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FORCED DISPLACEMENT
A GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION





FORCED DISPLACEMENT

A GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION



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of the requirements for the Degree of the
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| ABSTRACT

Forced displacement is one of the most difficult social problems affecting Colombia. This project focuses on exploring the realities of internal forced displacement through the mediums of sequential storytelling and graphic narrative.

In addition to telling the individual stories of those intimately involved in and affected by the violence, the villagers and the perpetrators, the research project sets out to explore the Rashomon effect through a range of characters and perspectives.

By bearing witness through the Rashomon effect, and the spatio-temporal language of graphic narrative, I aim to show both sides of Colombia's story of forced displacement, and how they eventually led to the reconciliation of both parties in the conflict.

Reconciliation is a significant part of the current construction of the social fabric in Colombia. It is important that this project contributes to the collective memory of Colombia by arguing that violence is not the answer in any circumstance, rather, it has serious consequences for society and the country's future.

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Figure 1. I'm not from here.

INTRODUCTION

Colombia has suffered the torment of violence for more than half a century, resulting in the most devastating consequences of this conflict, internal forced displacement. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2015), at least six million people have been displaced throughout more than six decades of conflict. In 2014, 137,200 people were newly displaced, 403,700 registered as internally displaced people (IDPs), and 7,100 were forcibly evicted. “More than 50 percent of IDPs live in informal urban settlements” (IDMC, 2015, p.20). When the victims of internal forced displacement enter a new city, they alter the social norm of that city. This disruption is further amplified when demobilised guerrilla combatants are also integrated into the city’s urban areas, sometime in the near future.

I am both a victim and witness of internal forced displacement. When I was a two years old, my mother and I had to leave our city due to a violent act against a family member. While completing my Bachelor of Design at Los Andes University in Bogota, Colombia, these personal experiences led me to create my own response to the conflict, telling stories of forced displacement and recruitment through graphic narrative. For that project, I created a comic book that visually represented the struggle of a forced displaced victim, and the journey to find her loved ones. This Master of Design research project is similarly informed, but from a wider perspective.

When victims of internal forced displacement flee to the cities seeking assistance, the first difficulty they face is the indifference and stigmatization of urban dwellers. They have to follow different procedures in order to get help and assistance from the government. This assistance does not fulfil the needs of the displaced and so makes their arrival and settlement in the city even more difficult. In addition to the displaced, the reintegrated often suffer contempt and stigmatisation due to having been part of an illegal group. The general problem is that people, who have not been affected by the conflict, believe that victims move in to urban areas by their own free will, not because they were fleeing violence. Such prejudices create a gap between the parties, making the assistance process of the government more difficult since most of this help happens in urban areas.

Various campaigns have been created for the public to help them understand the issues of the Colombian conflict. The aim of these campaigns is to facilitate acceptance among the urban dwellers, the displaced and the reintegrated. Presidential campaigns like *I care* (CNN, 2016), compare stories of rural and city youth, demonstrating that young city dwellers only know the conflict through the news and have little knowledge of the stories that led to the victims leaving their homes, families and villages. Similarly, the Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR), a government entity that helps the demobilised become reintegrated into society, produced a comic called *Step by step* (ACR, 2014), which tells the story of reintegration of a demobilised member of an illegal armed group. Surveys conducted by the firm Econometrics in 2013, show that 90% people consider such campaigns helpful in raising awareness of these issues (Cardozo, 2014).

Graphic storytelling has proven to be an effective medium to convey conflict, and has been used by several notable graphic novelists. For instance, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1991), tells the story of the Holocaust through the experiences his father survived. Marjane Satrapi in *Persepolis* (2000), narrates her childhood and early adult life during and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Most recently, Joe Sacco uses graphic journalism to tell the experiences of various conflicts he, himself, has witnessed. Sacco reaffirms the effectiveness of comics stating that with "comics you can put interesting and solid information in a format that's pretty palatable" (Gilson, 2005). In Chris Ware's graphic novel *Building Stories* (2012), which isn't based on a violent event,

Ware conveys the story of internal existential conflict, portraying each character's story in different range of formats and narratives.

In recent years, victims of internal forced displacement have used visual narrative as a means of therapy and artistic expression to heal their psychological wounds. The Mampujan victims, for example, used quilts as a canvas to tell the stories of the day they were attacked, slaughtered and forced to move from their lands by a paramilitary group. In the documentary *Rostros de la Memoria* (Faces of Memory) (2015) by the Colombian National Centre of Historical Memory (2015), Alejandra Gaviria, a communicator and cultural coordinator of Bogota's Memory and Peace Centre, states that these kind of artistic expressions are not only about victim's reparation; it is also about how people perceive these expressions; the chain of violence and impunity of the different violation related to the conflict, can only be broken if Colombians understand what happened, talk about the subject, and establish a dialogue with the victims.

Using testimonies and documentaries provided by the Colombian National Centre of Historical Memory (CNMH) as reference material, I will tell the story of internal forced displacement from the point of view of the victims and the victimizer, in a journey of self-healing, resilience, forgiveness and reconciliation. By illustrating the ongoing conflict through graphic narrative, my aim is to raise awareness and inspire action among urban Colombian youth. In doing so, I hope my research becomes a reference for future projects and that it contributes to Colombian society understanding the victims of forced displacement and to accepting demobilised illegal group combatants.



Figure 2. Internally forced displaced from Choco, Colombia. (CSC, 2005).



| CONTEXT

| FORCED DISPLACEMENT

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the term 'forced displaced' refers to a movement of people from their own place to another without their consent (UNESCO, n.d). The most common factor in this is violence. There are other causes of displacement unrelated to violence such as natural disasters, economic development, and lack of water supplies or food. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1998) defines internally displaced as:

Internally displaced people are people or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border. (p. 1)

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) claims that there are presently 60 million victims of forced displacement in the world, and that this number is comparable to the amount of people displaced at the end of the Second world war seventy years ago. The average number of people and refugees displaced per diem is 43, 000 people. To visualise this, the United Nations (UN) stated that if all the victims of forced displacement were gathered together, they would constitute the 24th largest population in the world (IDMC, 2015). Further, the UN refugee agency reports show that in the past five years, these numbers have been increasing dramatically due to the

beginning, or reactivation of 15 conflicts (UNHCR, 2015). These conflicts were located in different places around the world including Africa with eight conflicts, three in the Middle East, one in Europe and three more in Asia (UNHCR, 2015).

Globally, the displacement phenomenon is currently being led by the following countries: Colombia, D.R. Congo, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Syria and Turkey. These countries are experiencing severe armed conflict, which is resulting in the mobilization of large numbers of people (IDMC, 2015). Syria is currently the largest contributor with 7.6 million people forcibly displaced, due to their ongoing civil war. The situation for other countries is not as different as we think. Despite the international aid, and the efforts to avoid forced displacement in the world, numbers of displaced have been steadily increasing. In terms of this project, Colombia is reported to have the second highest rate of conflict and violence related force displacement in the world, with over 6,7 million victims in 2015 (IDMC, 2015).

Since 1960, illegal groups such as The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), The National Liberation Army (ELN), and Paramilitary groups, have attempted to take control of Colombia. The International Committee of the Red Cross reports that the most common methods used by these groups to gain control of an area are: mass slaughtering, stealing properties, the destruction of towns and villages, sexual abuse, forced conscription, and the sale of illegal drugs (CICR, 2008). For the people of Colombia, forced displacement is one of the most undesirable effects of the country's internal conflict. Due to the impact on both rural and urban populations, the Colombian government has been developing strategies and legal frameworks to decrease this activity and end the conflict.

