006, pg. 16, 17). As I have argued in previous work, (Vargas 2013) participatory communication is one of the approaches that understand communication in this fashion. Participatory communication proposes communication processes where participation, defined as 'the need to think, to express oneself, to belong to a group, to be recognized as a person, be respected, and have a say in important decisions that might affect one's life' (Diaz Bordenave 1989, quoted by Melkote 2000, pg. 138), is central to social change. The idea of dialogue is pivotal in participatory communication, as dialogue is seen as a process where both sender and receiver are equal partners (Diaz Bordenave 1976, quoted in Rogers 2006, pg., 111) and as an exchange that can provide a sense of ownership to people through 'the sharing and collective reconstruction of ideas' (Waisbord 2003, pg.152).

More recently, authors such as Manyozo (2012) have argued against this type of binary thinking that poises diffusion versus participatory approaches as opposites (Manyozo 2012, pg. 1). Rather, Manyozo (2012) provides a new framework to better understand the development communication field. She argues that communication and development approaches can be divided into

three broad groups: those concerned with media *content*, those concerned with media *structure*, and those with communication *processes* (Manyozo 2012).

I see citizens' media theory as drawing heavily on participatory communication approaches that focus on communication process, but also on alternative media theory that tends to focus more on communication structure and content. As Manyozo points out, alternative media, particularly media produced at a community level, fits into all three approaches as the term refers to 'the structure, process, and content of media owned by and serving the interests of geographical or ideological communities' (Manyozo 2012, pg. 124). Therefore, citizens' media theory offers a lens through which to study communication structures, the processes within these structure, and the result of these communication processes, which include both media products and behavioural and identity change.

### **Citizens' Media**

Rodriguez's theory of citizens' media is a way of thinking of media as both a communication structure and as a set of communication processes and practices. Rodriguez defines citizens' media as 'communication spaces where citizens can learn to manipulate their own languages, codes, signs, and symbols empowering them to name the world in their own terms. Citizens' media trigger processes that allow citizens to recodify their contexts and themselves. These

processes ultimately give citizens the opportunity to restructure their identities into empowered subjectivities strongly connected to local cultures and driven by well-defined, achievable utopias. Citizens' media are the media that citizens use to activate communication processes that shape their local communities' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 24). Citizens' media theory is, therefore, concerned both 'spaces of communication', and processes of social change within these structures that 'stimulate the construction of citizenship and democracy through dialogue and participation' (Bosch 2009, pg. 72).

### **Citizenship in Citizens' Media**

In examining processes of citizenship construction within citizens' media, Rodriguez draws on Chantal Mouffe's understandings of citizenship as defined by daily political action and engagement. Mouffe conceptualizes citizens as 'individuals in permanent interaction with their contexts, gaining and generating power from social relations...Citizens combine this fragmentary power to enact everyday political actions that shape their communities to reflect their personal and collective visions of utopia...a citizen is a person who uses his or her quotidian power to activate social and cultural processes, which in turn move the citizen's community towards the vision he or she envisions' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 24, quoting Mouffe 1992, pg. 231-235). Rodriguez views citizenship "not as a legal status but as a form of identification, a type of political identity: something to

be constructed, not empirically given'. Thus, citizens are not born as such, citizenship is not a status granted on the basis of some *essential* characteristic. Citizens have to enact their citizenship in everyday political practices: 'the citizen is not, as in liberalism, someone who is the passive recipient of specific rights and who enjoys the protection of the law'" (Rodriguez 2001, pg. 18-19, quoting Mouffe 1992, pg. 231-235). This understanding of citizenship, based on everyday practices that shape people's identities as citizens, is at the centre of my analysis. I am interested in understanding which and how citizenship practices emerge in the context of media production among youth in contexts of violence and conflict.

More recently, in her study of citizens' media in contexts of armed conflict in Colombia, Rodriguez draws heavily on the notion of *cultura ciudadana*. According to Rodriguez, in the Colombian context, the term *cultura ciudadana* (culture of citizenship) 'refers to a cultural fabric woven from numerous social processes that contribute to peaceful coexistence, among which the main ones include strengthening public spheres for dialogue about public policy; recognizing different identities as legitimate subjects with equal rights to access public spheres and voice their interests, goals, and dreams; normalizing non-violent conflict violent and resolution; the right and responsibility of citizens to oversee public institutions and their representatives; and transparency and accountability on the part of public institutions and public officials'(Rodriguez 2011, pg. 210).

Rodriguez points out that citizens' media groups 'bet on the creation of *cultura ciudadana* as a way, perhaps the only way, their media can intervene in local contexts of conflict and violence', and that many citizens' media leaders see 'a causal relationship between *cultura ciudadana* and violence, in which 'an increase in *cultura ciudadana* is followed by a decrease in violence' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 215). The concept of *cultura ciudadana* was pivotal for my analysis – my research sub questions are guided by this definition- because it provided me with a clear lens through which I could examine specific practices and connect them with the idea of citizenship as defined by Mouffe and Rodriguez.

An example of the ways in which citizens' media engage with the idea of *cultura ciudadana*, according to Rodriguez, is a poetry program in a radio station in the Colombian town of Inirida. A local man with a love for poetry proposed the poetry program, but most listeners initially reacted against it because they found it boring. However, the station leaders decided to support the man, and encouraged him to start a series of poetry circles in local schools, which eventually became a great success as all the poetry lovers in town felt like their interests were validated and, in turn, made the radio program a success. As Perez, one of the station leaders, explains, this was an important example of the ways in which citizens' media can trigger social processes that allow for new identities to be legitimized (Perez 2004, quoted by Rodriguez 2011, pg. 226). In this sense, citizens' media is not just about 'giving marginalized groups a minimal

voice and opportunity for expression, they are about making every voice count' (Ministerio de Cultura 2004, quoted by Rodriguez 2011, pg. 229). By allowing and encouraging the poetry program to air, the radio station legitimized the identities of the town's poetry lovers, thus enriching its social fabric and public sphere.

The emergence of new practices of citizenship, such as *cultura ciudadana*, through processes fostered by citizens' media, is deeply linked with the construction of peace. This is relevant to the *Paco* project given that it operates in an area marked by violence. Rodriguez argues that citizens' media projects have a critical role to play in peace-building, and can go beyond being simply tools of mass information and dissemination. For instance, Rodriguez argues that citizens' media can be alternative sources of information in relation to the conflict, mechanisms to facilitate communication among parties in conflict, and produce content to shed light on peace initiatives. She also puts forth the idea of citizens' media as ways to reclaim the experience of violence, preserve memory about the conflict, and sow the seeds for reconciliation, (Rodriguez 2000, pg. 151-157, Riano-Alcala 2006, quoted by Rodriguez 2011, pg. 237).

Citizens' media can contribute to the re-appropriation of public space as sites where social interactions disrupted by conflict can occur once again, which is critical in ameliorating 'the psychosocial effects of armed conflict', such as the violent disruption of people's daily lives, moral and social norms, and sense of

normalcy (Desjarlais and Kleinman 1994, quoted by Rodriguez 2000, pg. 151-157). In the specific case of Colombia, Rodriguez argues that citizens' media attempt 'to transform daily interactions from aggression and violence to civil dissent. By disrupting violence the [radio] stations work toward stopping the erosion of the social fabric of local communities... as they disrupt violence, the stations interject communication models in which different identities have legitimate access to public spheres, and where 'different' does not mean 'enemy' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 217).

### **Performance in Citizens' Media**

According to Rodriguez, communication models that foster new practices of citizenship such as *cultura ciudadana* are based on the notion of communication as performance. Rodriguez draws from performance theorists such as Bell (2008), Conquergood (1995, 1998), Madison (2005), and Turner (1988), to argue that performance 'engages all the senses of participants, allowing them to embody and feel communication. In performance, messages are communicated through smell, sight, touch, and sound; performance participants are enveloped in a holistic experience that engages all their senses' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 255). For Madison, 'lived experience, then, as thought and desire, word and image, is the primary reality'...performance emerges at the intersection of experience and expression, in the form of expressed experience, or as experience shaped into

meaningful expression. In performance, the constitutive potential of language over reality is salient' (Madison 2005, pg. 151, 152, 161, quoted by Rodriguez 2011, pg. 255). Literature from performance theory also points out that performance allows a collectivity to look at itself as in a 'hall of mirrors' (Turner 1982), a feeling echoed by Madison (2005), who argues that the self-reflexive power of performance allows us to 'come to realize truths about ourselves and our world that we cannot realize in our day-to-day experience' (Madison 2005, pg. 154, quoted in Rodriguez 2011, pg. 256). An example that illustrates this are the words of Guillermo Perez, a citizens' media leader in Colombia, who explains that 'being a radio producer allows them to immerse themselves in daily life of their communities in ways they couldn't see before, so they start to see things differently. They start feeling that they belong to something, belong from the inside, instead of just seeing things from the outside' (Perez 2004, quoted by Rodriguez 2011, pg. 215). The idea of communication as performance is critical to Rodriguez study of Colombian citizens' media.

### **The Performance of Citizenship in Citizens' Media**

Citizens' media contribute to the construction of peaceful citizenship because they provide spaces for the performance of *cultura ciudadana* as a set of citizenship practices. Citizens' media make it 'possible for people to feel, share, and experience an alternative to the terror imposed by war'. Citizens' media that



'regard communication as performance, rather than as information dissemination or persuasion, are better positioned to disrupt violence' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 35). In this sense, the communication collectives Rodriguez examined open a 'communication space in which a culture of peace is *performed*, becoming a lived experience for participants'... these are spaces where 'people are able to perform non-violent conflict resolution. People 'experience the process of shifting how they interact with others, and how they move from dealing with conflict violently to dealing with conflict discursively' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 121). The idea of citizens' media as tool for the emergence of a culture of peaceful conflict resolution is clearly in line with the notion of *cultura ciudadana* described above, which underscores peaceful coexistence and the internalization of non-violence (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 210).

One of the ways in which citizens' media foster the emergence of *cultura ciudadana* is by providing communication spaces for the performance of identities and ways of life that persist despite violence, thus legitimizing them. Rodriguez points out that, because 'citizens' media are strongly connected to the everyday lives of their communities, they are in a privileged position from which they can focus their microphones, cameras, and other communication technologies on those dimensions of people's lives that exist beyond the reach of armed violence' (Rodriguez 2011, pg.254). Performing cultural identities unaffected by violence is pivotal as, 'in performing these types of actions,

citizens' media strengthen the notion that the community's normal life has not been entirely obliterated by war and that habitus survives...citizens' media serve as loudspeakers for those realities that still exist out of the reach of armed violence' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 253).

