



## A "biografia artística" com jovens deslocados em acampamentos no Iraque: presença como indicador de resiliência

### The "artistic biography" with displaced youth in camps in Iraq: Presence as an indicator of entry into resilience

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#### RESUMO

Os atuais conflitos armados no mundo, e em particular aqueles ligados ao Sistema de Estado Islâmico (ISIS) no Iraque, constituem um grande obstáculo para a estabilidade das referências sociais, para uma leitura coletiva de uma cultura comum e para uma sociedade livre dos sintomas da guerra. Intervenções artísticas inclusivas com crianças afetadas por conflitos, são muitas vezes levadas a cabo para aumentar a sua resiliência e empoderamento. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar a resiliência identificada durante a implementação de um dispositivo de atividades de "biografia artística", com técnicos de uma ONG e jovens, em um acampamento no Iraque. O dispositivo construído foi um projeto para "pintar nossas caravanas" como um primeiro projeto com os jovens em um acampamento. Através de nossa experiência como artista, treinador e pesquisador, observamos os traços de "presença" durante as atividades artísticas. Compromisso em um trabalho coletivo, autorreconhecimento pelos treinadores e autorreconhecimento no trabalho artístico final são os três indicadores de presença que observamos. Os processos de resiliência individual e coletiva são complexos e longos e sujeitos a muitos obstáculos. Nosso artigo convida a uma maior investigação para construir evidências e desenvolver uma resposta artística em emergências humanitárias.

**Palavras-chave:** Ajuda Humanitária; Educação em Emergências; Oficinas de Arte; Resiliência; Educação Artística; Biografia artística;

#### ABSTRACT

The current armed conflicts in the world, and in particular those linked to the Islamic State System (ISIS) in Iraq, constitute a major obstacle to stable benchmarks, to a collective reading of a common culture, and to a society free from the symptoms of war. Inclusive artistic interventions are often deployed with children affected by conflict as a source of resilience and empowerment. The objective of this article is to propose entry into resilience



identified during the implementation of a device of an "artistic biography" activities with coaches of an NGO and young people in a camp in Iraq. The device built was a project to "paint our caravans" as a first project with the young people in a camp. Through our experience as an artist, trainer and researcher, we observe the indicators of entry into "presence" during the artistic activities. Involvement in a collective work, self-recognition by the coaches and self-recognition in the final artistic work are the three indicators of presence that we note. Individual and collective resilience processes are complex and long and subject to many obstacles. Our article invites further investigation to build evidence to develop artistic response in humanitarian emergencies.

**Keywords:** Humanitarian Aid; Education in Emergencies; Art Workshops; Resilience; Art Education; Artistic biography;

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The situations of vulnerability of young people and their families in situations of armed conflict and forced displacement are numerous. One in three children and young people aged 5 to 17 years living in countries affected by conflict or disaster (104 million children) are out of school, a figure that represents more than a third of the world's out-of-school population (UNICEF, 2019). In addition, of the 7.1 million school-age refugee children, 3.7 million, more than half of whom are not in school (UNHCR, 2019). Over 75 million children and young people in crisis contexts do not have access to quality education that is inclusive, appropriate and safe (OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE, 2016). There are many displaced children out-of-school and more than half of the world's registered refugees of school age are not in school (3,5 million children and young people). The health and humanitarian situations related to COVID-19 have increased the potential fragility and needs of displaced and refugee populations.

We are particularly interested in the situation of displaced youth in Iraq, where we conducted art workshops for an NGO in Kirkuk. Arts workshops based on artistic biography could contribute to the resilience of communities, as part of humanitarian interventions. This article provides a case study of artistic biography workshops from Kirkuk, Iraq, which will be detailed later in the article.

Conflicts in Iraq and Syria, such as those linked to the Islamic State (ISIS) group in Iraq, have strongly destabilized the sociocultural identities of the populations then under tension. Following a ten-year expansion to its apogee in Syria and Iraq



from 2013, the control of cities by the Islamic State Group led to the destruction of many societies. In 2014, ISIS took control of Iraq's second largest city, Mosul. It announces the establishment of a caliphate on Syrian and Iraqi territory. Today, in both Syria and Iraq, ISIS is officially wiped off the map, but it does not mean the end of the ongoing tensions. Thousands of Iraqis and Syrians are still displaced today. More than two years after Iraq's military victory over ISIS in December 2017, more than 1.3 million people remain displaced while 4.7 million have returned home (INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATIONS, 2020). A number of them are particularly traumatized by the vulnerability of long years of war and forced displacement.