The assistance provided by the government is represented by Law 387, which was created in 1997. This Law protects the human rights of the internally forced displaced by offering them short-term shelter, psychological and physiological help, food and economic aid. During the assistance process, government agencies such as the Colombian Ombudsman's Office gather data from the victims and update the current status of the conflict. Despite government efforts to try to solve the issues with laws and tangible forms of aid, the reality is that the number of displaced people is rising and the laws created to protect them have not been applied in the proper way, thus adding another layer to the problem.

RECONCILIATION

Justice, memory and reconciliation are very important steps in understanding and overcoming conflict. In journeying towards reconciliation, both the victim and the victimizer must recount what actually occurred during the conflict and the reasons for their individual acts. The process of remembering and recounting in order to uncover the truth assists the victim and the victimizer to engage in a self-healing process, to overcome their fears, and to have better psychological and physical health. This is how different countries, during periods of post crisis, have been able to overcome, understand, and identify the reasons for internal conflict. By scrutinizing the preceding events and contributing factors of a conflict, they can aspire to prevent them from happening again.

Countries that have achieved reconciliation through the truth and reconciliation commission include Germany, which in 1992 sought to clarify the acts of the East German regime through investigating the consequences of the dictatorship of the Socialist Unity Party in the former state of Deutsche Demokratische Republik. Argentina, with the case of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, where reconciliation involved investigating human rights violations perpetrated by the military regime during the period 1976-1983. The memories captured in the report entitled *Never Again* (1984) include the stories of the survivors of the disappearances and the description of how the captives were tortured or killed. In 1990, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Chile opened the Rettig Report. This report investigated the events regarding human rights violations during Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship between 1973 and 1990. The report's findings helped the country to create a new political environment and restore balance in their society. Following this investigation, Guatemala sought to clarify the violations of human rights and acts of violence by the Revolutionary National Unity of Guatemala against the Guatemalan people during the years 1958-1994. The final report is called *Guatemala: Memory of Silence* (1999). And in South Africa, the restorative body The Commission of Truth and Reconciliation was established to achieve justice and reconciliation for the victims of the apartheid regime 1960-1994. The final TCR report consists of five volumes, each written with a different focus on the conflict. The commission led Archbishop Desmond Tutu to proclaim that without "forgiveness there is no future, but without confession there can be no forgiveness" (Bainbridge, 2010, p. 49).

Over the last few years, Colombia has undertaken the first steps in the journey towards reconciliation. The demobilised combatants of the illegal groups, including the paramilitary groups and the defected members of the guerrilla groups such as FARC and the ELN, have been recounting their stories to the Colombian agencies ACR and the National Centre of Historical Memory. Through this recounting, important information is gathered as to why and how the attack took place and what happened during the attack. The main objective of this process is to identify the reasons for the conflict and understand why people joined and left these groups. These testimonies help victims of internal forced displacement understand why they suffered atrocity, and also help those caught up on both sides of the conflict overcome their emotional difficulties and fears.



COMIC AS A MEDIUM TO RAISE AWARENESS OF COLOMBIAN INTERNAL FORCED DISPLACEMENT

As a Colombian designer with first-hand knowledge of displacement and violence, I felt it my responsibility to do something to raise awareness about the issue. My first response was to create a comic called “*Susana*”. The comic tells the story of Susana, a young woman who is forcibly recruited by an illegal armed group from whom she escapes after some bad experiences and who consequently becomes a victim of internal forced displacement. The objective of this Masters of Design research project is to continue to raise awareness of the issue of internal forced displacement in the Colombian community not directly affected by the Colombian armed conflict as well as those who don’t recognize its victims. In order to decrease the indifference shown to victims, the Colombian government conducted a campaign in 2015 called *I care* (2015) in order to raise awareness of the armed conflict in the country. According to the Minister Counsellor of Communications Pilar Calderon, the initiative “is aimed at people living in the city but they consider that conflict is not with them, and do not recognize how difficult it has been for the country” (CNN, 2015). Another view of Claderon’s that I found to be important is that:

If the peace process in Colombia is not successful, it is very possible that young people between 18 and 30 will never know peace in the country because another peace process, or end the conflict, it could take another 20 or 25 years. The change starts with them because they have to be aware that this is the best way for their children to live in a country where they can develop. (CNN,2015, para. 10)

Given this cultural background, this Master’s project focuses on applying graphic narrative to tell the story of the conflict and reconciliation to young adult, urban Colombians aged 20 to 25 who have not been affected by violence and who are not aware of the realities of the conflict that surrounds them.

| GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

One of the main objectives of the project is to raise awareness among young Colombian adults regarding the potential for ongoing conflict in the country. By using the comic as a medium for storytelling, I will make a case for comic's ability to visualize and communicate this sensitive issue. In analyzing Marshall McLuhan's theory regarding communication medium, Thorson and Moore state that the type of medium influences the way we perceive, process and store the message contained in the communication (Thorson & Moore, 1996, p. 200).

I consider the graphic medium the comic to be appropriate to communicating complicated and problematic issues such as conflict and violence. Graphic novelists Art Spiegelman, Marjane Satrapi, Joe Sacco and Chris Ware, also consider the comic to be an effective medium for communicating difficult subjects and were consequently selected as precedents for my project.

| ART SPIEGELMAN



Figure 4. *Maus* (Spiegelman, 1980).

Art Spiegelman is a graphic storyteller. In his award winning graphic novel *Maus* (1980-1991), Spiegelman tells the story of the Holocaust based on his father's experiences during the World War II. Spiegelman uses anthropomorphic mice, cats and other animals as a metaphor in order to represent the social standing of the characters. By using animal metaphor, he not only shows us the events, but allows us to imagine what happened during the Holocaust (Garcia, 2015, p.140).

Another interesting observation of Spiegelman's work is how he employs the comic medium as a way to preserve the memories of his family and how this personal recounting contributes to human history. Due to the historical and cultural importance of the Holocaust and the accuracy with which Spiegelman portrays the events associated with the Holocaust, his work has become a classical reference for this event. In speaking about memory and comics, Spiegelman states that:

Comics are a good form for dealing with memory, because you've got a bunch of boxes on a page, so before you focus on one picture and the other picture, you got a sense of what those pictures are, and in that sense you got the past, the present and the future. (ABC-RN, 2013, 2:42)

In order to give his story more graphic impact, Spiegelman decided to illustrate his graphic novel in black and white. In doing so, he was influenced by the recurring monochromatic representation of the Holocaust in movies and photography. The purpose was to depict the horrors of the Holocaust clearly and comprehensibly (Garcia, 2015). In my opinion, issues of conflict are better portrayed in grayscale because grayscale allows the reader to focus on the story while respecting the seriousness of the subject matter.