For example, the radio stations in the Magdalena Medio region of Colombia that Rodriguez studied generally produce "journalistic programs that focus on the everyday life in the communities that goes on *despite* armed conflict...programming will chronicle the lives of forcefully displaced families, rather than reporting on the parties in conflict that cause the displacement' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 158). Therefore, for many citizens' media projects, 'the goal is not to communicate, express, or inform, but instead to perform all those local identities, values, ways of life, cultural practices, and forms of interaction that have not been permeated by militaristic, war driven logic' (ibid., pg. 82). In this context, the idea of legitimizing different identities through their performance in communication spaces is in line with the idea of *cultura ciudadana* as citizenship practices based on dialogue and pluralism.

Citizens' media can also contribute to citizenship practices that 'help re-establish two way direct interactions between local mayors and other government official and their communities' (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 167). This is especially relevant in a context such as Colombia's, where 'weapons, violence, corruption, and impunity have replaced communication and dialogue between local

governments and their people' (ibid.). For instance, *Puerto Wilches Estereo*, a Colombian radio station studied by Rodriguez, has been holding a series of events over the past few years called *Rendicion de Cuentas*, in which local government officials present their progress so far and listeners call in to ask questions, thus 'amplifying the town hall meeting to the entire municipality' so that 'farmers in their fields, fishermen on their boats, health practitioners, teachers, and mothers caring for their children can listen to the mayor and his cabinet' (ibid., pg. 162).

Rodriguez explains that this type of event was actually successful in putting pressure on local authorities, and that stations usually pressured the politicians into having a *Rendicion de Cuentas* by using a series of strategies on the air, such as a particularly annoying high-pitched jingle that sounds like a crow (Rodriguez 2011, pg.162). This is a clear example of performance of *cultura ciudadana* as a set of citizenship practices, as the citizens involved in the radio station see themselves as people with the right to oversee public institutions and demand transparency, and act accordingly within the communication space provided by the radio station.

In summary, the communication spaces created by citizens' media allow participants to perform a series of citizenship practices, in the case of Colombia often based on the notion of *cultura ciudadana*, through media production. For Rodriguez, *cultura ciudadana* is a cultural context and set of practices that

contribute to peaceful coexistence, the strengthening of public spheres for dialogue about public policy; the legitimization of different identities as subjects with equal rights to access public spheres and voice their interests, the normalization of non-violent conflict resolution, the right and responsibility of citizens to oversee public institutions and their representatives, and transparency and accountability on the part of public institutions and public officials (Rodriguez 2011, pg. 210). In turn, the performance of these practices of *cultura ciudadana* can lead to the emergence of new social relations that go beyond the confines of the communication structure, and can lead to social change.

### Chapter 3: *Paco* Communication Collectives

The *Paco* project is a component of *Aprendiendo Crecemos*<sup>1</sup>, a \$9 million effort operated by Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in the Nariño Department of Colombia between 2008 and 2013. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funded the project under its priority area of securing the future of children and youth (Canada 2011). *Aprendiendo Crecemos* was implemented over 5 years in partnership with 22 public educational institutions, two Awa indigenous organizations, Afro-Colombian community councils, and local education secretariats in six different municipalities: Pasto, Tumaco, Ricaute, Policarpa, Barbacoas, and Samaniego. These areas are notorious for having been particularly hard-hit by armed conflict, and are home to vulnerable population such as indigenous people, afro-Colombian communities, children, and youth, many of whom have either been victims of internal displacement, or at risk of becoming displaced (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 6). At the time of writing, the project has been renewed until 2018, and will extend to the neighbouring department of Cauca.

The objective of *Aprendiendo Crecemos* was ‘to guarantee the rights of children through the improvement of access to quality education’ and to

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1 The full name of the project is Promotion and Protection of the Right to Education and Participation of Children and Youth in the Department of Nariño – Colombia (<http://www.aprendiendocrecemos.org/>)

strengthen 'participation processes for children and young people, their families, and the communities that are most affected by violence, armed conflict, and extreme poverty in the region' (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 6). The project hoped to meet these objectives through the implementation of educational programming 'designed to reduce violence, encourage the development of students' life plans, reduce dropout rates, and adapt inclusive curriculum and strategies to include a gender equality perspective', and through the training of teachers in 'student-centered strategies' that include more relevant content and methodology' (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 6, 7).

Programming for *Aprendiendo Crecemos* took place in the form of curricular and extracurricular activities. Curricular activities centred on educational content, test scores, evaluation. The program's final report to CIDA states that 40,457 students, 2,070 teachers, and 6,673 parents were reached through the program in schools, and 3,032 people were reached through Flexible Education Models (FEM), which were designed to reach 'vulnerable and conflict-affected children, youth, and adults' (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 7, 9). Extracurricular activities also took place in schools, but were based on voluntary student participation. These activities included peace games, student government, workshops on children's rights, music groups, football tournaments, conflict resolution sessions, etc (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 38, 39). The *Paco* project, which is described in more detail below, was one of these

extracurricular activities. The objective of these activities was to contribute to ‘the development of citizenship, coexistence, and peace building approaches’ and ‘the strengthening of children and youth participation’ (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 10).

A number of different principles guided the design and implementation of *Aprendiendo Crecemos*. Conceptually, the program was aligned around five key axes: a rights-based approach, quality and relevance of education access to education, inclusiveness, gender equity, participation, and citizenship and coexistence (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 22-30). All programming was designed around five key principles: project integrity in addressing all dimensions of education such as the school, the family, and the community; the importance of local contexts in designing education interventions; projects must be able to record successful experiences in ways that allow these experiences to be transferred to other contexts; focus on increased coverage and transformational education; and sustainability through increased capacity at all levels of program implementation (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 31-35).

*Aprendiendo Crecemos*’ focus on participation, citizenship, and coexistence is of special interest for this thesis because the *Paco* project is a direct result of concern with these issues. According to program reports, *Aprendiendo Crecemos* focused its work around ‘the development of citizenship,

coexistence, and peace building approaches’ and ‘the strengthening of children and youth participation’ (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 10).

The program argues that ‘citizens’ participation in relation to education is critical in developing, sustaining, and transforming education’ (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 28), which makes participation not just a ‘political and democratic imperative, but also a factor ‘that contributes to the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of action’ (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 28). In this sense, *Aprendiendo Crecemos* defines citizenship as ‘a legal status through which a citizen acquires individual rights and duties in relation to a larger political entity’, and views participation in their citizenship education projects as a way to ‘strengthening democracy, coexistence, and their relationships with others’ (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 30).

All citizenship competencies in *Aprendiendo Crecemos* projects were based on both national education guidelines that focus on diversity and tolerance, peaceful coexistence and democratic participation, as well as on Save the Children’s concern with exercising and fulfilling children’s rights, building a culture of peace, peaceful coexistence in schools and encouraging participation’ (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 75). In light of these concerns, *Aprendiendo Crecemos* was interested in implementing initiatives to strengthen ‘the capacity of children and youth to engage in personal and collective reflection



in ways that allow them to think, opine, and make decisions on personal, collective, and public affairs' (Save the Children International 2013, pg.28).

External evaluators from Capra International conducted an evaluation of citizenship-building activities. The two mechanisms used to measure improvements in participation and citizenship were the measuring of 'beneficiaries that demonstrate more knowledge and capacity to advocate their rights', and the number of participants who participate in some of the activities mentioned above (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 29). In order to draw their data, the evaluators used focus groups and interviews with students, particularly focusing on students that had directly participated in citizenship projects, and surveys of students, teachers and directors in Pasto and Tumaco in 2009 and in Pasto, Samaniego, Policarpa and Ricaurte in 2011 (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 75).

Some of the results of the evaluators' analysis included were that 94% of the learners who answered the survey found that what they had learned in *Aprendiendo Crecemos* flexible education models for at-risk youth allowed them to understand their rights and duties, while 86% said that they learned about democracy and how to strengthen it (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 58). The evaluators also concluded that 'the large majority of children interviewed and surveyed stated that they were aware of their rights and demonstrated that their most important rights are the right to life, to have a family, to participate in issues

that affect their development and to receive a quality education' (ibid., pg. 85).

However, as it will be discussed below, the evaluation process did not specifically evaluate the *Paco* project, making it impossible to draw on evaluation data for this thesis.

### **Communication Collectives**

The *Paco* project consisted of the establishment of 19 communication collectives for students in schools participating in *Aprendiendo Crecemos*. *Paco* collectives, the name being an abbreviation of Participation and Communication collectives, are defined as 'protective spaces that strengthened participation processes for children' by 'teaching and modeling the peaceful resolution of conflicts' through media production units. The project views participating children and youth as 'both as leaders to guide the direction of the collective and as community reporters' (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 38).

The objective of the *Paco* strategy was to 'allow children and youth to express themselves about what is happening in their communities' through radio, print, television, or the Internet, and to 'propose peaceful solutions that alleviate violence in their communities' (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 65).

According to *Aprendiendo Crecemos*, the *Paco* project was also designed as way to 'strengthen the capacity of children and youth for critical thinking, highlight the importance of local context, and provide communication, participation and

advocacy skills to children and youth' (ibid., pg. 65). It is estimated that a total of 22 teachers and 272 students received communication training at 19 different *Paco* collectives. Ultimately, the *Paco* collectives are conceptualized as 'a link between the local school and the broader community, making it not just an information mechanism but also an educational one' (ibid., pg. 66).

According to Marcela Forero, the person responsible for the initial conceptualization and implementation of the *Paco* collectives within *Aprendiendo Creemos*, the project has its origins in a number of television production experiences with working children led by *Fundacion Magdalena* in the early 2000s. The work of *Fundacion Magdalena* provided working children in these cities with the opportunity to produce television content that highlighted their rights, and created avenues for the content to be broadcast on local stations. Forero drew from her experiences with *Fundacion Magdalena*, where she spent a few years, and envisioned the *Paco* project as series of media production hubs where children would be given the opportunity to produce information (Forero, personal communication, January 2014).

*Aprendiendo Creemos* implemented the *Paco* initiative following a six-step process. It would first inform all members of the school community about the initiative, and then engage in a short process of consultation with children and youth at the school to determine whether *Paco* was pertinent to their needs and context. It would then select a number of volunteer children and youth to

participate in the project, offer them training in journalism, television, and radio production, and begin a script writing process with the program participants. Additionally, the project provided a series of workshops to teachers on knowledge of communication media, communication networks, and strategies to make communication collectives sustainable (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 66).