The camps suggest a space made up of uprooted victims in the urgency of waiting. Daily life in these camps is governed by ambivalence: it is both ordinary and barely visible, but at the same time hardly compatible with the paradox of the exception (AGIER, 2008). The camps are temporary facilities that are not intended to become permanent, but they are consolidated over time and in situations of prolonged conflict (AGIER, 2008; TASSIN, 2018). This must be a solution of urgency; in a reduced time that becomes the norm on the margins. Times are torn between an emergency that remains in the need to get out of a territory "above ground" to recover lost roots or to take root in a social environment that allows these people to rethink their possibilities. Presentism then becomes a reality where the "thought full of exile" gives a presence to the world. This reveals an impossibility to think about the past and the future and to experience the emptiness of the present. The need is to make the present "livable" (HARTOG, 2003; AGIER, 2016).

These above-ground spaces, controlled by the humanitarian system, aim to protect people by providing them with a safe space. The vulnerability and victim posture conveyed by the humanitarian environment are the only elements confirming the present reality (DELPLA, 2004; VOLLAIRE, 2007). The camps become landmarks devoid of the cultural markers of the populations that inhabit them. The aim is to maintain a non-conflictual cohabitation where neutrality is the watchword governing the collective spaces of the camp. The proposed activities are mainly



initiated by NGOs with their own objectives. The loss of landmarks and cultural aporias are multiple and devastating. The camps are reservoirs of multiple acculturations and the creation of new cultural eras where multiplicities develop. Camps become enclosed and confining places but also cosmopolitan crossroads where new or hybrid socio-cultural structures are built in order to survive: between different cultural anchors including local cultures and the cultures of international NGOs, for example (AGIER, 2013).

Faced with these situations of extreme tensions, the young people's hopes living in the camps often oscillate between a bygone past that they are desperate to find and a return hoped for as the only way out (BURIEL, 2017; GÜNEY; ATIK; LUNDMARK, 2018). The multitude of violence linked to wars, their displacement, and the voids they cause, suggest a problem in individual and collective narratives (DENOV et al., 2019; GREEN; DENOV, 2019). The chaos created by successive war-related violence and situations of forced displacement leads to feelings of insecurity and painful unrest that are difficult to contain and externalize. The stories seem to resound with failures and missteps of an otherwise unacceptable nature.

Humanitarian responses have always involved artistic activities. Two trends can be distinguished: the "health approach to art" and the "culture approach to art". The majority trend in these programs is towards arts programs dedicated to mental health and wellness. It focuses on questioning the psyche from an internalist perspective (e.g., psychosocial support programs, art therapy and art therapy programs). A minority approach is culturally oriented (e.g. programs related to local arts learning, peacebuilding through art practices). Our work considers it important to create a "cultural habitus" that is distinct from a "health habitus". Habitus refers to "embodied social knowledge" that settles over time and shapes, like a "second nature", the individual and collective identity of the members of a human group (ELIAS, 1997). This means that meanings are constructed in and for action. Experiences can be subject to processes of internalization and abstraction and lead to the sedimentation of circumstances and narratives in the form of cognitive invariants. The practices of the "artistic cultural habitus" follow the embodied logic of



history sedimented in the everyday activity of the participants in the artistic work (MAUSS; LÉVI-STRAUSS, 2013).

It seems important to act at these two levels in order to cumulate the contributions of these practices at the individual and intimate level as well as at the collective and cultural level. The work of this artistic cultural habitus goes against the juxtaposition of human lives and a certain form of individualism of health-centered approaches. It aims at social bonding, cohesion and the training of educators and young people through education (transmission of culture and values). It aims to contribute to the cultural artistic heritage. The objective of this article is to propose an understanding of the entry into resilience identified during the implementation of artistic biography activities with young people.

## **2 CREATIVITY AND PROBLEM SOLVING THROUGH ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHY AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESILIENCE PROCESS**

Many researchers have explained that resilience has become the conceptual umbrella for multiple factors that modify the impact of adversity (COHOLIC et al., 2012). The psychosocial approach of resilience (lat. *resilientia*, "jumping back"; bouncing back) is defined as "the power or ability to return to the original shape and position after being bent, compressed or stretched; elasticity" (ibid.). Resilience comes under two different conceptions : 1) at an individual level, resilience is related to the ability of individuals to solve problems by overcoming them through the deployment of various coping strategies (ibid.) and 2) at a collective level, resilience, as referring to the ability of community members to adapt positively and work cohesively towards common goals in order to overcome a situation of collective suffering and cope with adversity (BEAUREGARD et al., 2019). This dynamic process varies according to contexts, variables internal to individuals and external changes in the social and political environments, and cultural spaces in which they are located.