| MARJANE SATRAPI

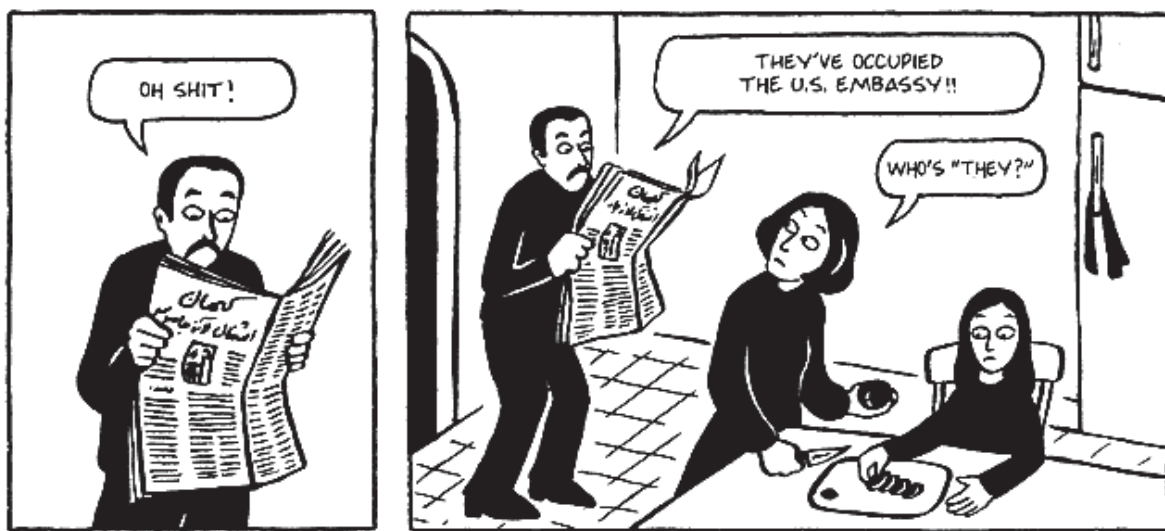


Figure 5. *Persepolis I* (Satrapi, 2000, p.72).

Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2000), recounts the atrocities of the Islamic revolution in Iran during the course of her childhood and adolescence. Satrapi uses simple shapes and an outstanding narrative to engage the reader in the story.

According to Satrapi, we are living in a "culture of images" (Bearman, 2006, para. 11). Bearman asserts that comics are easily approachable because, for the public, images are easy to understand and people are used to reading stories through images (Bearman, 2006).

Similarly to *Maus* (1980-1991), Satrapi's illustrations are created using simple linear strokes, allowing the reader to have a deep connection with the characters and the story. The varying size of the panels allows the reader to understand important details in different scenes. In addition to panel size, Satrapi uses color to create a contrast

between the past and present. In this comic book, Satrapi's early memories are represented in black and white while the present, depicted at the end of the comic, are in color.

What makes *Persepolis* different from *Maus* is Satrapi's use of the homodiegetic narrator. In *Persepolis* the protagonist is both the character and the narrator. However, Satrapi occasionally gives the narrative point of view to other characters thus allowing them to have the main voice. For the reader, this makes the story more interesting because it allows for a broader understanding of the historical events that Satrapi experienced during the revolution of Iran in 1979.

Further, the simplicity of her style allows the reader to identify themselves within the story. This stylistic characteristic is an important reference for my project, as is the homodiegetic narrator. By creating simpler drawings, I hope that the reader will identify and connect with my characters' types and will interact with them and other narrators as the story progresses.

| JOE SACCO



Figure 6. *Refugeeland* (Sacco, 2001, pp. 147-148).

Joe Sacco uses comics to narrate his experiences while working as a war zone journalist. In *Palestine* (2001), one of his most acclaimed works, he tells the stories of inhabitants living in territories occupied by Israel in 1991 and 1992.

In his well known comic *Journalism* (2012), Sacco compiles reports from different journalists in conflict zones around the world. These gathered stories and photographs from his time in the field were used to create comic books that represent, according to Sacco, events that other forms of media wouldn't be able to capture (Lannan, 2011).

Sacco's particular style of comic book visual narrative combines both text with sequential art. Captions and speech bubbles are integrated in a purposeful way to give each page a unique rhythm. In addition, Sacco employs textures, objects, people and different climates in the backgrounds of his comics (Figure 6) to complement and give

more depth to the story (Lannan, 2011), creating different emotions on each page and immerse the reader in the story (WAC, 2009). This is notable because Sacco is not just focused on the main characters, but on their environment as a whole.

Sacco's holistic storytelling method is similar to my own method of storytelling. Sacco's graphic novels are based on real events which creates a sense of empathy and truth for his readers. For the three comics created for this project, I have combined true stories from my own personal experiences with stories gathered from other victims. In using this combination of perspectives, my intention is to create an honest and holistic, graphic account of internal forced displacement in Colombia.

For most narrators, the panels are the most basic part of the comic, but for Ware it is the page. Ware has a deep understanding of comic structure that has allowed him to expand beyond classic conventions. For Ware, graphic narrative is more complex than squares and panels on a page with juxtaposing text and images. Instead, his structure relates to the act of memory, which does not work in a linear way. Consequently, Ware does not limit the text to speech bubbles, but mixes images and text together to create a new visual composition. This style of text is called “lexias” (Figure 7) (Heer, Worcester, & Kannenger, 2009), and is influenced by Will Eisner who argued that in comics “text reads as an image” (Eisner, 1985, p.1).

Additionally, Ware’s graphic representations experiment with narrative in that his non-linear narratives tell stories from the point of view of different characters in the same space (Heer, Worcester, & Kannenger, 2009). Ware argues that experiments with narrative structure make the reader see comics in a different way and to break the normal habits of comic reading (Bartual,2012).

For Ware comics are a representation of memory. The act of memory is related to an association of different ideas, and events from the past and the present. Through complex, non-chronological narratives and diagrams, Ware wants to depict how memory works (Bartual,2012).

Ware’s use of the entire page and lexicas are an effective means of representing memories and chaos authentically. This non-traditional way of formatting allows me to communicate the struggles of my characters more realistically.

| MEMORY

Memory has played a key part in the healing process for victims of internal forced displacement. Using their experiences as material, victim survivors express themselves through a variety of art forms, such as songs, performances, plays, sculptures, illustrations and graphic narratives. These creations recount what happened to them individually, and are used to remember the victims who did not survive. This form of art therapy is meant to heal and help people overcome their grief.

Of these art therapies, the most influential reference for my project are the Mampujan Quilts. These quilts tell the stories of the attacks carried out by a paramilitary group in 2000 on the Mampujan village, located in Bolivar, Colombia (Ridder, 2015). The quilt designs feature a continuous narrative and characters that are representative of the victims themselves and their families (Figure 8). The main objective of these quilts is to preserve the historical memory of the community and to heal the psychological wounds left by the conflict.



Figure 8. Mampujan Quilt, Majende Mi Prieto. (Monsalve, 2015).

Memory and time have often been represented in comics. This is evidenced in Ware's non-linear style and Spiegelman's arrangement of panels that collectively reflect the past, present and future. Comics become historical objects when they attest to historical events and cultural realities (Nora, 1996, as cited in Goggin et al., 2010). For this reason, they can be considered memorials to past events that bear witness to trauma. Moreover for society, comics are able to show the mentality of a society at a specific time in history, and act as benchmarks of cultural historical reality (Nora, 1996, as cited in Goggin et al., 2010).

Comics can also represent a collective memory in a powerful way (Nora, 1996, as cited in Goggin et al., 2010). By telling a story about a whole group, the reader is able to gain a broader understanding of the situation. The Colombian collective memory is integral to "*I'm not from here*". I maintain that the authenticity underpinning the narrative and characters of the three stories creates empathy and closes the gap between the young adult readers and their cultural realities – especially those for whom the reality is unknown.

| RASHOMON EFFECT

The stories comprising "*I'm not from here*", are based on different testimonies of victims and victimizers of the Colombian conflict. These testimonies were provided by the Colombian National Centre of Historical Memory, which is the main entity of the Colombian government charged with collecting this information. In order to give these narratives a unifying structure, I have decided to use the Rashomon effect.