Following these series of workshops, students in each *Paco* decided whether they wanted to focus on producing radio, television, print, or online material, though they often chose more than one medium. *Aprendiendo Creemos* provided a lot of the necessary equipment, such as cameras and computers, and the different *Paco* groups began to meet at least once a week. The students produced a wide variety of media, ranging from news to chronicles to public awareness campaigns in defence of children's rights (Forero, personal communication, January 2014). At this point, the communication team at Save the Children were Marcela, Laura, and Fernando, three communicators who spent months going from school to school in Nariño teaching media production workshops (ibid.).

As groups became stronger, the *Paco* project became spaces to explore ideas of citizenship and participation with children and youth through the production of media. Once training in media production was complete, Forero and other Save the Children staff also began providing workshops on media

content, which allowed for issues of citizenship and participation to become part of the discussions. For instance, according to Forero, one of the main purposes of the media products the students created was to modify practices and attitudes towards children and youth among the audience. For example, many *Paco* groups produced material on issues such as violence towards children at home, and on the many risks stemming from the armed conflict that children and youth in the region face as many are recruited to work for armed groups. Importantly, project leaders were especially mindful of security issues for children who were producing these types of material, and often used darkened screens or audio editing to protect their identities (Forero, personal communication, January 2014).

When it came to broadcasting their media products, each *Paco* operated differently. For instance, if the town where they were working had a strong radio station, then the *Paco* groups would choose to focus mostly on radio production and would seek agreements with the station so the students could use their studios or have access to the airwaves. Save the Children support was critical at this point, as many local or radio television stations charged the students (Forero, personal communication, January 2014). In some other cases, *Aprendiendo Creecemos* set up and funded a school radio station (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 65).

Many of these *Paco* groups became increasingly more self-sufficient over time. The older students began to share their experiences with the younger ones, and many groups went on to implement a system of media education for the younger members of the collectives. The students in the project also became known in their communities because they were often on television, which encouraged more people to join the project. *Aprendiendo Crecemos* continued to support these groups, often offering transportation subsidies for students to be able to attend the groups (Forero, personal communication, January 2014).

Each *Paco* collective had the opportunity to work on communication needs specific to their communities, but collaboration with other *Paco* collectives was encouraged. For instance, the *Paco* collective in an Awa Community worked to support the revival of the local Awapit language, while the work of the *Paco* in Tumaco primarily consisted of children and youth engaging in political advocacy with local government representatives (Save the Children & NRC 2013, pg. 38). However, as a way to encourage collaboration, *Aprendiendo Crecemos* facilitated a meeting that brought together all 19 PACO collectives across Nariño as a way to exchange experiences and lessons learned. According to program, reports, 68 children and 20 teachers participated in this event (ibid., pg. 41). This meeting led to the renewed commitment of 15 teachers to continue supporting this project, and produced a regional PACO network that will carry out a regional campaign entitled 'Education for Peace' with participation of all PACO collectives

(ibid.). Additionally, *Aprendiendo Creemos* produced a guide for the implementation of *Paco* Collectives.

*Aprendiendo Creemos* also produced two booklets as guides for best practices and for the conceptual soundness of the *Paco* collectives. (Save the Children International 2013, pg. 66). These two booklets were produced to support teachers and collective leaders in establishing and sustaining the *Paco* groups. The first booklet, *Yo Participo, Yo Comunico: Centros de Participación y Comunicación PACO: Todo lo que Debes Saber para Implementar un Centro PACO en tu colegio y comunidad*, introduces basic concepts about communication, the nature of the *Paco* project, and outlines the step for creating a *Paco* collective. It states that *Paco* groups should not be made up of more than 30 participants.

The booklet highlights that media content should be about the community where the *Paco* group operates, and should be produced from the perspective of children and youth. Media products should focus on issues around children's rights, protecting children from harm, and participation, and should highlight positive developments rather than simply reporting on violence or rights violation (Save the Children International 2012). The booklet also introduces media formats such as newspaper reports, interviews, and radio shows. Additionally, it provides a series of definitions of terms such as participation, citizenship, and democracy.

The second booklet is called *ABC del los Centros de Participacion y Comunicacion Paco: Cartilla de Actividades*. The booklet provides a series of activities and games that *Paco* leaders or teachers can carry out with the entire group as a way to build up the collective. They include anything from designing crosswords to signing songs to playing with balloons. The booklet also includes sample radio and television scripts (ibid.).

The evaluation of the *Paco* collectives was left up to the school and the local community. The only data available on the evaluation of a *Paco* collective is the table below, which shows the results of two focus groups conducted with participants of a *Paco* collective in an Awa indigenous community.

Table 1: Evaluation of *Paco* collective

Participation Space	Level of recognition of students to access the space	Result of the survey that was conducted
Radio Station	High	The majority of those interviewed recognized that the radio station is a space for real participation by all Awá students.
School Newspaper	High	The majority of students recognized that this is a new space that reflects the interests and decisions of Awá children and young people.

(Save the Children & NRC 2013)

*Aprendiendo Crecemos*, however, recommends a series of parameters for evaluating the work of *Paco* collectives. For instance, they propose determining whether the materials produced are appropriate and attention-grabbing, and whether they engage with topics related to children and youth in their community



(Save the Children International 2013, pg. 66). As a result of the general lack of data on the effectiveness of *Paco* collectives in fostering new citizenship practices, I did not use any data from the evaluation and monitoring process, and focused my analysis exclusively on the media products.

## Chapter 4: Findings of Citizenship Practices Reflected in Media Products

Given the size of the project and the vast amount of communication products created by *Paco* participants, I focused on the media products that were made available to me by Save the Children's Bogotá and Toronto offices. It is also worth mentioning that, because many *Paco* collectives started rather informally, not all of the groups kept a record of the media products they were creating. For instance, some radio shows would be broadcast live and no record of the scripts was kept. In other cases, *Paco* collectives produced very few materials, and retrieving them would pose a problem, as it would involve travelling to numerous schools across Nariño. Therefore, the products described below are not representative of the entire project. Rather, these products capture some of the general themes that were discussed in some of the most active or diligent *Paco* collectives.

### **Case 1: Web Content Produced by Paco Collectives in Tumaco**

The *Paco* project in Tumaco began in two different schools, *Ciudadela Mixta Colombia* and *Iberia*, though initially there was only one *Paco* collective for both schools. Laura Ossa, communication official at Save the Children Colombia, explained to me that the process began with fifteen students from each school (Ossa, personal communication, 2014). They were lucky to have found support in

some of the teachers at the school, who also helped recruit students to join the collective. In this context, *Aprendiendo Creemos* offered a series of workshops for these thirty students, which included both discussions on communication and journalism, media production training. *Aprendiendo Creemos* staff also offered workshops on children's rights, hoping that the students would produce material on this topic. This initial process took about six months, after which the group began to produce television programs. However, none of the material was edited or properly kept during the first few months of the project because the staff at *Aprendiendo Creemos* never thought the project would grow or become a success, and there was no funding for editing equipment (ibid.). Therefore, most of the early material was recorded and broadcast live.

As time went by and project leaders realized that the *Paco* collective had great potential and that there was a lot of 'untapped talent' (Ossa, personal communication, 2014), the initiative received more support. Students continued working on television production, but some also branched into press and radio. One of the schools, *Ciudadela Mixta Colombia*, even managed to set up a permanent radio station for the school (ibid.). As the project grew, the *Paco* collective found support from the Walt Disney Foundation, through their *Amigos por el Mundo* program for Latin America. This additional support allowed for a media education project where more experienced students in the collective would

share their knowledge and experience with younger members (ibid.). This made way for a much larger project.

Figure 1: *Paco* participants in Tumaco



Today, there are about 200 students in two *Paco* collectives, one for each of the two schools mentioned earlier, in Tumaco. There are workshops every Saturday during the school year, to which a maximum of 30-40 students can attend, which means that the 200 students have to take turns attending so they can all participate. *Aprendiendo Creecemos* provides transportation subsidies and a snack to all participants. Ossa explained to me that there are no norms within the collectives, that students of any age can participate, and that people are encouraged to express themselves in any way they want. This system allows collective members to reach agreements about the kind of media products

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<sup>2</sup> 'Paco participants in Tumaco' Photo Credit: Save the Children Colombia

they want to create. Consequently, collective members produce very diverse media projects based on their daily experiences or events at school, though the guiding thread in all products is always a discussion on children's rights (Ossa, personal communication, 2014). Collective members create their work specifically to be broadcast on the Internet- they do not have access to a local television or radio station.

*Aprendiendo Crecemos* has provided all the equipment for the work of the *Paco* collectives in Tumaco, but schools have also begun to contribute. For instance, Ossa told me that the equipment at one of the schools had been recently stolen, but that the school principal has committed to replacing it using school funding. This is possible because school officials understand the value of the project, which contributes to the engagement of students at school and gives more visibility to activities organized by teachers (Ossa, personal communication, 2014). This is a critical development for Ossa, as it means that school official and collective members are aware that support from external donors will eventually end, and they will eventually have to find ways to continue funding their work (ibid.).

## Media Products

The web content that was available for my research consists exclusively of videos uploaded to youtube.com by Save the Children's Colombia office<sup>3</sup>. I studied a total of 16 clips that profile the work of two different *Paco* collectives, one in Tumaco one in and Samaniego, a different municipality, though most of them were produced in Tumaco. I divided the 16 clips into six different kinds of products.

Two of the videos are what I call 'summaries', as they are clips that bring together a number of images and voices about the general nature of the Paco project. One<sup>4</sup> of the videos shows a lot of footage from different schools participating in *Aprendiendo Crecemos*, including footage produced by different *Paco* collectives. This video shows student reporters covering school activities, particularly other extracurricular activities put together by *Aprendiendo Crecemos*. For instance, a number of students share their experiences producing media, their insights about the importance of communication, and some of their musical talents. The other video<sup>4</sup> shows a number of *Paco* participants explaining what the project is about, and sharing some of the impact that the project has had on their lives. However, though the footage for these videos was clearly

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<sup>3</sup> Most videos can be found by clicking on <http://www.youtube.com/user/savethechildrencol> or on <http://www.youtube.com/user/ProgramaPACO>.

<sup>4</sup> Participacion: Del Derecho al Hecho-Aprendiendo Crecemos  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWjbhGa5Z4I>

produced by *Paco* students, *Aprendiendo Crecemos* staff clearly participated in the editing process and likely uploaded the videos to the Internet.

