



**Arts  
Collaboratory**

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**REPORTS |  
on the Arts Collaboratory  
Assembly Senegal 2015**

**Ana Garzón Sabogal,  
Más Arte Más Acción, Colombia**

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***“Discussing the challenges to define a time to resist, to achieve the settlement of these processes, taking on rhythm, improvising, understanding, guessing as means of approaching them.”***

It's only been a few weeks since our meeting in Senegal and has been difficult for me to think back to that period as I am overwhelmed by how much the Assembly meant to me, and all the feelings and emotions.

In Indonesia, we had the chance to meet each other and to discuss amid the intense experience of visiting the country. All the while rapidly laying the seeds of projects that helped us imagine ourselves as a network and further the idea of collaborating.

This time before Senegal, the conversation had already started via facebook, email and skype around developing the collaborative projects. So when arriving we had the opportunity to deepen our engagement with each other and further the process of the projects more quickly to take action. Experiencing in Senegal I drew many par-

*“I don't usually feel sure about my memories, I prefer to invent them”*

Buika

allels with Colombia and especially of to the rural site where we have our residency in Choco.

It's been difficult to write this report because all the experiences seem like a blurry intermixing temporality. Our many days between Dakar and Toubab Dialaw are now a ball of wool. Thinking through all the workshops, plenary sessions, discussions, and visits that made us reflect on the network itself, the common structures, and a “co-responsibility.” I really feel that all this had to do with the stories they presented, the ones we told, the ones we're still telling told and the ones we will tell. Discussing the challenges to define a time to resist, to achieve the settlement of these processes, taking on rhythm, improvising, understanding, guessing as means of approaching them. These stories began for me with the denial of my visa and shifted my notion temporality. Finding about the news one day before leaving as I was trying to wrap everything in the office, I could only laugh when I heard the news, it was absurd. This brought to the fore the notions of territory and its control which previously seemed just a theory. The news also became a gauge of desire, of the wonderful desire to meet in Africa, to see each other and talk, and continue working together. As I flew without my visa, arriving and waiting hours in Senegal's airport, anxious, eager to learn if I could walk freely. We started the meeting with the galvanometer at its highest reading.

The idea of dreaming up a new structure for Arts Collaboratory involved making agreements or questioning concepts, models, short and long-term dreams, while also understanding the organizational level and position of each space has in their individual contexts and how that affect the

development of our management styles, some more traditional and others as cooperatives. For seven days we undertook permanent listening and dialogue to understand how our experiences can be re-imagined as a common model that allows us to continue working together, not only to receive funds, but also how to contribute to the resources and needs ecosystem of each of the spaces.

The assembly, as always was very intense. Bina, Jason, and Gertrude managed to make the program and methodology so that we can take advantage of each encounter as a learning tool for continuous reflection. Every visit we made to spaces and workshop we had seemed to be pushing us to think of the network as a collective future, but also re-think our policies and local practices relating to arts and culture. The visit to the village of art had a great impact on me as I learned about how it was an initiative from the public sector that enabled to be founded. In Colombia, something similar might be the proliferation of residence spaces but there is difference in terms of the type of artistic production and exchange that goes on in the spaces. In Senegal, I liked the contrast of the works and practices of the artists side by side in the building. The presence of women was very low but I was pleased to speak to a female artist was telling me that her work was selling well in America.

Visiting Les Colombins, made me think hard about communication, one of the biggest challenges for networked projects. Here amongst the deaf and dumb students, the gesture was the means to communicate, here words and definitions were useless. Just seeing the artwork made by the hands of these children and young people made me realized that the contact between us, the physical presence of the meetings had much more meaning. The encounters kneaded us, deformed us and shaped us carefully, it was a different level of understanding about the Assembly that I arrived at.

Communication and translation were difficult at times and made me partly lose big moments

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of understanding for example during the visit to Portes de Passages, fortunately the message there was lived and I felt it on my skin, in the food, and in the breath. A sort of nostalgia was present, the feeling of being in Chocó, not the landscape but the strong animism in the approach of everyday activities. After a great moment with music that was played for us while we ate and drank tea, I wondered if there would be time I could share a moment with the musicians and sing a couple of songs for them. The pulse and beat of them playing was so close to the music we have in Colombia. This encounter helped further my learning about forms of communication.

A strange moment was the visit to the atelier of Issa Samb, here the ways of communicating were difficult, not only because it was in French but everything he said and his performance: I'm not ready to understand yet. At the end of it all, I felt it was very much about co-responsibility, seeking our own meaning, intervening, not being passive, but rather agents of change, flowing. These were the some of the lessons I learned as well as learning from his surprising movements and speech, there was a wisdom and a language to learn. We should be more open to surprise.

His gestures came to be, once again to be my translator during a stop we made on our way to

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Dakar, to see a performance by the theater of the oppressed. The gestures, tone of voice, and body movement reminded me of the afternoon with Fausto, Elisa, Marino, Laura and Marciano in Guachalito and Coquí. My French was of course nonexistent so understanding the play was hard but we had a very nice time while Jazael sang with the girls around me, “Oh Ana.”

The workshops on the future of Arts Collaboratory, were divided into language groups to facilitate communication and a regional understanding in the Spanish group helped a lot. We talked about our passions and obstacles to find out what was valuable in working together on Arts Collaboratory. The desire unfolded to turn this meeting into a space of knowledge sharing, cultural exchanges that helped improve our practices, share resources, and expand the spirit of this network to different levels (networks, base, communities). Also considering our local realities in terms of sustainability, and how there has been a culture of dependence in the background and how AC can change this. In between the talks I started noticing the structures of the spaces. I found it extremely interesting how Teorética kept on operating even though its founder passed away and to learn how the generational change happened. It was incredible how important the space was in Costa Rica in providing art and education and how its vision were activated through the personal initiative of the founder. Another important institutions that actively collaborative with artists on artistic production, lugar a dudas, which has been a home, a school, a hanging

place, a place to spend the afternoon is an initiative that continues to permeate the scene of art and cultural in Colombia. In terms of obstacles, it was very clear to me that in order to save time and facilitate the processes to grow, Más Arte Más Acción should increase its amount of human resources. Not in an effort to specialize, but to have the possibility of having more heads and hands working together to create an utopia of establishing social mediation through art as well as becoming a political tool that can continues to influence our context.

