

Time(s) to Listen: A Collection of Asynchronous Experiences

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ABSTRACT

How does reconciliation feel? This growing collection of testimonial digital textiles, currently composed of 2 pieces—initiated by women's textile collectives and intervened by the *Remendar lo Nuevo* (Mending the New) team—invite us to look, touch and a different way to textile messages about reconciliation in a situated way. Participants will have the opportunity to get involved in a different way with these testimonial digital textiles and to respond to the women's messages embedded in them. The pieces allow an asynchronous, open-ended, and multi-situated conversation between the collectives and the participants. The intervention seeks to create a patchwork of discourses on reconciliation from emotions and senses in the day-to-day life in a bottom-up dynamic.

Author Keywords

Listening; participation; testimonial digital textiles.

Background

The question of how to build scenarios of peace and reconciliation in Colombia has been recurrent throughout the country's internal armed conflict for more than five decades. In recent years, after the signature of the final agreement to the peace negotiations between the Government and the former FARC-EP insurgency, this question has taken center stage. However, despite the continued presence of the concept of reconciliation, most of its meanings have been institutionally established, from the top down. This is why in the *Remendar lo Nuevo* (*Mending the New*) project and in *The Time(s) to Listen*, we find an opportunity to explore the meanings of reconciliation from a bottom-up approach.

For decades, communities that have felt the consequences of war in their daily lives, own bodies, and territories have used textiles to tell their stories of the conflict. Textile practices have become communal au-

onomous design spaces [1] in which they share their daily life. Here, textiles have become part of the repertoire to construct collective memories. Their practice has become a way to transform themselves, using their own resources. This is the case of *Costurero de Tejedoras por la Memoria de Sonsón* (Antioquia), *Mujeres Construyendo Sueños y Sabores de Paz de Mampuján* (Bolívar), *Artesanías Guayacán de Bojayá* (Chocó) and *Artesanías Choibá de Quibdó* (Chocó).

These women collectives, through textile crafts, have recounted their past, denounced their victimizers, and claimed for justice, leaving a testimony of what the war has meant in their lives. How could textile pieces help us think about new and future scenarios for reconciliation in a collective and multi-situated way?

After the Peace Process Agreement was signed, women in the collectives have continued crafting their stories, although they are now aimed to reflect on efforts for the construction of the future within reconciliation. Therefore, *Remendar lo Nuevo* proposes to lean on their textile practices to re-think reconciliation. Through living labs and research spaces [2], we wanted to explore this question.

We conceive our living labs as places to produce material discussions. From a transdisciplinary work perspective (design, social sciences, and engineering) and jointly with the women collectives, we have decided to craft a dialogue between textile and digital materialities. We are aware of the capacity of digital technologies to bring people together while physically distant, amplifying their voices and emotions through the transformation of languages of digital components [3].

During these encounters, fed by their own experience, these women request to be heard. They claim a listening in which the desires and voices of marginalized communities in rural areas of Colombia are made visible [5]. Therefore, we consider that digital materialities can collaborate to amplify collectives' textile messages, senses, concepts, and metaphors about what it is and how reconciliation is made. Creating a call to *sentipensar*: to re-think situatedly with the body, the heart, and the mind [4].

Proposal

The Time(s) to Listen: A Collection of Asynchronous Experiences is developed as a collection of testimonial digital-textiles (TDT) that produce different listening experiences of situated messages about reconciliation. The experiences seek to involve corporeity in the wi-

llingness and action of listening. The collection is currently composed of two pieces that invite participants to listen to how reconciliation is felt and made. These pieces have been originally hand-embroidered by the textile collectives involved with the project, and then intervened by the *Remendar Lo Nuevo* team, adding a digital layer. Additionally, in workshops given in the context of the project, small textile patches, and audio recordings have been developed as material responses to the embroideries and the sound messages. These patches activate each piece in different ways, in order to produce particular experiences of listening. To experience the stories, participants should interact with the pieces through the senses. They have to touch, go around, observe carefully, take the time to go through and pay attention to the sound changes that are generated in the interaction. Each piece will require a different kind of effort and a different amount of time to connect with the message. The participants will have to move away from passively watching to actively engage with the pieces, making an effort and taking the time to figure out how to relate with them:

Voice Ensemble (140cm x 65cm)

In this piece (Figure 1), multiple textile speakers integrated to the back of the original textile piece act as multiple voices. Each one of the voices communicates a different message. Since they are all speaking at the same time, it is hard to recognize what each voice is saying. In order to identify the messages clearly, the audience has to approach each source and listen to them carefully. This requires an active engagement with the piece, approaching different regions, and moving through the textile (Figure 2). However, when a patch is placed near a specific region of the piece, the voices sync, and they convey a single and amplified message recorded by the person that embroidered the patch. Although the action sounds simple, it requires time and effort to find the right area to place the patch at. Multiple voices reciting the same message at the same time create this voice ensemble that sounds louder and stronger than a single voice.

Layered Stories (65cm x 65cm)

The tapestries made by the women of Mampujan collective use *appliqué* technique, they are built from pieces of fabric with different shapes and prints, which are sewn on top of a larger cloth to compose a layered story. This digital textile follows this logic. It invites to explore the various layers of the juxtaposed stories and meaning about reconciliation that were stitched

and told by *Mujeres Construyendo Sueños y Sabores de Paz de Mampuján* in this textile piece. Therefore, this TDT consists of three layers. The first one is the original textile (Figure 3), on the back of which an embroidered speaker is placed, the other two layers hold the patches made by other people who had previously connected with the piece. When the first layer is visible, the speaker plays the recorded messages of the women who made the piece. Once any other layer from the back is placed on top, the speaker plays the message recorded by the person who embroidered the patch. This experience allows us not only to approach the stories sewn into the original textile by the women who made it, but also to listen to the messages of some of the people who connected with the piece, which are materialized as new textile layers of meaning.

The action/visit will happen every 45 minutes, and in groups of 6 people maximum (small groups are necessary in order to fully experience the pieces). It will take place in two moments: First, the participants will be held for 15 minutes in a waiting room with an infographic document that contextualizes the project and the textile collectives. Then, they will be invited to enter the area where the TDTs will be physically displayed. Both pieces are equipped with textile speakers in different dispositions to achieve different listening experiences. For 30 minutes, participants will be able to engage with the forms of listening that each piece invites.

Afterwards, participants will be led to a third area where they will be invited to orally and materially respond to the women's messages. These responses will take the form of signs embroidered on the audience's clothes, recorded messages, and pictures. During this making-responding activity, the team will propose a series of questions regarding what reconciliation means to each listener after experiencing the pieces. These will initiate a discussion, which will involve not only verbal interventions but also material arguments. The participant's responses will then return to the textile collectives, as a remnant of the moment when their request of being wholeheartedly heard was fulfilled.

Time(s) to Listen requires a covered place to protect the pieces from water or strong wind. The collection would benefit from low-noise spaces that allow attentive and careful listening.

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Figure 1. The obverse (left) and reverse (right) of the Voice Ensemble piece. The patches used in the interaction are held by a long piece of fabric at the bottom of the wooden structure.



Figure 2. The image on the left shows one of the embroidered patches. The image on the right captures Janiris, from Mampuján, listening to one of the voices from up close.