Figure 2: Image from ‘summary’ video uploaded to Youtube



There are also three videos I classify as ‘reports’, which are more journalistic in nature and shed light on particular events covered by the student reporters. The first one is a report on the graduation ceremony that *Aprendiendo Crecemos* put together for *Paco* reporters in Tumaco, where they received a diploma as ‘student reporters’<sup>6</sup>. There is also a video that reports on life by the *Playa del Morro*, Tumaco’s beach and biggest source of pride for the *Paco* students. The video highlights the music and food that are part of the local landscape, and explores the practice of hair braiding which, as a one of the

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5 Testimonio Paco Subtitulados <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knHqJwmniuE>

6 Grado Paco Tumaco [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k\\_FELo9yATs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_FELo9yATs)

students explains, has its origins in the time of slavery when men used women's hair to make ropes so they could escape plantations. Lastly, there is a video<sup>7</sup> that shows *Paco* students covering an event where Save the Children staff members from different countries are gathered in Bogotá to discuss their work in the field of education.

Figure 3: Image from video report uploaded to Youtube



I also identify two videos as 'instructional', which are videos in which the *Paco* students share their knowledge about producing different forms of media. These videos were created as teaching tools for other *Paco* collectives. The first one<sup>8</sup> is a video produced by the *Paco* collective in Tumaco, which explains the

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7 Reunion Regional de Educacion, Save the Children, Bogota, Colombia

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abJoxVV1dJY#t=68>

<sup>8</sup> Como se hace un periodico – Paco Tumaco <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bk6xyUPu21o>



steps and equipment needed to make a newspaper and find news stories. The second one<sup>9</sup> is a video produced by the *Paco* collective in Samaniego. This video explains the processes of radio production, as well as the different types of radio shows that be made. Even though this video was not produced in Tumaco I decided to include it in my sample because it closely resembled the other 'instructional' video. Both these videos delve into more technical aspects of media production, rather than into content related to citizenship or participation.

Figure 4: Image from instructional video uploaded to Youtube



I consider six of the videos 'campaigns'. These are short videos to be broadcast on local television as a way to influence public opinion about children's

<sup>9</sup> Como se hace un programa de radio? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qUQCTMGKRc>

rights. These campaigns are reminiscent of development communications strategies that borrow from marketing approaches discussed in Chapter 2. The first<sup>10</sup> of these videos is campaign by the *Paco* collective in Tumaco asking people in the town to vote for them through an online platform because they are hoping to be selected by Disney for their '*amigos por el mundo*' program. It is worth noting that the *Paco* group in Tumaco ended up being selected by Disney, and received funding and equipment for their media production projects, which is why some children appear wearing Disney t-shirts in other videos. The second video<sup>11</sup> is a 30-second clip where children and youth ask adults to teach them to live peacefully, to provide a good example for them. The third video<sup>12</sup> is about a minute long and features *Paco* students from Tumaco and musicians from Colombian pop band Wamba inviting people to a concert for peace and to 'take over' the town with culture and fun as a way to support children's rights.

The fourth<sup>13</sup> video is a video that highlights the work of the *Paco* collective in Tumaco, and ends by telling the audience that the 'children of Tumaco do not

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<sup>10</sup> Comercial Danos tu Voto – Proyecto Amigos por el mundo- Disney

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPAHvgsJluM>

<sup>11</sup> Comercial Danos tu Ejemplo- Construir un Mensaje de Paz- Tumaco

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amgiFc8e2O4>

<sup>12</sup> Comercial Concierto Tumaco con Wamba [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIV\\_2KFfrqI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIV_2KFfrqI)

<sup>13</sup> Centro de Participacion y Comunicacion en Tumaco

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXDkS1xXxPg>

want any more violence'. The fifth video<sup>14</sup> is short clip about preventing sexual abuse that features a number children saying that sexual abuse must be reported to local authorities, and features the logos of some of the institutions that can protect children in these situations. The last video<sup>15</sup> is similar to the second video, which asks adults to give young people a good example by treating them well and respecting their rights.

There are a couple of videos I call 'skits', which show fictional situations of conflict and children's abuse, and teach children how to deal with these situations. The first one is a video<sup>16</sup> that shows a fictional confrontation between two women over a man. The confrontation, which starts because of gossip spread by a neighbour, eventually ends in a hug between the women as they engage in dialogue to solve their problems. The second video<sup>17</sup> intertwines images of a number of children dancing and singing about their rights, and the story of a girl who is sent to work by her abusive father only to be yelled at for not having made enough money. The video ends when the singing children come to

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<sup>14</sup> Comercial Prevencion Abuso Sexual <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkARc9Zm7cU>

<sup>15</sup> Video 'Danos tu ejemplo' Contruccion de Paz Tumaco

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buV1frDJ9fM>

<sup>16</sup> Clip Resolucion de Conflictos <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1YDGPYI5tM>

<sup>17</sup> Si me proteges, soy feliz <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQ2GI50YUiE>

meet the abused girl and encourage her to denounce her father to the local authorities.

Figure 5: Image of campaign video uploaded to Youtube



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Lastly, there is one video I label as ‘advocacy’, as it delves into political demands on the part of the *Paco* students. This video begins with footage of different children and youth sharing their problems/opinions on pieces of paper. One of them has to walk very far to get to school and there are no paths when it rains. Another one cannot access education because her family does not have enough money to cover transportation fees. A third one cannot get to school because he would have to walk through a minefield. This section ends with a voice and caption stating ‘we want our voices to be heard. We need our needs to be taken into account by mayoral candidates.’ What follows is footage of

numerous students speaking from a lectern and articulating political demands. They ask for the elimination of registration fees at school, the creation of subsidies to cover transportation and book costs, for healthier food in the school cafeterias, and for increased funding for public education. Another student demands there be more job opportunities for their parents so that children are not forced to work, as well as more education for parents so they value education and learn how to support their children in this process. Other students ask for more government intervention so that armed groups and gangs do not recruit students, for more support to those suffering from drug addiction, and more security in schools so that drug dealers cannot sell to students. Different students ask for more spaces for recreation, and for increased conflict resolution programming in schools. The video ends with students reporting from the beach in Tumaco, where they ask the viewers to vote for candidates whose government plan include children and youth. The reporters say 'vote for us: for our education, protection, participation, health, and for me.'

Figure 6: Image from campaign video uploaded to Youtube



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In the paragraphs below I present the findings of my analysis. It is important to note that these findings were produced using my research questions, which are outlined in Chapter 1, in the methodology section.

### **Findings according to research sub-question #1: Citizenship Practices that Strengthen Public Spheres**

Many of the *Paco* project videos reflect citizenship practices that strengthen public spheres, one of the key social processes for the construction of *cultura ciudadana* as a way to peaceful coexistence. In the paragraphs below I outline some of those practices and provide examples. In sum, these videos reflect that *Paco* participants are internalizing understandings about their rights, are learning

to communicate to uphold their rights, and are become more aware of the importance of creating public discussion on issues that affect them.

One of the practices I observed was the realization on the part of *Paco* participants that public spheres can contain a large number of perspectives, including their own. For instance, one of the videos features footage of two young women telling the audience that mainstream news only cover war, mines, and bombs, and that life in their communities is not all like that. They argue that mainstream news never cover music or band contests in some areas because of fear of armed groups. Meanwhile, the screen images of students, apparently of indigenous background, playing music and people marching down the street. The two reporters explain to the audience that they think that through local media, such as the newspaper they are creating, they can show all the art, music, and culture that young people are creating, rather than the images of way to which people have grown accustomed. This example reflects the emergence of practices on the part of media producers to bring new perspectives to the public sphere through their media products. It reflects that, through participation in the project, children and youth are internalizing the idea that public spheres should be spaces for a multitude of perspectives. Additionally, they are learning how to bring their perspectives to public spheres through media production.

Another practice that strengthens public spheres I observed is the understanding and articulation of children's rights on the part of *Paco*

participants. An example is a video filmed during a graduation ceremony where boys and girls call three parents up to the front to join a group of students. The parents are asked to interview the students as if they were part of a TV show. The parents proceed to ask the kids what they think are the best ways to prevent violence, to which the students respond that there should be workshops for parents, and that they should be able to listen and communicate with their children. This short exchange demonstrates that participating children and youth have begun to internalize the notion that they have the right to discuss their rights, and have developed communicative practices to engage in these discussions. In my view, having an understanding of their rights and knowing how to articulate demands is critical for the development of stronger public spheres where multiple perspectives are included.

I also found that some of the videos reflected a clear willingness to engage with sensitive issues and to demand protection from authorities, which is a practice I believe contributes to stronger public spheres. Clear examples of this are the videos I labelled as ‘campaigns’, which talk about issues such as sexual abuse and violence towards children. The video I labelled as ‘advocacy’ also reflects this type of practices as children and youth learn to bring their concern to the public sphere in an effective manner, thus strengthening it. Ultimately, these videos reflect a greater awareness of the importance of public spheres as spaces to discuss critical social issues, and demonstrate that children are strengthening



public spheres by bringing these discussions to local television sets, and may be even having the same kind of discussions at home.

## **Findings according to research sub-question #2: Citizenship Practices that Legitimize Different Social Identities**

The *Paco* videos described earlier also reflect citizenship practices that legitimize social identities normally considered as 'different', which according to Rodriguez (2011)'s definition of *cultura ciudadana*, is pivotal for peaceful coexistence. By including, and highlighting these different identities, media producers are providing spaces for these identities to be performed, thus legitimizing them in the eyes of media collective members, and are opening up a space for those identities in the public sphere. It is important to note that while below I refer to examples in the videos, I believe that the real process of legitimization of difference occurs *within* the media collective. In other words, the videos I analyze merely reflect the process of legitimization of difference that surely went on in the production process, behind the cameras.

One of the social identities the *Paco* collectives are legitimizing through media production is that of children and young people as subjects of rights and active contributors to society. A lot of the videos, if not all, feature young people speaking about their rights and showing their media work. This clearly demonstrates a process where young people producing these media products

are beginning to understand their own identities as subjects of rights. Videos such as the ones I label 'instructional' even go into further detail of media production, thus reflecting a process where *Paco* participants see themselves as valid producers of media, as people who are capable of producing quality communication. In sum, all these videos reflect social processes that I believe are practices for the construction of *cultura ciudadana*, which turn them into citizenship practices.

Another one of the social identities being legitimized through media production is that of women as independent, capable, and productive people who are also subject to a number of rights. An example is a segment<sup>18</sup> where a number of students are reading their notes when they come upon a comment from John, a student, who says women can't play sports and they should simply be maids. The student immediately reacts, saying that their groups does not agree with this comment, that they think women should be able to play sports and even have executive/business roles. I believe that the fact that this clip was recorded, edited, and put in the final version of the video reflects a process, which I view as a citizenship practice, whereby members of the collective had a discussion and decided to include it. That decision-making process is where the process of legitimization occurs.