A resilience approach focuses on strengthening the protective factors that are expected to contribute to successful adaptation to potential future crises (HEISE,





2014). A "culture of resilience" would involve a system that focuses on the strengths, assets and protective factors of the individuals and groups concerned. This culture would be based on the idea of teaching and learning to "bounce back" in a collective way. Difficult or even impossible to measure, it can be deduced in particular from indicators of the skills deployed by individuals in the face of more or less high risk factors (AKESSON et al., 2014). Young people considered resilient are better able to cope with fears, adapt in order to try to solve problems, show optimism, become positive role models and demonstrate flexibility (HEISE, 2014; KIM, 2015). This conceptualization of resilience underscores the importance of recognizing a dynamic relationship between young people, the resources they may have access to and their culture and/or context (COHOLIC et al., 2012).

We consider collective problem solving and creativity as central concepts to resilience. This includes developing creative thinking and interpersonal problem-solving skills (ibid.). Creativity would help individuals learn from their experiences and better solve problems in the future. Creativity is seen as "a process by which a symbolic domain of culture is changed". Creativity is thus any act, idea or product aimed at modifying an aspect of the culture of individuals or social groups so as to transform it. These processes participate in reshaping existing ones in order to continue a new narrative. This reshaping strongly echoes those of resilience: "reshaping in response to a given condition such as adversity or risk" (COHOLIC et al., 2012). Problem solving is a dynamic process necessary for the development of resilience. It can be transposed to the artistic problem deployed in an artistic creation process. The artistic creation programs, under certain conditions that we will expose, seem to us to be able to participate in the development of creativity and other skills necessary for resilience. Art would thus allow the development of special abilities for cooperation to create resolution of problems related to the narrow lives of the camps and the experiences of war. The problem can only be solved collectively because the success of the group requires the success of each individual. The collective space is then defined by the social use implemented by the artistic devices in the camps.



We are conceptualizing the "artistic biography" as a didactic device. Biography (or the writing of life) through creative art aims to develop resilience and empowerment through the narration of individual and collective life experiences. The artistic biography themes are identity, culture and environment: 1) Identity: The notion of identity refers to the culture that each human being possesses and represents individually (knowledge of the world, of others, his norms, ideas, opinions), but also to his intimacy (appearance and physical character, character, tastes, ideas, name, gender, nationality etc.) 2) Culture: The notion of culture refers to the common culture of a group of people such as the Iraqi culture that understands its history, gastronomy, values, etc. The culture of Iraq is a common one. It can also be associated with a smaller group of people and 3) Environment: The notion of environment is the set of geographical spaces associated with an individual or group of individuals. The different environments are part of the social markers associated with identity and culture. The environments interlock with each other until the slightest specificity. We belong to a neighborhood, a district, a governorate, a region, a country, to a continent and we live on Earth.

These concepts do not aim at autobiography, where the participants would be led to testify of their own existence. The conception of biography does not fall into a psychological category but into a didactic function of self-transformation through the intervention of artistic biography. These themes aim at the redeployment of these young people in an accessible external space. The artistic biography process aims at giving the possibility to overcome artistic problems centered on themes central to the development of these young people.

The aim is to engage in a "joint" biographical narrative and insert it into an original "collective work" with the youth and the educators. It is joint because it is the product of the joint actions of educators and young people (COLLECTIF DIDACTIQUE POUR ENSEIGNER, 2019). The process of solving the artistic problem in artistic biography. The problem refers to anything that confronts the youth with a difficulty of action. In approaching the problem, young people already know some things on which they will deploy the problem-solving process. This set of



elements can be described as "already there". The problem is then considered as a "setting" (set of resources and material and cognitive constraints present in the didactic situation) (COLLECTIF DIDACTIQUE POUR ENSEIGNER, 2019). It involves 5 steps: 1) identifying the problem, 2) stopping at it; it is a suspension or letting something come to you in the face of the problem posed (MORAIS, 2013; BILLETER, 2016), 3) decomposing the different tasks to observe the resilience, 4) developing an investigation by experiencing and experiencing the risks of non-elucidation. Young people adapt their creative response, taking into account the environment and the specific context, until the problem is solved, and then finally, 5) attempt the "reconstitution" process of "problem solving"; it is a matter of "understanding his work and trying to understand in what terms the problem he wanted to respond to arose and the particular circumstances that led him to pose it" (BAXANDALL, 2000, p. 41). It is not a question of reporting the whole experience but of focusing on what is conceptualizable.