The concept for the Rashomon effect comes from the film *Rashomon* (1950), by Akira Kurosawa, who was inspired by the stories written by Ryunosuke Akutagawa (Davis, Anderson & Walls, 2016). The Rashomon effect involves multiple testimonies of one event, with the possibility that each version is the truth, without disqualifying any of the testimonies. It is up to the reader to make their own conclusions based on what was told (Davis et al., 2016). I have therefore decided to use this concept to tell my story, because I think it is the fairest way of depicting the truth - not only the truth as experienced by the victim, but also that believed in and perpetrated by the victimizer as well as the cultural truth perceived by the reader.

| SEQUENTIAL ART

"I'm not from here" comprises three comic books that when unfolded, transform into posters. In the comic book, the story begins using sequential art. On the poster, the story continues in sequential art but in the form of continuous narrative and polymorphic representation.

Comics have been defined multiple ways over the years. According to Roman Gubern (1979), comics are composed of narrative structures formed by the progressive pictograms sequence, in which elements of phonetic structure may be integrated. Some authors like Thierry Groensteen believe that defining comics is an impossible task because they contain multiple elements and rules to follow (Heer, Worcester & Groensteen, 2009). Despite this, Groensteen asserts that every comic can be defined as "a collection of separate icons and interdependent images" (Heer et al., 2009, p. 125). More recently, Neil Cohn a cognitive scientist defines comics as "social objects created by incorporating the results of two human behaviors: writing and drawing" (Cohn, 2013, p. 1).

Each of these definitions address the interaction between phonetic structures and images. That is why the most accepted definition for comics is the one made by Scott McCloud in his book *Understanding Comics* (1993). McCloud defines comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud, 1993, p. 9).

Comics are structured according to Gubern (1979) into three categories: Macro-units, units and micro-units.

The category of macro-units corresponds to the format, which can be a poster, magazine, the page, or a strip. It is also related to the colour and the style of the illustrator (Gubern, 1979). This category is very important to the project. Knowing the format of how the comic is to be represented allowed me to achieve a different kind of outcome. The project began as a series of posters that referenced the format of the Mampujan quilts. In exploring different poster designs to show the concept of displacement, I decided to draw on Chris Ware's format and concept of displacement, and made the decision to fold the poster so that it could be flexible and could be designed to use all the format.

The category of units relates to the panels and the interaction between them (Gugern, 1979). This interaction is one of the most distinctive parts of the comic. McCloud states that the gutter, the white separation between the panels, is where closure occurs (McCloud, 1993). Closure relates to the reader mentally filling in the gutter between the panels so as to understand what is happening between them (McCloud, 1993). McCloud argues that there are different types of closure that are described in the following transitions between panels: Moment to moment, which shows subtle movements between panels; Action to action, which shows the progression of an action between the panels and subject to subject, which involves the reader and which shows different events in the same scene related to each other. This transition involves transportation through distance, time and space and requires considerable interpretation on behalf of the reader. Finally, the type of closure termed Aspect to Aspect deals with different aspects of a place or an idea, while Non-sequitur concerns the transition between aspects that are not logically related (McCloud, 1993).

In the last category, the micro-units are all the elements that compose the panel, such as the text, speech balloons, onomatopoeias and *symbolias* (Gugern, 1979).

Speech balloons are one of the most characteristic elements of comic (Eisner,1985). They are used to depict the voice of the characters, which can be transmitted within the balloons through text or graphics (Eisner,1985). In comics, they represent “the integration of text and image into a meaningful whole” (Cohn, 2013, p.1). Moreover, when the speech balloons are present in the panel, they can determine the sequence of the character who speaks first, as well as giving a reading order to the panel and page (Eisner,1985). This order contributes to the narration to having a better flow (Eisner,1985). Depending on their shape, speech bubbles can further convey different emotions and give meaning to a character’s speech. In addition to the balloon shape, the lettering can help as well to express the emotions and personality of the character (Eisner,1985). This same category includes captions, which represent the internal voice of the character or the narrator of the story and which contrast the oval shape of the speech balloons by their rectangular shape (Goggin et al., 2010).

Another important characteristic of comics is the use of onomatopoeia. According to Fresnault-Deruelle (1977) onomatopoeia, in comics, are the most important

device to represent non-verbal sounds. The spelling of these sounds' representation can vary depending on the language (Marrs, n.d., as cited in Uyeno, 2015). For instance, in English the sound of an explosion can be represented with the words "Boom" but in Spanish this same sound could be written like "Buum". There are no specific rules to spell the onomatopoeias, rather finding the right spelling is more an organic process made by the artist (Uyeno, 2015). Besides representing sounds, onomatopoeia can clarify events in a panel giving more information to an action that may be difficult to show in a single image (Uyeno, 2015).

The signs and symbols termed *symbolias* by Mort Walker are classified in his book *The Lexicon of Comicana* (1980). Symbolias were created to convey and reflect the emotions of the character or to represent the state of an object (Brownlee, 2013). There are different symbolias, for example, *hites*, which are lines created to show movement and *emanatas* that are auxiliar descriptions that help graphically enhance the emotional state of the character (Walker, 1980).

| CONTINUOUS NARRATIVE

Continuous narrative refers to different scenes of the same story that occur at different times and which show the repetition of the same character doing more than one action. This type of graphic sequence has no gaps or divisions in any particular area (Von Dippe, 2007). In exploring continuous narrative, I found that it allowed me to create more interesting ways to tell the story "*I'm not from here*". Further, because this form of narrative does not have spaces dividing the scenes, it makes the comic book artist seek alternative ways to graphically resolve the scenic transitions and find the most appropriate way to show it. I consider that this kind of narrative motivates the reader to immerse themselves in the story and to explore reading the visual narrative following the movements of the characters.

| POLYMORPHIC REPRESENTATIONS

Polymorphic representations are repetitions of a character depicted doing different actions or a single action within the same background. This type of representation is used as a way to show movement (Cohn, 2013). When compared to continuous narrative, the perception of time in the polymorphic representation is shorter as it only involves portraying one movement in one scene. I decided to use this type of representation because I think it relates perfectly with subject of *"I'm not from here"*, which is displacement.





**I'M NOT
FROM HERE**

| PROCESS

The process began with gathering testimonies related by victims and victimizers, which were provided by Colombian National Centre of Historical Memory. Each testimony tells the real experiences and unfortunate events that were experienced by those interviewed. Based on these testimonies, I created the story of *"I'm not from here"*. I analyzed the different characteristics of each story and used that information to structure each comic story. For instance, some events featuring in the stories of the perpetrators were: Forced recruitment when they were younger; the inhuman military training, and the nightmares they suffered as a consequence of post-traumatic stress disorder. In the case of the victims, one testimonial mentions how they were attacked after the village festivals while in others victims tell how some of them had to flee down the river after an attack. These stories also tell of how, after living through all these tragedies, they are gradually rebuilding a new life.

Having conducted this historical analysis, I began to explore different ways of using comic book graphic narrative to tell it. The first approach was a flip book (Figure 9). In this design I experimented with flipping the different pages to show how each story could unfold and be mixed with others as a way of conveying how each event in the conflict could be related to each other. After I had completed this prototype, I discovered that the result was confusing because of the multiple options that the reader could create, and which meant that the story lost its intention.