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<sup>18</sup> Participacion: Del Derecho al Hecho-Aprendiendo Crecemos  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWjbhGa5Z4I>

These media products also convey a sense of understanding and appreciation of 'different' ethnic identities, such as those of Afro-Colombians, among the members of the collective. For instance, the segment that focuses on hair braiding and highlights the cultural significance of this practice as it relates to slavery legitimizes Afro-colombian cultural expressions. The reader will remember from Chapter 2 the references to Colombia's national identity project, which I argue has historically favoured a Hispanic or *mestizo* identity, thus ignoring the contributions of Colombians of African or Indigenous descent. In this context, I view this process of legitimization as critical because of the high number of Afro-Colombians that have historically called Tumaco their home. This turns the legitimization process I describe into a way to appreciate and understand local culture for the *Paco* participants. The choice of this type of messages that highlight ethnic identities traditionally labelled as 'different', which occurred within the collective, is a practice for the construction of *cultura ciudadana*.

Figure 7: Image from video that reflect the legitimization of Afro-Colombian identity



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Ultimately, the media products produced by the Tumaco collectives reflect a concern to include the voices of people who generally cannot access the public sphere, which contributes to the legitimization of those people and their identities.

An example is that one of the videos has a segment on cooking local fish with local ingredients, and on the handicrafts produced by local artisans for sale by the beach, which legitimizes and values local workers, contexts, and practices.

Another example is the video that features *Paco* collective members interviewing two poor children selling plantain out of a wooden basket on the street, and then an older man who claims to have discovered a series of caves containing lost

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<sup>19</sup> Tradición y Cultura [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k\\_FELo9yATs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_FELo9yATs)

indigenous art and crafts. These interviews demonstrate a genuine concern on the part of the media producers with including people who rarely have access to media spaces. In interviewing these people and including these interviews in the video, the media producers went through a decision-making process that resulted in the legitimization of those identities as valid and worthy of media space. Therefore, the process of including this material is a practice for the construction of *cultura ciudadana* within the media collective.

### **Findings according to research sub-question # 3: Citizenship Practices that Normalize Non-violent Conflict Resolution**

These media products reflect some citizenship practices that normalize peaceful conflict resolution, which is fundamental for the emergence of *cultura ciudadana* as defined by *Rodriguez (2011)*. As I discuss in chapters 2 and 3, due to Colombia's social context, violence is often the most common mechanism to resolve conflicts. This is particularly true because of the absence of a responsive state to intervene and protect citizens.

This type of practice was difficult to observe, as it is hard to see into the conflicts that may have occurred during the production of the media products. However, it is clear that students do have an understanding of conflict resolution as a couple of the videos deal with this particular issue. I argue that while the videos reflect a genuine concern with dialogue and mutual understanding as a

way to solve conflicts, it also reflects the practice of denouncing adults to the authorities as a way to solve conflicts and violence, which in my view could be worked in a richer way. For instance, it would have been a good idea to produce media that shows young people engaging in productive dialogue with adults, which would hopefully happen before young people decide to take the case to the authorities.

The videos reflect a genuine concern with the practice of dialogue as a mechanism to solve conflicts. The clearest example is perhaps the video that features two young women engaging in conflict and then solving it peacefully and by listening to each other. I believe that this particular example demonstrates that, in deciding on the topic for the video and in creating a whole video on this topic, the *Paco* participants choose to perform peaceful conflict resolution, thus normalizing it within the collective.

The other clearly visible practice to solve conflicts is to take the conflict to the appropriate authorities. Clear examples of this practice are the video campaigns that prompt children to contact local authorities to denounce violence or sexual abuse. For instance, when a father in one of the videos described above abuses a girl, forcing her to work for him, other children approach her and tell her to get in touch with the police. I believe that this reflects an internalization of the practice of denouncing issues to authorities on the part of youth. However, it would have been interesting to use this opportunity to produce media where

youth can actually experience what is like to talk to a police officer or a community worker. This could have taken the form of a video that shows a young person visiting one of these institutions. Also, a video that presents dialogue as a way to engage with parents, perhaps showing a young person and a parent reaching an agreement by talking and listening to each other, also would have been a good opportunity to create a space for media producers to experience other forms of conflict resolution.

**Findings according to research sub-question # 4: Citizenship Practices that Promote Citizen-State Relationships Based on Accountability, Transparency, and the Right and Responsibility of Citizens to Oversee Public Institutions**

The videos created by the *Paco* collectives also reflect the internalization on the part of youth of some practices that may lead to citizen-state relationships based on transparency, and on the right and responsibility of citizens to oversee public institutions. As Rodriguez (2011) points out, this type of relationship is critical for the creation of *cultura ciudadana* as a cultural fabric that promotes peaceful coexistence. I generally found that these practices consisted of asking questions to authorities, of demanding protection from public institutions drawing on a framework of rights, and on making political demands to politicians. I believe are great first steps in fostering this kind of citizen-state relationship.

The videos reflect the internalization of the notion that children and youth have the right to ask questions to authorities. One example that I think reflects this practice, even though it does not consist of an interaction with a public official, is the video about *Paco* members covering a Save the Children International meeting in Bogotá. Save the Children, despite not being a public institution, are nonetheless part of a structure that is providing funding and services to the *Paco* reporters' communities. Therefore, when a reporter asks questions such as 'what do you want to learn while you are here?' or 'what do you hope to get out of your visit here?', it reflects a willingness to ask tough questions and a genuine concern on the part of the reporter about the organization serving them. In a way, this exchange covertly demands accountability from the agency. This ability and willingness to ask questions is fundamental in establishing more transparent relationships with the states as the media producers now have a set of skills to engage with them more effectively. Therefore, I view this type of inquisitiveness as a practice for the construction of *cultura ciudadana*.

Another clearly visible practice visible in these videos is that of demanding protection from public institutions and authorities. This practice consists of understanding a framework of rights on which to draw when demanding protection, and knowledge of the different types of institutions that are meant to uphold those rights. For instance, the sexual abuse campaign video mentioned



above, which calls on children and youth experiencing sexual abuse to report it to local institutions, demonstrates that *Paco* participants understand their rights and know which institutions can protect them. I believe that the process of deciding the topic for the video and the research that goes into learning which institutions can protect them in order to create the video is where the internalization of this practice occurs. Importantly, children and youth in the collective are learning the value of demanding protection as a group using media, rather than as individuals, which might not always be as effective.

The practice of making political demands to politicians using media is also reflected in some of these videos. Perhaps the clearest example of this practice is the video I label as 'advocacy' described earlier in this chapter, which shows a number of the children and youth articulating their political demands. There are also examples in other videos where young people call on local politicians to intervene in different ways. These examples demonstrate a clear understanding of a framework of rights, as well as the acquisition of communicative skills to articulate political demands and positions. In my view, the discussions and decision-making processes that occurred behind cameras when producing this video are the sites where the internalization of this practices of citizenship occurs.

## Case 2: Television and Press Content Produced by *Paco* Collectives in Pasto

I analyzed four episodes of *TVemos*, a variety show produced by students at I.E.M Chambu, a school in Pasto's *comuna* 5. *TVemos*, whose name roughly translates into 'we see you' in English, is only one of the multiple products created by students at I.E.M Chambu. The leader behind this process is Sara Tovar, a communicator by trade and head of *Generacion Alternativa*, a small community communication organization that started 14 years ago in the *Comuna* 5 and has always collaborated with schools officials at I.E. M Chambu (Tovar, personal communication, February 2014). In 2008, when *Aprendiendo Crecemos* started operating in I.E.M Chambu, the local *Paco* collective was merged with *Generacion Alternativa*, which was already known in the neighbourhood and had years of experience producing community media.

Life for youth in *Comuna* 5 is not easy. Tovar explains that there is a big problem with street gangs, and many students at I.E.M. Chambu become involved in these groups in some way. Tovar also points out that many of the young people in *Comuna* 5 come from homes marked by violence (Tovar, personal communication, February 2014). When one walks through *Comuna* 5, especially in the afternoons, it is not uncommon to see groups of young people on the streets, standing in street corners, without much to do. Tovar asserts that very few young people in the community get involved in projects after school,

which makes them vulnerable to violence, drug use, or recruitment by armed groups.

This difficult setting has created some problems for the media collective. Members of the collectives have been robbed in their own neighbourhood twice, and different equipment sets have been lost. This resulted in the near elimination of shooting video or conducting interviews in the streets: most video takes are made either on the school ground or in indoors spaces. The only occasions when the groups records in the street is when all members are able to come out and surround the media producers as a way to protect them and their equipment (Tovar, personal communication, February 2014).

Tovar points out that the support of *Aprendiendo Crecemos* was critical as it allowed them to develop a solid media education system where older students teach younger ones. Generally, this media education process takes about six months for new members of the collective. Additionally, the older youth regularly visit other schools in different areas of Pasto to share their experiences and teach workshops. For Tovar, having students teach other students is fundamental for the success of the project, as student teachers become leaders, have higher self-esteem, and generally do better in school (Tovar, personal communication, February 2014).

*Generacion Alternativa* currently produces *TVemos*, the television show described below, and *Ventana Juvenil*, a radio show that relies on local radio

stations who donate airtime. The collective will also be launching a web-based radio station in March 2014, which will have a lot more content and will clearly require a lot more work. Additionally, there are also a number of students working in digital animation, graphic design, and web design on the organization's website<sup>20</sup>.

Figure 8: 'Tree of commitments' at *Generacion Alternativa*, IEM Chambu, Pasto



Youth within the group developed a set of rules to ensure the group functions well. For instance, decisions about media content or messaging are

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<sup>20</sup> <http://generacionalternativa.org.co/>

made by consensus or voting as a way to ensure everyone feels included. There is also a process for people who want to join the collective, which consists of a short letter explaining why they want to join and an interview with Sara Tovar. Students who join have to respect the rules, and are asked to contribute to a 'tree of commitments' (see figure 8) and do everything they can to make sure no leaves fall from the tree. Another rule to make sure implemented by the youth of *Generacion Alternativa* is that people who fail to come in to edit their work for no good reason must then call everyone involved in the production of the radio or television program to apologize.

After *Aprendiendo Crecemos* support ended in 2012, *Generacion Alternativa* and I.E.M. Chambu decided that the project needed to continue. They found support in the American Jewish World Service, another international development agency, through a contact they had made through Save the Children. Today, most of the participants come from I.E.M Chambu, and *Generacion Alternativa* now rents a small space near the school where students gather to produce and edit media.