Affinity was a word that was around a lot and I think in the future scenario it will be the key word in forming possible collaborations. There have been some affinities created in the past meetings and we have developed approaches from other organizations. However the workshops here enabled us to see how each other work more clearly. Hearing ways of articulating processes and how they correspond to the general activity involved in being a network, it has also opened up a way for us to understand each other and develop a closer relationship.

There are many words I would like to include in this report, more as a list of things that haunt my head and that I cannot articulate clearly or that I already started to describe in the collaborative projects: reciprocity, deconstruction of power relations, community, collaboration, infatuation, expanded territories, creative mediations, P2P, file, temporary memory, affection, collective desire, vandalism, complicity, active communica-

tion, hearing, pause, answer, micropolitics, trust, inbreeding, time (time measuring), dream, fiction, imagination, circulation of ideas, movement of people, sustainability of ideas and spaces, work, precariousness, time, time, work division, standardization, dance, body, singing resonance, violence, conflict, crisis, cure, curator, fear, resistance to change, resonance again, earth, anxiety, water, weather, time to think about breathing, structures, hierarchy, horizontal, sinusoidal, chaos, improvisation.

I was very happy with the plenary we had on Goree Island. That day we arrived with less fear to ask hard questions about how AC currently manages its operations. With DOEN and Hivos we could think about the realities of how a new path could be, the notion of self-managing very set up and led by Cráter Invertido, ruangrupa and Platohedro. As they are little schools of self-organization that showed us how this way could be self-sustained and to find a way, with others can be a means to manage a common pot. The team to finalize the future vision that will meet in Amsterdam in June will be able to work and explore these notions much better. I firmly believe in the capacity of this team that they stimulate me emotionally and intellectually. I admire them and have a heart full of emotion and optimism that this crew will find a way, a good way forward for Arts Collaboratory. Also it is important to mention the great initiative shown by Gertrude from DOEN, to give us the ability to change the relationship between donors and beneficiaries and it is something we should learn from as organizations. DOEN is already moving toward a change and now the ball is rolling, its course will surely put us in crisis at some point but we will adapt. It will take lots of compromises but I think

it will be well worth it.

I do not want to leave out the public moment and shared events such as the talk at the book store and the dance at Ecole des Sable, the mural painting, and Simon's concert. The first intervention of the movement Y'en a Marre left me full of thoughts. I found ingenious their use of rapping the news in Wolof as a strategy to raise consciousness, but I really questioned the notion of citizenship which they appealed to and I just wanted to see them on stage rapping.

At the public forum I was really missing the presence of Stefano Harney as I had high expectations but was super happy with the intervention of Binna and all mediation of "Casco" these days, and all the great facilitators because this Assembly was very special. At the forum Binna opened our way and gave us a floor to address the different practices of AC. Crater with its performance, Ker Thiossane with its projects with the community, and Picha-VANSA as a way of sharing resources to continue working together. Seeing us on stages like this activates not only the positioning of AC not only as a financier but as a network that constantly generates knowledge and triggers discussions.

The dance class at Ecole des Sables and the mural painting in Ker Thiossane, two moments of beautiful encounter that triggered other energies, for me. It was always surprising that we were looking for new forms of dialogue: dancing on earth, feeling the drums, the moon and the sun in our bodies, amid the randomness of our steps we opened the energy to keep the strength of the assembly. With the mural, the idea of putting our imagination together and leaving some

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of our feelings in the community was great, it was a time strike in the agenda.

Visiting Goree Island stirred very strong emotions in me. Its history and what that represents, and how the entire African diaspora influences our territories was powerful. The legacy of slavery, colonialism and racism is still present in our ways of living in so many places. Being there gave a feeling of nostalgia, sadness, strength, anger, all at once.

Once we were back in Dakar we went to the hip hop concert that was a bit disappointing from what we heard about how important it was as part of the story of the political change in the country. The show had strong propaganda, institutional videos, the support of many private companies, the ads for political candidates and then

a very militarized ending scene. My reaction was very strong since in Colombia we are experiencing a process of dialogue and political resolution of a conflict, this show did not sit very well with me. I felt somehow as if it was a movement permeated by electoral propaganda. I do not judge the fact that for many movements change is made by embedding itself in ongoing political systems as one type of strategy.

Other incredible moments during the Assembly were spent with the crew of Raw Material Company and Ker Thiossane. I have to say that Alpha was one of the best guides, an accomplice who was given the task to get us rolling through the city. I wanted to dance salsa in a local place but it was not possible, I did buy some records. It is a debt that I have leaving Dakar where the presence of Fania was so strong. In Colombia it became active in the interpretation of salsa and I will have to take another look at it in the street.

My return to Colombia was very hard due to all the emotions that this encounter left me, many things to learn and inspired by all processes and breathing to see how to mobilize Más Arte Más Acción to resonate to the rhythm of all the practices of the network and for the future that we already started. For me as a personal experience it was very enriching. I never get tired of repeating that to me AC is the school that will always be with me on a professional and personal level whether I continue working or not for MAMA. I have affection scattered like seeds in many parts of the world and my house will always be available with mattress and hot food to all of my AC friends.