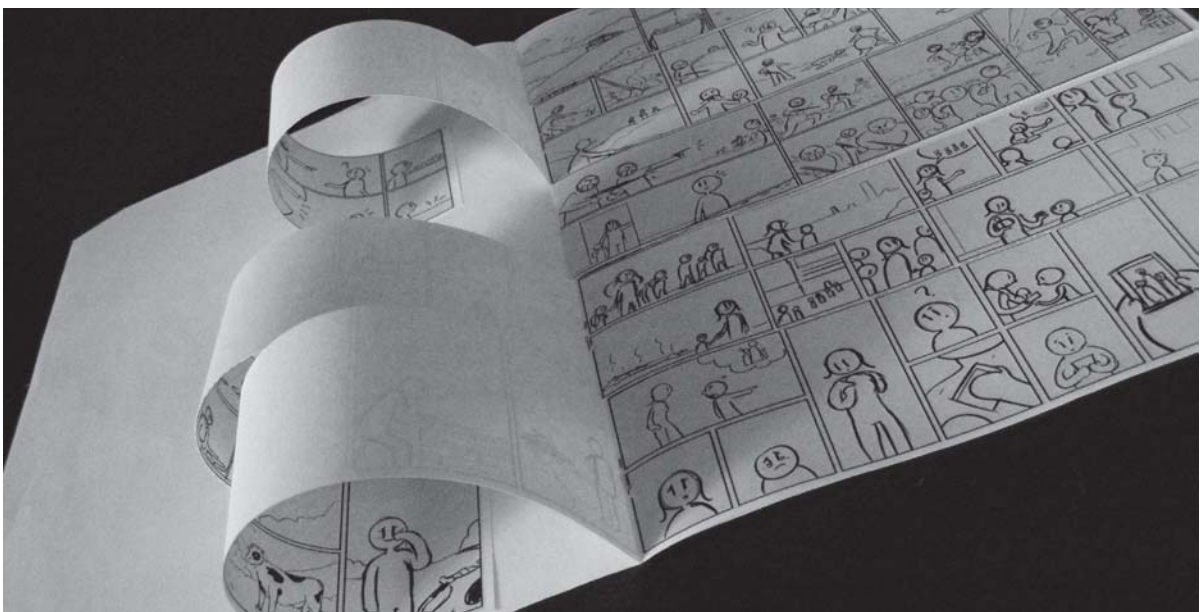


Figure 9. Flip book.

After finding out that the victims of the Mampujan created big format quilts using continuous narrative to tell their stories, I decided to select a poster format and continuous narrative to convey internal forced displacement. As I went through the process of creating different posters, I reflected on how the posters could be carried. It was always in my mind how my target audience of young adults could approach and read the poster. I thus decided to link this objective with the idea of displace and to engage in finding a way to design the poster so that they could be portable. Chris Ware proved to be an important influence in this decision making. I discovered that when the posters were folded it allowed me to carry them and freed up more space for the story narrative. This new space allowed me to expand the story graphically portrayed on the inside of the poster and to introduce the story on the outside of the poster. In doing so, I discovered that comics zines using one sheet of paper are also folded in a special way. This led me to apply the same process of folding and cutting in the middle to my poster design (Figure 10).

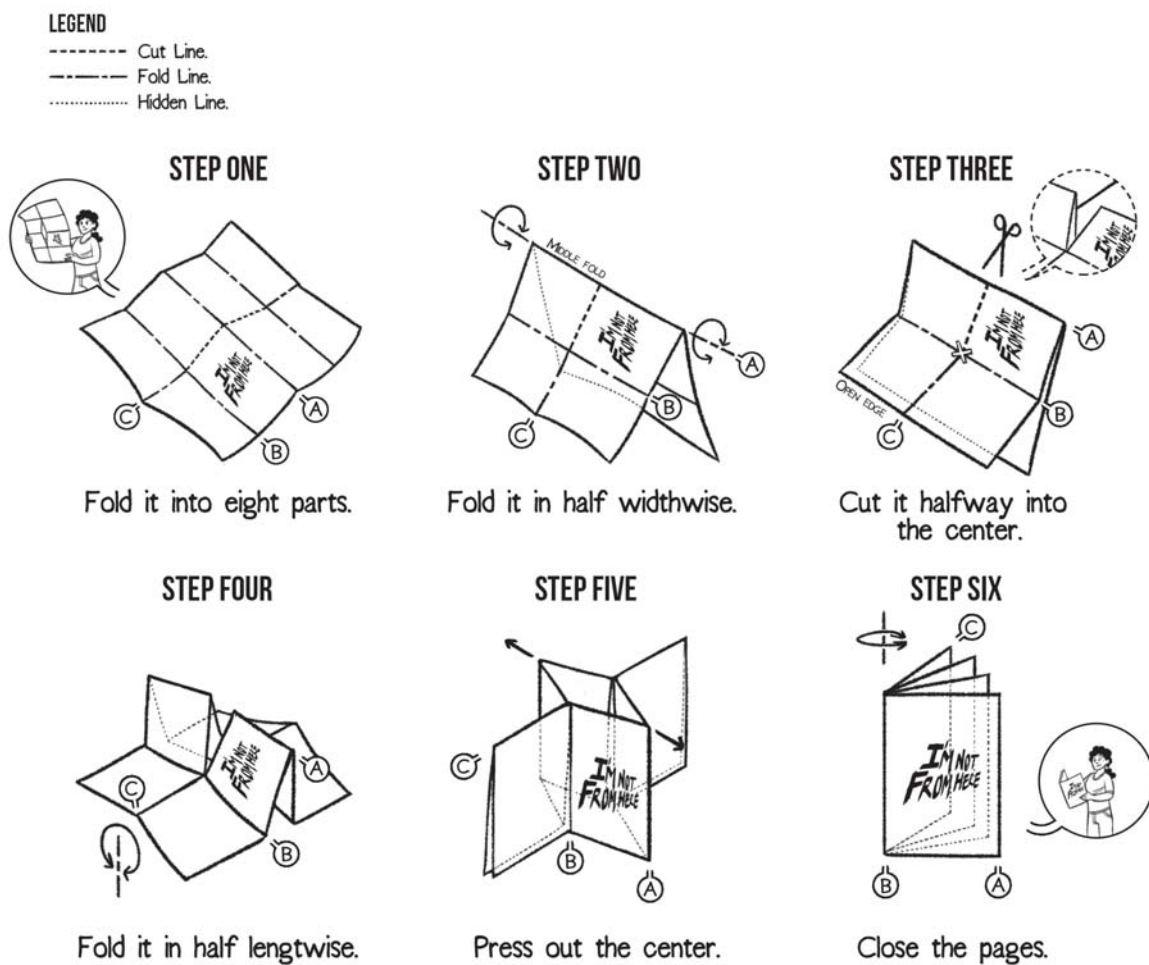


Figure 10. Folding instructions.

In exploring the stylistic representation of the story characters, I began depicting them with a rough line (Figure 11). But after researching Ware and Satrapi, I decided that a defined line would be a clearer way of communicating the victims' and victimizer's stories of internal forced displacement (Figure 12).



Figure 11. Nightmares, rough line.



Figure 12. Nightmares, defined line.

| SYNOPSIS

"I'm not from here" is a trio of stories about internal forced displacement in Colombia. The stories are told from the point of view of the victims and victimizers in an effort to tell both side of the conflict. The comic *"Nightmares"*, tells the story of a demobilized combatant who is suffering from post-traumatic stress and seeking forgiveness. In the comic *"Fleeing"*, the story focuses on a family who have been forced to displace to a new city after an attack on their village. In the third comic *"Resilience"*, the story focuses on this family as they begin to integrate into a new community and overcome their adversities. *"I'm not from here"* is thus proposed as a journey of self-healing, resilience, forgiveness and reconciliation.

| POSTERS

The posters are folded so they can be easily carried. The decision to fold the posters was based on the word "displace", which was always a reference for the project. Further, folding the posters allows me to design them as one would a book with a cover, in this case of six pages.

The story is told in three posters. "Nightmares" shows the story from the point of view of Rafael, the victimizer. "Fleeing" and "Resilience", tell the main story from the point of view of the village family. In each poster, the figure of the black vulture, a bird common to Colombia, is used as a metaphor for violence and chaos. In the story the vulture is a constant reminder of violence, However, when the story concludes and the characters reconcile, this figure decreases in size but is still there as a reminder that violence is not the answer to a problem.