Tovar argues that the project received support and is successful because the work at *Generacion Alternativa* is led entirely by youth, especially in its decision making process, even if Tovar provides support. Tovar explained to me that a council makes all decisions within the group, including decisions that concern financial resources. She also estimates that there are about one

hundred members of *Generacion Alternativa*, and that at least thirty of them are part of the decision-making council, which meets twice a year. For Tovar, this is possible because the students who lead *Generacion Alternativa* are the result of a process that formed them to be inquisitive, to express their position and opposition (Tovar, personal communication, February 2014).

### **Media Products**

The first three episodes I analyzed are episodes 1, 3, and 4 of *TVemos* and were produced in 2010, when I.E.M. Chambu and *Generacion Alternativa* were still receiving support from *Aprendiendo Creemos*. I was unable to find a copy of episode 2. The fourth episode I analyze is episode 26, produced in 2013, and was produced with support from independent sources. Each *TVemos* show is about 26 minutes in length, and is produced twice a month. At the beginning of the project the show was broadcast three times per week on TV Pasto, the community television station of the Universidad de Narino. More recently, the show has only been broadcast online because their agreement with TVPasto ended recently, though they are hoping to enter into a new agreement with Claro, a private channel (Tovar, personal communication, February 2014). I analyze these four episodes in an effort to show how *Aprendiendo Creemos* support helped trigger a sustainable communication process, even beyond the end of initial financial support.

Episode 1<sup>21</sup> of *TVemos* was released on April 5<sup>th</sup> of 2010. The show begins with an interview of the school principal at I.E.M Chambu, who voices his support for the project and underscores the value of communication competencies as critical for education. What follows is a report of a workshop series offered to parents at I.E.M. Chambu that focused on communicating with their children and other parenting issues. *TVemos* producers interview some of the parents about their opinions on the workshops.

Afterwards, the show features a report about what politics means for people in Pasto, where they interview local leaders, politicians, and students. Responses vary, but they generally say that politicians lack values, that they need to work for society. People are tired of promises and of politicians threatening social services as a way to get services. A local man also says that for people or peasants, it's very difficult to read and understand political system. The message conveyed is to pursue a different kind of politics, based on respect for people and not on corruption or clientelism. They then have a few minutes devoted to the spaces around the school, pointing out that the green areas are polluted and that the roads that lead to their school and to many others are broken. They show people having difficulties crossing the road, as well as a group of students in the green areas around the schools who are working together to clean up the area and have fun in the process. This episode also

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<sup>21</sup> Generacion Alternativa. *Tvemos Episodio 1*. April 2010.

profiles two women in the neighbourhood who created a community centre that focuses on vocational and entrepreneurial training for young people as a way to open new opportunities for them.

The show concludes with a very interesting segment about urban/alternative cultures among youth in Pasto. They give a historical and political background on urban cultures as they emerged in places like New York City, and focus on how social marginalization leads to the emergence of these cultures. They even have some footage of young people walking around at night in Pasto and then being searched by police officers.

Figure 9: Community members in *Comuna 5*, Pasto, working to protect green spaces



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Episode 3 begins with a long segment about local myths and horror stories in their neighbourhood and surrounding areas. The producers interview a



teacher at I.E.M Chambu who is leading project to rescue these stories, which are generally transmitted orally, by hosting events where children and community members gather around the fire to share stories. The idea behind the project is for young people at the school to put together a digital book and radio programs with all these stories. The producers also interview a few seniors in the neighbourhood who share scary stories and local myths. The focus of this section is on recovering lost stories and on drawing on the wisdom and knowledge of older community members. The next segment of the show focuses on the opinions and thoughts of younger children at the school. There are some snippets of children sharing the things that makes them happy, such as games, and about what makes them sad, Some children state that adults should stop making them go to bed so early and they should understand that sometimes they simply aren't sleepy at bedtime. There is also a girl who shares her experience having to work to help out at home to help out her dad who is ill. Another segment features children sharing some of their wishes, some of which are that that all children have their rights, that they are not forced into war, that they have enough money to live well. The focus of this section is to give children a voice and profile what their lives are like. The final segment of the episode is, once again, about urban subcultures. This time the producers focused on the culture of hippies in the US and in Colombia. They interview a local expert on hippies, and conclude that hippies use art to protest and to better society.

Figure 10: Community members sharing local myths around the fire, I.E.M Chambu, Pasto



Episode 4 begins with a segment on a project in Pasto where students are teaching community members, many of whom are senior citizens or in vulnerable situations, to read and write. The project is providing literacy training to 500 people using the Cuban literacy method *Yo Si Puedo*, which takes about eight weeks to complete. The producers interview one of the Cuban teachers visiting Pasto, as well as some of the grade 10 students who are serving as literacy teachers over the weekend. The students share that they feel they have learned a lot from the senior citizens, and one of the students sends a message to the next president of Colombia asking him to support literacy programs, rather than investing so much money into the army. The producers conclude the segment with interviews of project participants who say they are thankful because they can at least sign documents on their own.

The next segment of Episode 4 highlights the life of students and teachers who attend night school, hoping to finish their education. One the teachers explains that part of the night school program has been to educate students about democracy and about the voting system. There is footage of night school students voting to select an ombudsman for their group to represent them in student government. The episode concludes with a final segment about urban subcultures in Pasto. The TV presenters point out that most people only see the negative side of these urban cultures, and that the parents are completely unaware of their existence. They then present an interview with a young man who used to be part of an urban subculture and who says the group helped him through his teen years, even as many people think that people in urban tribes are Satanists or drug addicts, which is not perfect. They then have a short segment on *reggaeton*, a popular rhythm throughout Latin America, and the overly sexualized way girls dance to this rhythm. The producers argue that this type of music is demeaning to women, and that even though *reggaeton* could be considered an urban subculture, not all urban subcultures are like this, that some subcultures make people think rather than let themselves be turned into objects. The presenters end the episode by reflecting on what they learned after delving into the world of urban subcultures, which is that everyone has a right to think differently, and that there are no absolute truths. They point out that their interest is to give a space to those who think differently.

Episode 26, which was produced with the financial support of the American Jewish World Service, focuses on the events of *Semana de la Juventud*, or Youth Week, an event organized by the City of Pasto. The episode begins with a new intro song and with two reporters introducing themselves. One of the reporters apologizes for failing to appear on a previous episode, and explain that she could not join the rest of the team because she ran into some problems with the police during the 2013 agricultural strike, arguing that the police, instead of protecting protestors, decided to attack them. They then introduce Youth Week as a series of events on youth participation that touched upon themes such as sports, theatre, sexual health, and taking care of animals. The next segment is about environmental issues discussed during Youth Week. They interview people participating in the events, and focus their questions on nutrition, both from a cultural and a nutritional perspective. For instance, they talk to people as they eat vegetarian soup at one of the events. One of the students talks about the difficulties of being a vegetarian. Another talks about recycling and getting the support of city hall for these initiatives.

The next segment of Episode 26 focuses on sports and culture events within Youth Week, which were organized to showcase local talent. One participant talks about the importance of highlighting local hip-hop, graffiti, and break dancing. Another one talks about his dream of being a music producer. A young artist talks about his experience drawing and painting, which for him is

very fulfilling. They then talk to a young skater and then to a youth who claims to be an expert in cutting hair in innovative ways to create shapes. The segment ends with the interview of a young woman who says that, contrary to what many people think, young artists and skaters are not thieves or homeless, but that they are pretty cool and are not into drugs. She argues that no one should criticize them for the way they look.

In the next part of Episode 26, the producers focus on issues around sexual health, and explain that *Generacion Alternativa* helped conduct a consultation process asking young people what they wanted to know about sexuality. This process guided a psychiatrist who gave a workshop on this topic during Youth Week, whom they also interview. The next segment of Episode 26 is about the different theatre groups that performed in schools during Youth Week, all of which highlighted youth issues during their performances. The producers interview students about which they think was the most interesting play, and the reasons why people are participating. They then interview the actors, who believe that imagination and art is a way to change society. They also interview a young woman who is unsatisfied with the event; she feels society is very harsh on young people and wishes there had been more focus on art throughout Youth Week. The episode concludes with the presenters saying that the city could do a better job next year promoting the events, and invite viewers to get in touch with them.

## Findings according to research sub-question # 1: Citizenship Practices that Strengthen Public Spheres

Many of the television programs just described reflect citizenship practices that strengthen public spheres, one of the key social processes for the construction of *cultura ciudadana* as a way to peaceful coexistence. In particular, these videos reflect a concern on the part of the media producers with using public spheres to highlight positive community engagement and as a way to trigger action from public institutions. In the paragraphs below I provide some example of the types of practices reflected in these products.

One of the practices I observed was the inclusion of several voices in discussions about local issues. An example of this practice is the segment on local politics, in which the reporters are shown interviewing local leaders, politicians, and students about what politics should be about. Responses vary, but respondents generally say that politicians lack values, that they need to work for society. This segment reflects that media producers are working to bring multiple voices to the public spheres, and that different perspectives are valid. In my view this practice strengthens public spheres not so much because of what people are saying on camera, but because the producers made a conscious decision to listen to and include multiple points of view, including their own. Therefore, these media producers are now better equipped to engage in public discussions.

Another citizenship practice I found was that of highlighting positive work being carried out at the community level. There are multiple instances where this practice is visible. One of them is the segment in Episode 1 that profiles the group of students and community members working together to clean up the green areas around the school. Another one is the segment that focuses on the work of two local women who put together an organization to teach work skills to local youth. Other examples include the project at I.E.M. Chambu where students and teachers are working to recover local myths and stories, or the project where Cuban volunteers and local students are teaching seniors how to read and write on the weekends. In my view, in highlighting this work, the students are learning to appreciate their local communities, despite common views of their neighbourhoods as dangerous and marginalized. This practice strengthens public spheres both because people in the community are becoming aware of the existence of this type of work, and because media producers now have a better understanding of the communities they come from, and about the kind of change they would like to see.

The practice of bringing attention to local issues and calling on action from authorities is also visible in many of these television episodes. An example of this practice is the segment that focused on the spaces around the school, pointing out that the green areas are polluted and that the roads are broken, and that City Hall needs to take action. Another example is the segment on the environmental

issues that were discussed during Youth Week. For instance, one of the students talks about the importance of recycling and getting the support of city hall for these initiatives. This practice contributes to stronger public spheres because media producers are learning about local issues and are acquiring advocacy skills to use media as a way to reach to public officials. By bringing attention to these issues, media producers are not only bringing them to the public sphere, but are also becoming active participants in these discussions.

Lastly, I observed the practice of shedding light on social issues and asking community members to reflect and change their behaviours. There are also multiple examples of this practice. Some of these examples include the segment that focuses on the lives of local children, highlighting some of the hardships they endure and what their dreams are. This segment stays away from blaming anyone in particular, and simply states what the problems are. The segments on the over sexualization of women in *reggaeton*, on environmental and nutrition issues discussed during Youth Week, and on sexual health among local youth are also examples of this practice. This practice is interesting because it reflects awareness that social change is not just the responsibility of public institutions and elected officials, but that it requires the input of all citizens. Therefore, this practice strengthens public spheres precisely because of this realization, and because it contributes to a more public discussion on these issues.



## Findings according to research sub-question # 2: Citizenship Practices that Legitimize Different Social Identities

The TV programs reflect a number of practices that contribute to the legitimization of ‘different’ social identities, a pivotal process for *cultura ciudadana* as a path towards peaceful coexistence. Importantly, while the focus of most of the media products the students at I.E.M. created was on legitimizing youth identities, such as urban subcultures, there is also a strong concern with social identities beyond their age group, such as those of senior citizens. Generally, these practices consisted of researching and understanding these identities, rescuing lost or marginalized social identities, and adding nuance to the local perception of some groups.

One of the practices I found in the media products described above was that of researching and understanding different social identities. The clearest example of this practice is the number of segments on urban subcultures, which appeared in three of the episodes I examined. These are segments that delve into the history of these groups and the socio-political context in which they emerged. For instance, the episodes feature footage of urban groups in the United States, such as rapper and hip-hop musicians in New York City, that have had an influence over groups in Colombia, and a number of interviews with people who have both experienced and researched these groups in Colombia. In

my view, these segments reflect a number of decision-making processes whereby media collective members decided to focus on this topic, did their research, and connected their findings to their local context. I believe that these processes constitute practices that contribute to the emergence of *Cultura Ciudadana* as media producers learn to better understand and engage with 'difference'.

I also observed the practice of recovering the identities of marginalized people in their communities. This also included delving into the history and past context of their communities in order to better understand current social processes. The clearest example is the in-depth segment about local myths and legends as told by senior citizens. There is footage about a local project working to rescue all these stories, as well as numerous interviews where local senior citizens, people who rarely have access to media spaces and who are often illiterate, share their stories. In my view, by focusing on these stories and on the people who tell them, the media producers are legitimizing the identity of seniors as people who have a lot to contribute to their communities, as the guardians of collective memory. This practice is important to construction of *cultura ciudadana* as, in my view, media producers involved in the creation of these products are better positioned to understand and include multiple perspectives in public discussions.

Another practice I observed in these media products is that of adding nuance to widely held views on 'different' ways of thinking or being. There are numerous examples of this practice. One of them is the segment that focuses on the opinions and thoughts of younger children at the school, which tries to debunk the idea that all children think or behave in the same way, and put forth the notion that children need to be listened to in order to be better understood. Another example is the segment on environmental issues discussed during Youth Week, which features a number of people talking about difficulties of recycling or being a vegetarian in Pasto because a lot of people do not respect those views. The segments on urban and youth subcultures, such as skaters or rappers, are also a clear example of this practice. For instance, there is an interviewee in one of these segments who argues that, despite the fact that most parents have either negative or non-existent views of these groups, many of them help young people get through their teen years in ways that schools or parents do not. Learning to think in a more nuanced and critical way about groups with a negative social perception allows media producers within the collective to discuss public issues in ways that are inclusive and pluralistic.

### Findings according to research sub-question # 3: Citizenship Practices that Normalize Non-Violent Conflict Resolution

These media products reflect concrete citizenship practices that normalize peaceful conflict resolution, a basic social process for the emergence of *cultura ciudadana* as defined by Rodriguez (2011). As I mentioned earlier, distilling these practices from the media products is not always easy because the conflicts that may have occurred during media production are not always reflected in the media products. Nevertheless, the episodes I examined show a clear concern on the part of collective members with engaging in non-violent conflict resolution.

In examining these television episodes, the most evident practice is that of highlighting instances where people are engaged in non-violent conflict resolution. There are multiple examples of this. The first one is the segment that features a number of parents participating in parenting classes, in which they are delving into issues of communication with their children learning to listen as a way to avoid conflict. Another example is the segment that focuses on the election of an ombudsman and class council by students attending night school, most of whom are adults. This segment focuses on the importance of democratic practices as mechanisms to make decisions and avoid conflicts. It also focuses on the skills that class council members have to develop, such as advocacy and communicating both with fellow students and school administrators. Of course, while producing media on these types of conflict resolution is no guarantee that

media producers within the collective will always solve conflict peacefully, making these products at the very least creates awareness about how to solve conflict and convincing others without resorting to violence. Being aware and normalizing these approaches to conflict resolution is critical for the emergence of *cultura ciudadana* because it makes people realize that there are other, more effective, ways to deal with conflict and engage with each other.

**Findings according to research sub-question # 4: Citizenship Practices that Promote Citizen-State Relationships Based on Accountability, Transparency, the Right and Responsibility of Citizens to Oversee Public Institutions**

The videos created by the *Paco* collective at I.E.M. Chambu reflect the emergence of a number of practices among participating youth that contribute to citizen-state relationships based on transparency, accountability, and on the right and responsibility of citizens to oversee public institutions. As Rodriguez (2011) points out, the emergence of this type of relationship is pivotal for *cultura ciudadana* as a cultural fabric that promotes peaceful coexistence. These practices included articulating political demands and putting pressure on local authorities, criticizing public institutions on politics, and communicating with decision-makers.

One of the practices reflected in the television programs is that of articulating political demands and putting pressure on local authorities.

Importantly, many of these demands are made following a few minutes of footage highlighting the problem. This demonstrates a good understanding of the issue on the part of youth, and the realization that using political demands must be based on some sort of evidence. There are a few instances where these videos reflect this practice. The segment that focuses on the deterioration of green areas in their neighbourhood, and the one that shows the terrible conditions of the roads around local schools, which put young people at risk, are perfect examples. The section features a student, who teaches literacy classes to senior citizens on the weekends, demanding the president of Colombia support literacy programs, rather than investing so much money into the army, is also an example. These are all instances where the media producers explore the issue, the way in which is manifesting itself in their community, and then proceed to ask the authorities to act. The media products reflect awareness on the part of young people that action from authorities should be seen as a favour or a form of charity, but rather their responsibility.

Another practice reflected in these episodes is that of criticizing local authorities drawing from a framework of rights. There are at least two examples of this practice in the materials I analyzed. The first one is an instance where one of the reporters of *TVemos* apologizes for failing to appear on a previous episode, but explains that she ran into some problems with the police during the 2013 agricultural strike. She argues that the police, instead of protecting

protestors, which is what they are meant to do, decided to attack them. The second example is the last segment of episode 26, where the media producers conclude that while the events of Youth Week were positive, the city could do a better job the following year promoting the events, and invite viewers to get in touch with them in order to achieve change. These are both examples in which media producers demonstrate that they are aware of their rights, including the right to protection, to protest, to accountable government, and to give suggestions for change. In my view, this practice contributes to *cultura ciudadana* as media producers are better informed about their rights and about the ways in which they can engage in advocacy to create change.

### **Summary of Findings: Citizenship Practices in Youth Media Production as Part of the Paco Project**

The media products I analyzed from both Tumaco and Pasto reflect a number of practices that contribute to the construction of *cultura ciudadana* as a cultural fabric that allows for peaceful coexistence. Some of the practices I found consisted of:

- Including and listening to multiple perspectives in public discussions;
- Validating of the opinions of local youth;
- Understanding and articulating a framework of rights;

- Understanding institutional and setting and learning to approach public institutions;
- The willingness to discuss sensitive issues in public spaces;
- Deciding to include, understand, and highlight different and social cultural identities;
- Commitment to dialogue as a way to solve conflicts;
- Demanding protection from local authorities;
- Highlighting positive work happening in the community
- Shedding light on social issues and asking both authorities and community members to address the issues;
- Rescuing and legitimizing local sources of knowledge;
- Including the voices of marginalized people into public discussions;
- Highlighting instances where people engage in non-violent conflict resolution;
- Highlighting instances of democratic and participatory decision making;
- Articulating political demands to politicians and to their communities;
- Putting pressure on local authorities for them to live up to expectations;
- Being inquisitive about public issues;
- Criticizing public institutions;
- Communicating with decision-makers, both in public institutions and in their communities.



I find that by drawing on the concept of *cultura ciudadana* and on the theory of citizens' media as defined by Rodriguez (2011), these groups can delve into deeper discussions of citizenship and participation. This is the case for both of my case studies in Tumaco and Pasto.

In the case of Tumaco, while these videos reflect a clear intention engage with issues related to children's rights, I believe that the project would benefit from the concept of 'communication as performance' put forth by Rodriguez. The media production opportunities that the *Paco* collectives create should be seen as opportunities for young people to perform, to experience in their own flesh and bones, the social relations they are trying to achieve. For instance, some of the videos I analyzed were campaigns that tried to convince adults to treat children in a better way, while other were videos portrayed all adults as abusive. It would be worthwhile to explore whether these types of campaigns actually lead to behavioural change on the part of parents, or whether there are better ways to engage with these type of issue. The work of *Generacion Alternativa* in Pasto, which is discussed below, could serve as an example to follow. In one occasion, the media producers in Pasto interview a number of parents participating in parenting workshops and depicts them actually behaving as good parents. It also features footage of adults having positive and peaceful interactions with young people, engaged in sincere dialogue. This type of media products, which demonstrate desired social relations and behaviours, allow young people to

experience those relations in the process of media production. In producing this type of media products, the students in Pasto go beyond simple awareness of their right to protective parenting, which is what happens in Tumaco, and get to experiment what those kind of social relations feel like and get to meet parents who believe in this type of behaviour.

In the case of Pasto, while many citizenship practices are developing among participating youth, the concept of *cultura ciudadana* as defined Rodriguez (2011) could help create stronger communication processes. For instance, focusing more clearly on practices related to non-violent conflict resolution or about citizen-state relationships could allow the media producers to learn a lot more about these practices and gain new skills, such as mediation or advocacy. Additionally, the group in Pasto could draw from the experiences in Tumaco in regards to using a clearer framework of rights. In my view, a framework of rights is a powerful discursive and communicative tool for young people to better engage with each other and with local authorities. Students at I.E.M Chambu could consider articulating this framework more clearly.