The decision to purposefully depict the stories in black and white is to represent the memories of the victims and for the reader to focus on them. Similar to Satrapi's representation of the present and the past in *Persepolis*, I've chosen to represent the actual memories in the testimonials in *"I'm not from here"* using the same palette. Art Spiegelman's interest in monochromatic film also influenced the decision to use black and white to help the reader focus on the story and to understand the message contained in the narrative.



| NIGHTMARES

Nightmares tells the story of Rafael who was persuaded as young boy to be part of an illegal armed group, with different kinds of treats. The group also gave him money for simple errands, to make him feel that he was part of something important. After a while, he decided to leave his family and be part of this illegal group. One day, after an attack on a village, he realized that what he was doing was wrong. Every time he falls asleep black vultures follow him and tear him apart. These nightmares and being aware that he is doing wrong, motivate him to make a change in his life. Rafael escapes from the illegal group, and decides to ask for forgiveness from his victims. He believes that in doing so, he will be able to start a new life and be part of society again.

STRUCTURE OF THE POSTER

On the comic page side, I introduce the character Rafael and show what happened to him since he was little. I think this part is important because I want to address the idea that the victimizer was manipulated in a certain way to be part of the illegal group. When this character becomes part of the group, I not only change his clothes to a military uniform, I also change the shape of the speech bubble to convey how he has changed internally and externally (Figure 14).

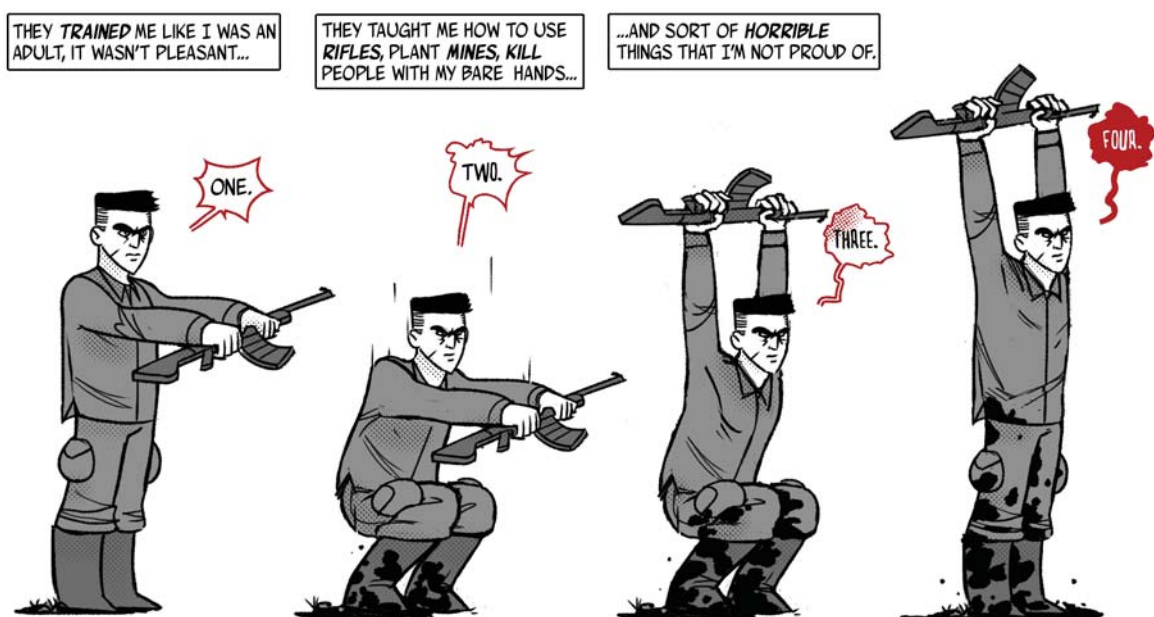


Figure 14. Nightmares, a section of page III.

In the course of the story I use different transitions between the panels, such as action to action, when the mother of the character refuses the dirty money (Figure 15); Moment to moment to represent the character being trained (Figure 14) and subject to subject to show the explosion of the gas cylinder (Figure 16). Using these type of interactions between panels allowed me to tell Rafael's story in a detailed and concise way.



Figure 15. *Nightmares*, a section of page II.

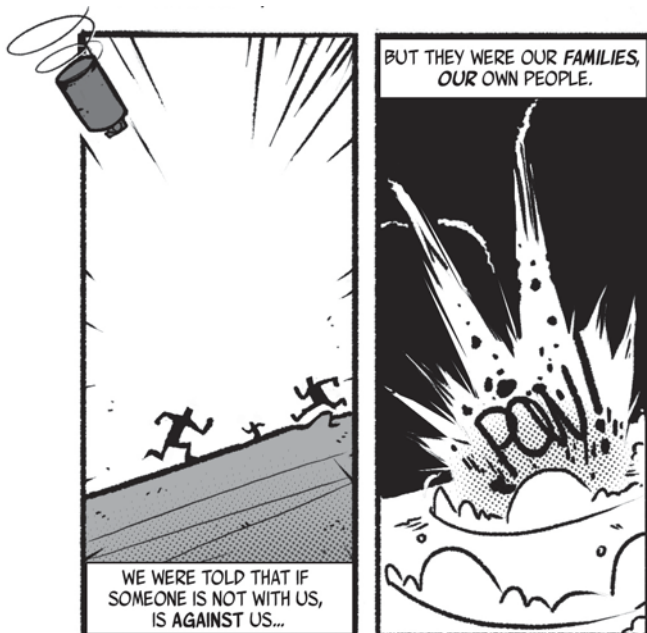


Figure 16. *Nightmares*, a section of page IV.

On the poster side, I used the shape of a spiral to give a graphic structure to the entire design. The spiral shape is used to represent the inner conflict of the character. Within this shape, I used continuous narrative showing the character in multiple scenes (Figure 17), from the darkest scenes until the lightest when he becomes the new person Rafael wants to be. The black vulture is always present in the continuous narrative, representing his sins and his inner struggle. When Rafael decides to make a change in his life, the vulture vanishes and becomes a dove that can be seen at the end of the spiral.



Figure 17. Nightmares, continuous narrative.



| FLEEING



Figure 18. Fleeing.

During the village festivals, a family of four, Antonio, Patricia, Andres and Camila are enjoying the firework show. But suddenly everything changes. Without any warning or reason, the family is under attack by an illegal armed group. Avoiding the attack, the family tries to protect themselves and hide in their house. The attack is so intense that one of the bombs explodes in their roof. The family decide to run away to save their lives. While they escape, the daughter Camila steps on a land mine and vanishes in the air. In order to survive, the rest of the family leave their village and start searching for a new place to live.

| STRUCTURE OF THE POSTER

In the comic section, I use the transitions action to action and subject to subject. The reason for this is that I want to give this section a faster reading rate to reflect the situation being experienced by the characters. The use of onomatopoeia was also intentionally used to give the scenes a sound atmosphere, especially the third page where the sound increases through the panels to represent what is happening offstage (Figure 19). In addition I inserted the caption “Suddenly everything changed” as a lexia to intentionally connect the panels and to give more drama to the page (Figure 20).

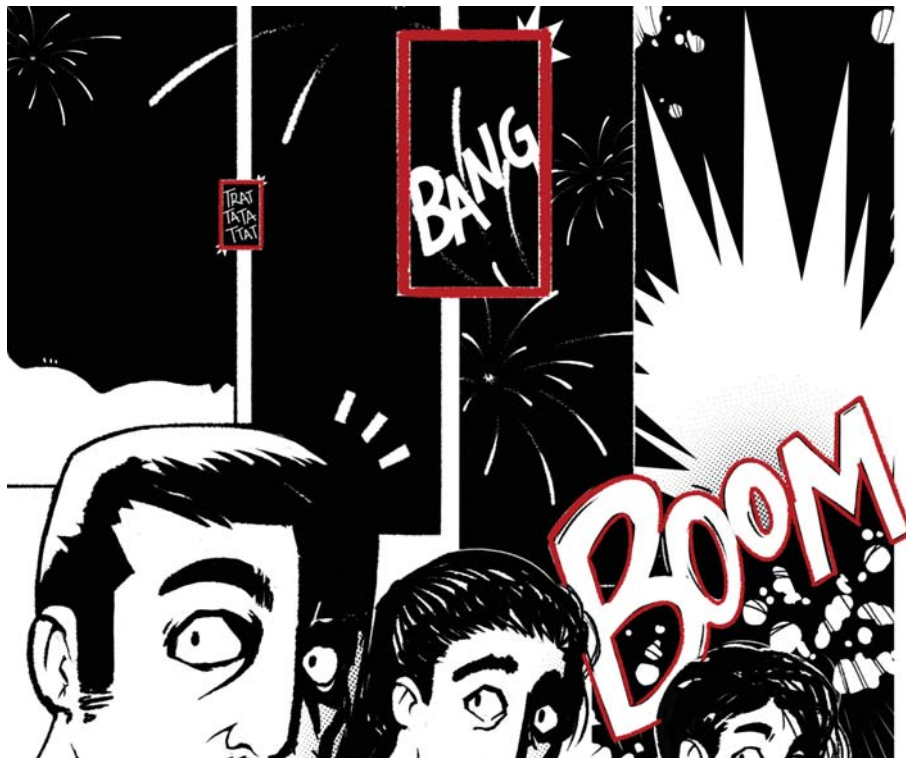


Figure 19. Fleeing, a section of page III.



Figure 20. *Fleeing, lexia.*

In the poster design I deliberately used polymorphic representations to symbolically show displacement (Figure 22). In the narrative I show the family fleeing from the village, which is on fire, then turning up the river and moving against the current, which symbolizes the adverse circumstances that are happening to them. The vulture as we have seen above, similarly represents the violence experienced by the character Rafael (Figure 21).



Figure 21. *Fleeing, black vulture.*



Figure 22. Fleeing, polymorphic representations.



| RESILIENCE

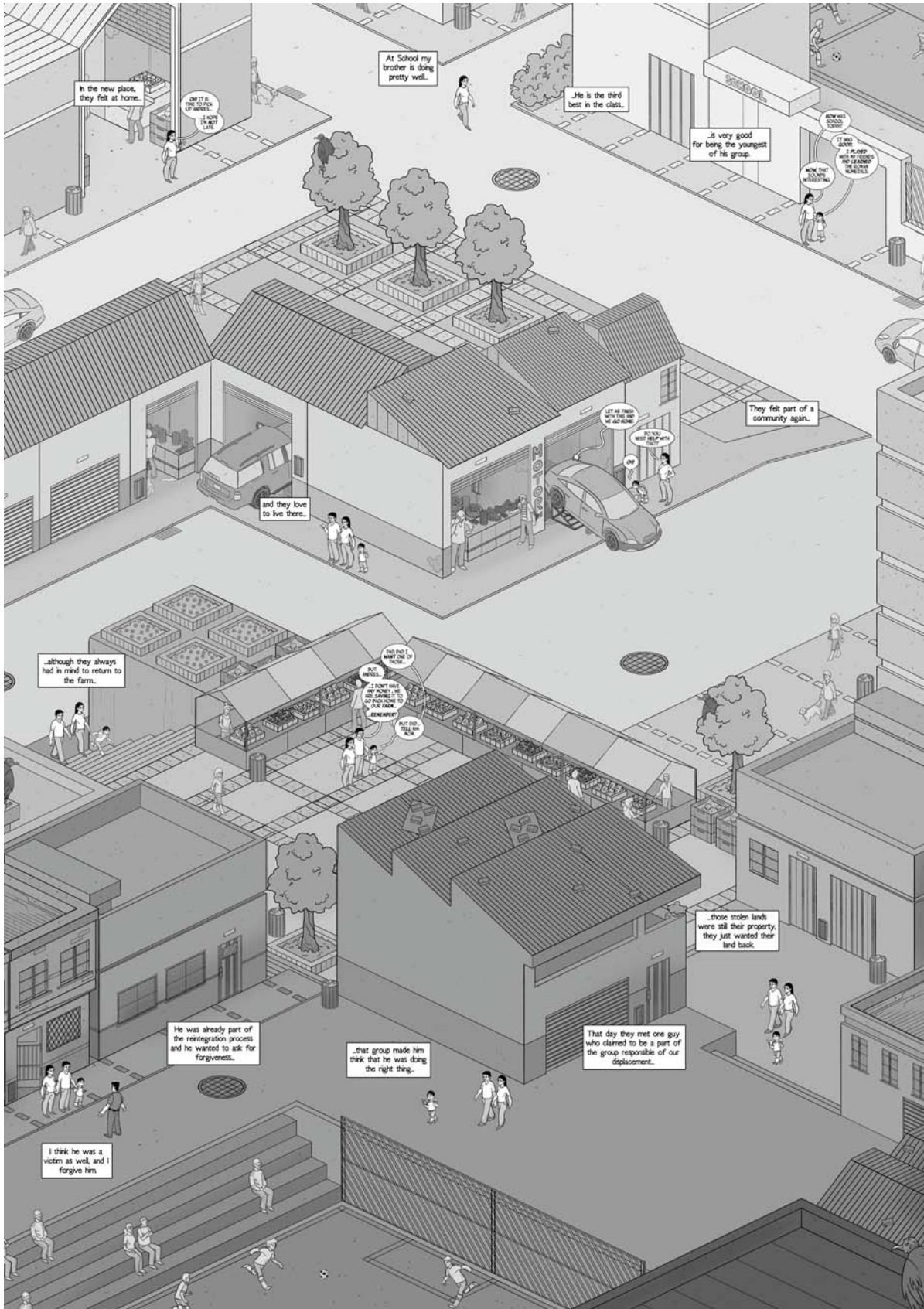


Figure 23. Resilience.

The family arrives to a new place. It is a big city far away from where they used to live and where they think they will be safe. The first days of their arrival, they are ignored by the city dwellers who think they are just beggars. The lack of help forces them to live and sleep on the street. The next day they find out that the government can help them because they are victims of violence. At the beginning it seemed that this aid would be enough, whereas in reality it was minimal and momentary. This situation makes the family start to look for new opportunities and adapt themselves to the new place and community.

| STRUCTURE OF THE POSTER

In the comic part, the transition most commonly used is scene to scene, which I employ to show the sudden changes that the characters are experiencing. This transition is evident in the second page where the characters are depicted in front of the city and then in the middle of it (Figure 25). On the fifth page, scene to scene transition is used in the graphic telling of how the characters are unemployed and then become employed (Figure 26). On the fourth page, I combine two kinds of transitions, moment to moment and action to action. Through the transition moment to moment, it can be seen how the characters benefit from the government aid, but with the transition action to action, I show how the government aid suddenly disappears (Figure 24). Used this way, these types of transitions allowed me to give a more dynamic emphasis to the narrative and, for the reader, a more understandable representation of the history behind each scene.