In sum, the media products created by *Paco* students in both Tumaco and Pasto reflect the emergence of important practices that are fundamental for the emergence of *cultura ciudadana*. The focus on childrens' rights and on creating campaigns for social change in Tumaco has allowed collective participants to better understand their rights, and to learn how to articulate them into demands

for change. The focus on narrative, local identity, and in-depth analysis is creating opportunities for young people at I.E.M. Chambu to better understand their context and to experience more peaceful and pluralistic social relations, something they can rarely do outside the context of the *Paco* collective. It is clear that while both projects are creating change among its participants in the form of new practices of citizenship, they have a lot of lessons and insights to share.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Projects

Even as each communication process is different, school-based communication collectives following the *Paco* model created by Save the Children are effective mechanisms to foster active forms of citizenship among young people in contexts of violence. There are multiple reasons why I believe this to be the case, which I outline below. However, it is important to note that the conclusions I share below are the result of my study into only two of the 19 *Paco* collectives funded by *Aprendiendo Crecemos*. Nonetheless, I believe that some of these insights are relevant to people engaged in similar processes.

The first insight is that the *Paco* model of school-based media production groups is flexible enough to adapt to each of contexts in which operates. The *Paco* model essentially consists of funding the purchase of communication equipment, providing training on production and on a general framework of children's rights for media content, and of providing any other additional support, such as setting up a radio station or making agreements with local broadcasters. This allows for each of the media collectives to be operated by teachers and students in each school, who also choose the type of media they want to produce and the issues they wish to highlight. This resulted in a number of vastly different processes in each collective.

The second reason why I believe the *Paco* is effective in helping foster new understandings and practices of citizenship is because the communication processes in each media production group are relatively sustainable. The fact that funding for these media collectives generally lasted at least three years, and much longer in the case of Tumaco, allowed for ongoing participation on the part of students. It also provided ongoing supervision from teachers and school officials. As Sara Tovar, the leading figure behind the *Paco* collective in Pasto, which was later renamed *Generacion Alternativa*, the notion of sustainable processes is what matters most. She points out that local institutions sometimes create programs to include marginalized youth, but that these programs do not usually last more than three months (Tovar, personal communication, February 2014), which she believes is not enough to create any sort of change.

In contrast, *Generacion Alternativa* has managed to create sustainable and long-term processes at Colegio I.E.M. Chambu. Laura Ossa, one of the communication officials at Save the Children in Colombia, echoes Tovar's support for sustainable processes, and points out that in many schools administrators have begun to fund the media collectives after external support ends (Ossa, personal communication, February 2014). There are, however, limitations to sustainability, as many schools lack the resources to continue

funding the collectives, and as sometimes student leaders leave unexpectedly. I explore this further in some of the paragraphs below.

Another pivotal factor for the sustainability of the *Paco* collectives is the system of media education that most of them developed. These were systems where older students, often in their graduating year, shared their knowledge about media production and media content with younger collective members. This allowed for the collectives to continue producing work, and probably promoted a sense of cohesion within the groups. Save the Children was successful in using its experience in the area of education to foster learning of media and communication practices.

The third reason why I believe the *Paco* model of school- based media production contributes to social change is because it seems to contribute to a number of positive changes for the students. Aside from the citizenship practices I explore in Chapter 4, I found that participating in media collectives contributed to higher grades, more participation in other school spaces, the development of communication skills, and even higher self- esteem. Marcela Forero, the person who created the *Paco* project at Save the Children in Colombia, points out she noticed that the participants' self-esteem levels rose as they began getting recognition in their communities and getting invitations to local public events (Forero, personal communication, January 2014). Sara Tovar from *Generacion Alternativa* argues that most of the project participants usually do well in school,

or that they see improvement in their academic standing if they were not doing that well to begin with. She also asserts that students who participate in *Generacion Alternativa* often become leaders at school and in their communities, where they lead coexistence and community work. Tovar contends that project participants are rarely shy to share their views, and generally become more confident (Tovar, personal communication, February 2014). In addition to these changes, I observed that this type of project also seems to have an even more significant effect.

Furthermore, I believe that the *Paco* model can be a powerful mechanism to prevent the recruitment of youth into armed groups. As I mentioned in my introduction, recent years have seen millions of Colombians migrate from the countryside to urban areas as a way to escape the conflict. This has resulted in the growth of poor neighbourhoods surrounding major cities, which is the case of Pasto, a city that as the capital of Narino has received an influx of internally displaced people. These neighbourhoods are often marked by the presence of illegal armed groups, instances of drug trafficking at a small scale, poverty, violence, and old allegiances to opposed groups. As one school official told me, these are areas with broken social fabrics where children grow up in environments marked by violence and playing war games.

In this context, the *Paco* model helps prevent recruitment by armed groups operating in these settings in two different ways. The first one is that, as

John Sullivan, country director for Save the Children in Colombia, points out, project participants acquire an awareness of their rights and learn to identify threats to those rights through project participation. Young media producers learn to defend themselves from those threats to their rights, which might include criminal organizations or even a violent parent, by expressing their views and seeking protection from the appropriate authorities (Sullivan, personal communication, February 2014). The second way in which this type of project might prevent recruitment is by creating spaces where young people can express themselves in ways they cannot do on a daily basis, which can allow them to develop a collective identity based on pluralism, rather than on violence. Marco Fidel Martinez, principal of one of the schools I visited in Pasto, shared that that armed groups in the area are beginning to use videos and social media to appeal to young people, presenting themselves as inclusive groups. For him, the *Paco* collective in the school has provides students with an avenue to express their identities within the school using media, rather than flocking to armed groups that might appeal to young people's desires of belonging and self-expression (Martinez, personal communication, February 2014).

Ultimately, I believe that each communication process is unique and is dependent on context. While investing time and resources in training developing best practices is certainly worthwhile, each communication process is different and is bound to produce very different results. I observed some cases where



Save the Children's financial and programming support was unrelenting, as in the case of media collectives in Tumaco, which made for collectives that worked over long periods of time and that produced material that reflected the project goals. I found other cases, such as *Colegio Ciudadela de Pasto*, where *Aprendiendo Crecemos* ended much sooner and the communication process was a lot more scattered, with numerous communication projects that seemed to lack depth. The example of *Generacion Alternativa* in Pasto's Colegio I.E.M. Chambu was also unique because their leaders, through their participation in *Aprendiendo Crecemos*, learned to navigate the system of international donors, organized themselves as an independent NGO, and now received sustainable external funding.

I found that what really made a difference to the quality of the communication process was the specific context in which each media collective operates, and the quality of the leadership in each of the schools. For instance, the fact that Tumaco receives more national media attention as a city steeped in violence probably made it easier for the media collectives in Tumaco to continue as more funding became available. Also, the fact that Sara Tovar, a journalist and communicator by trade without teaching duties, was available to guide the process at Colegio I.E.M. Chambu probably made the project more successful as participants received constant professional support. Also, some collectives seem to function very well without any rules and with large numbers of people, such as

the collectives in Tumaco, while others are smaller and have a self-regulating set of rules that all collective members commit to following.

In sum, I found that contextual factors, such the social setting or the presence of teachers with an interest in communication, had a much larger impact on the communication processes than all the booklets and resources produced by Save the Children. Consequently, it is important that this type of projects remain as flexible as possible, entirely responsive to the communication needs of each context.

### **Recommendations for Future Projects**

In this context, I would recommend further research into some of the contextual factors that impact these types of projects. Having an understanding of how funding practices, the presence of committed teachers, or the make up of the communities where the project operates, will impact the success of these projects. It is important to note that while schools in both Tumaco and Pasto operate in a context marked by violence, internal displacement, poverty, and the presence of armed actors, these two cities are very different from each other and violence manifests itself in different ways.

In terms of recommendations for Save the Children staff running the Paco project, or for anyone interested in replicating this model in different settings,

I found that there are a number of actions that could be taken in order to create more cohesive media collectives. These recommendations would allow for these projects to be more easily evaluated and replicated in different contexts.

First of all, I would recommend creating an archiving system for all media products created by media collectives. One of the most difficult aspects of carrying out this research was accessing media products for analysis. A solid archiving system will allow for better evaluation and research into the project, will permit the replication of the project in other settings, and will serve as collective memory for all project participants. It will also help new projects in developing their own style, and will make the project more visible to potential funders.

I would also recommend that these types of projects be subject to both internal and external evaluations. As I noted in Chapter 3, the general lack of evaluation data and results in the mid-project and final reports made it difficult to carry out this research. In my view, a project of this size, reaching hundreds of schools and students, needs to be evaluated. Importantly, I believe that while external evaluations can help the project maintain funding, internal evaluations designed and carried out by media collective members would done periodically can help in improving processes and setting future goals. The strong archiving system I propose above would assist in these processes and would allow external researchers such as myself to better understand the value of this work.

These types of projects should have a strong focus on sustainability. Every effort should be made so that students and teachers learn to work the collective after external support, such as the one provided by Save the Children, ends. It is also critical that all collectives have media education systems that allow older students to share their knowledge and experience with younger students. Lastly, these collectives could benefit from training on financial sustainability that allows them to access funds after initial financial support comes to an end. The case of *Generacion Alternativa*, whose leadership learned to navigate the international development and private donors system, is exemplary. Training on accessing alternative sources of funding, reaching out to potential donors, writing proposals, and presenting their ideas, should be part of the training these collectives receive.

When designing these types of projects, it is important to focus on decision-making processes within the collectives themselves. When observing citizenship practices, I noticed that citizenship practices become evident in decision-making processes within the groups. For instance, highlighting different cultural identities or asking questions to a politician are the result of a series of decisions made by the collective members. Therefore, projects like this should try to foster environments that contribute to democratic decision-making processes within the group.

Lastly, the notion of citizenship can be a powerful idea on which media collectives can draw. The *Paco* project is centred around the notion of participation, which can sometimes be a bit vague as it is not always clear what participation entails, or whether it is permissible not to participate or participate in non-conventional ways. The concept of participation alone is also insufficient in orienting people as they try to navigate public institutions and power structures beyond their school. Fostering a culture of participation is critical, but what it is that young people are participating in needs to be made clearer. In contrast, the concept of citizenship is much broader, can easily include the concept of participation, and can even be a tool for deeper reflection. The process of aligning the project around the notion of participation should, of course, include a review of the ways in which citizenship is understood in the local context. However, more importantly, this process should be based on the ways in which collective members define what citizenship means to them and their communities.



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