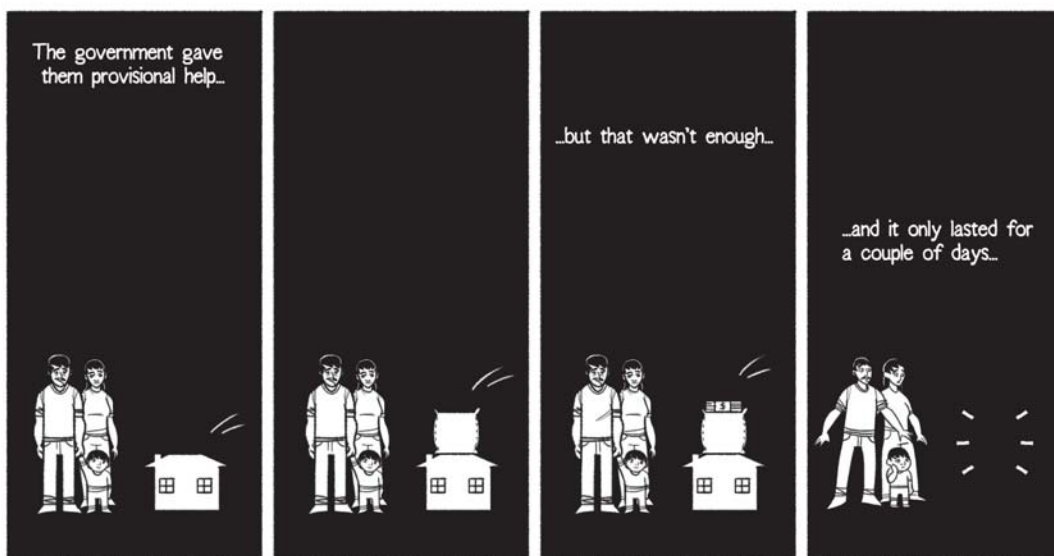


Figure 24. Resilience, page IV.



Figure 25. Resilience, page II.



Figure 26. Resilience, page V.

In this poster I wanted to represent how the characters adapted to their new city life. Using Polymorphic representation I showed how each of the characters moves freely in their new place. Further, isometric perspective allowed me to visualize the entire area where they characters are moving, and the new environment around them (Figure 27).

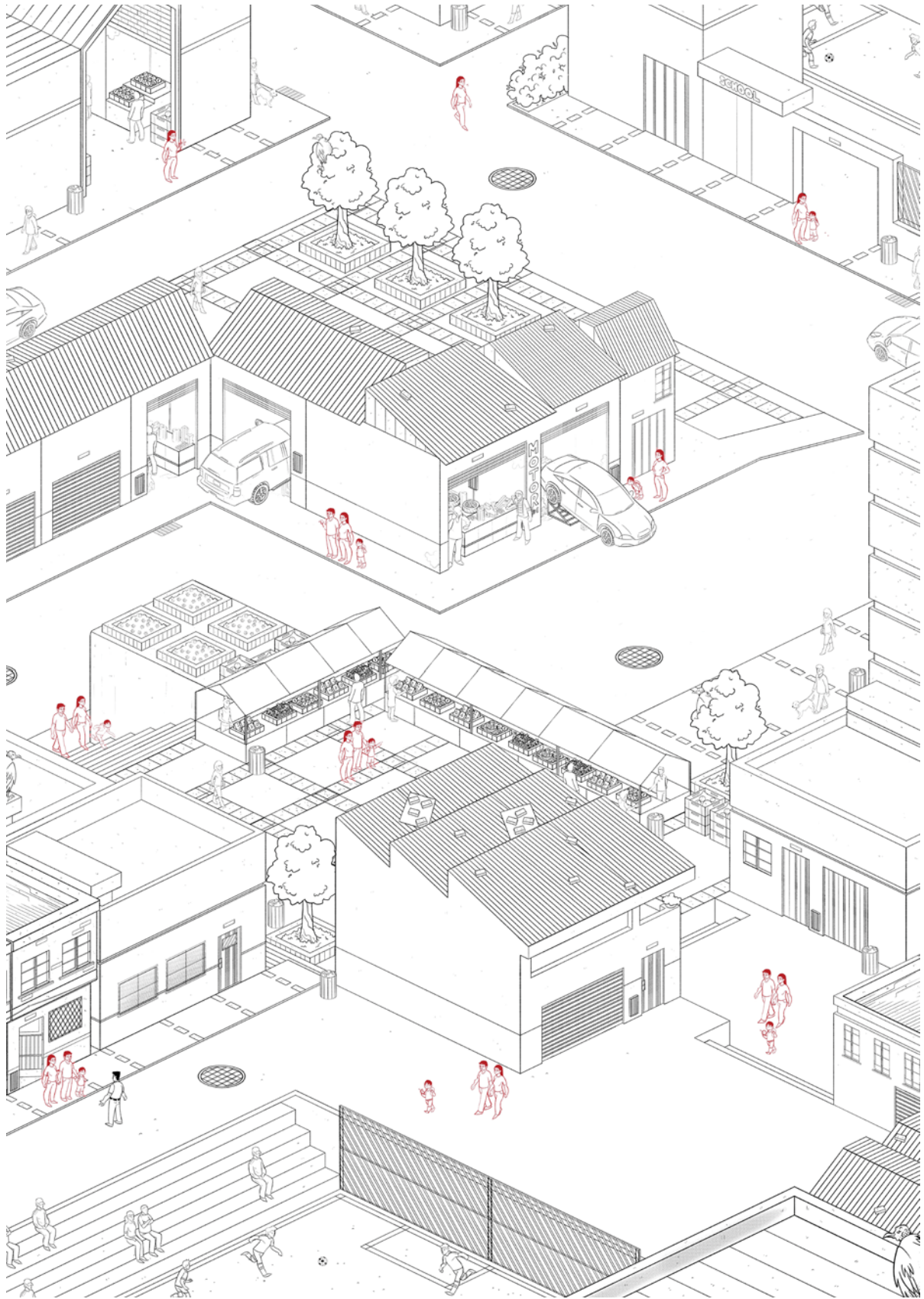


Figure 27. Resilience, polymorphic representations.

| CONCLUSIONS

This project was done in order to bear witness to the situation of internal forced displacement in Colombia, and to give a message of reconciliation between victims and victimizers. It is also aims to contribute to the country's historical memory as it deals with stories that are based on real events. Through the stories and their representation, I gained a broader understanding of the different reasons and adversities experienced by many Colombian victims of internal forced displacement. While working on different pages of the comic, I found that I would experience emotionally the struggles of the characters of the story. Moreover I believe that I could use these emotions to inform the comic design and thereby make an impact on the reader.

My research into comic book precedents showed me that it was possible to powerfully use the comic to tell stories of conflict and that the comic helps these kinds of issues to be more easily understood. My research and my exploration also proved that different transitions between panels can make it clearer for the reader to understand the history and the flow of the events. Further, I found that by exploring folding as well as comic book graphic language and devices let me resolve the stories in a different and unconventional way. In doing so, I hope to offer readers a different way of engaging in this subject matter.

The issue of conflict in Colombia is a subject that is little represented or discussed via the medium of comics, and so I intend to bring this topic out in the open and make it easier for people who are not related to the conflict in Colombia to understand. I intend for young adults to read *"I'm not from here"* so as to get a view of the conflict, and for the comic to motivate other projects to help the victims and demobilized. The next step is to publish the work in the multimodal format that is designed in. In Colombia there are publishing groups that do this type of work and who would potentially be interested in publishing it. Lastly, I plan to continue telling stories of forced internal displacement like *"I'm not from here"*.

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FIGURES CREDITS

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