The artistic creation process involves making conscious choices to find multiple answers to a given problem through the creative process. It aims to create a space that allows for the creative expression of young people and gives them the opportunity to actively engage in the aesthetic and philosophical process. The "presence" in art workshops seems to us to be an indicator of the entry into resilience. It is a marker that is difficult to define without requiring attention or a statement. The "presence" is a means of observing the onset of resilience and making resilience an action as an observable and describable reality. It is situated in the immediacy of the present moment because it is what we do that matters for the present moment. "Resilience-presence" offers an alternative to the single concept of "resilience". It is a question of not giving the components of presence upstream, even though it is by essence a complex concept that is difficult to "catch". It is a matter of trying to find signs of it by formulating possible indicators of the entry into resilience. Thus, we hope to focus more on the observed facts than on how to name it (CHAUVIER, 2014). Thus, the concept of presence, and even more, the concept of resilience-presence, is deliberately not defined upstream in this article.





### **3 CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY**

Our case took place in two camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kirkuk, Iraq, north of Baghdad, in November and December 2017. The geopolitical situation of Iraq and Kirkuk in the face of various incursions, including that of ISIS, strongly destabilized the region from 2014 to 2018. Kirkuk was then characterized by the presence of numerous state and non-state security forces and militias, including ISIS. The context of Kirkuk in this case study, as a disputed territory between KRI and the Government of Iraq, contributed significantly to a climate of significant tension for the displaced population. In 2014, the Kurds took full control of Kirkuk City and the eastern part of the governorate in wake of the ISIS invasion until its resumption by the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in October 2017. At the same time, Iraqi forces retook Hawija, previously one of the oldest strongholds of the Islamic State and retook remaining areas of Kirkuk governorate in 2017 from the Islamic State (ISIS).

A previous study (BURIEL, 2017), conducted in another camp for IDPs in Iraq in the same year, among displaced youth in camps, shows that young people and their families have great difficulty projecting themselves and their hopes for the future. Even more so, their only hope was to return to their former lives. Several studies (INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATIONS, 2020) have shown the extent to which there is a strong sense of insecurity and control in the daily lives of IDPs in Kirkuk. Concerning young people, many of them do not attend school. For security reasons, the camps are areas where freedom of movement is limited. Individuals must obtain permission from the authorities to leave the camp, and these restrictions are even greater among young people.

The case study presented is intended to illustrate the considerations presented in the introduction. The art project in which this case study is included was dedicated to young IDPs living in two camps in Kirkuk. It was implemented by the NGO Terre des Hommes Switzerland. The art project is part of a larger project dedicated to young people. This whole project will not be developed and discussed in



this text. The purpose of the case study is not evaluative and does not aim to report on the humanitarian conditions and impact of the political situations in which the activities took place. This article is not intended to report on practices and does not provide a detailed description of the device that has been experienced. Our case study proposes sedimented indicators of entry into resilience through "presence" identified during the implementation of artistic biography activities with young people.

### **ART WORKSHOPS SETTING**

In order to carry out this project dedicated to the arts, artistic coaches have been selected in the camps on the basis of their mastery of an artistic discipline (drawing, sculpture, painting, singing, music and theatre). These coaches are displaced in the camps where they are working with the youth.

They were trained by the practitioner-researcher during a 17-day training course spread over 4 sessions for 1 month. The aim was to train in participatory methods centered on artistic biography with young people from the camps. In particular, the aim was to ensure that the coaches were able to implement resilient and biographical activities through their respective disciplines. The art coaches created their sequences of activities and supervised the art workshops within the camp. The art project was based on creative processes guided by the art coaches.

The activities described below correspond to the first activities carried out by the art coaches with the young people, during the implementation of the artistic project planned to run for one year. They respond to the fact that the aim of the youth project was to develop their resilience through their social competences and to provide them with a space for the youth where they can meet and interact (caravans) inside the camp. The young people live with the rest of their families in the tents. They are often the only daily landmark, and this can be oppressive. An alternative, dedicated space where they can meet each other was therefore a first step out of a monotonous daily routine.

These caravans are themselves the places to host the proposed activities that wish to foster the resilience of these young people. It was essential to ensure that it



was the coaches and the young people who personalized and appropriated the "refuge" place for the project activities. The idea was to transpose the lack of roots and expression of these young people through the game of problem solving applied to their future space where the activities were going to take place for more than a year. These first workshops followed the training days. The practitioner-researcher acted as a guide in the preparation and follow-up of the project and as an observer during the workshops. The collection and processing of data was carried out through participant observations, non-participant observations and debriefings with coaches.

### **WORKSHOP DEVICE "PAINTING OUR CARAVANS"**

The artistic problem posed was: how to transform an ordinary place (the caravan), a place "inhabited" and "habitable" by young people? It was a question of proceeding in stages so as to make young people aware of their relationship to their own identity, to their common culture and to the spaces to which they belong. It was also necessary not to untie this project to the trying realities of the camp.

The aim was to get them to find creative ways to live in the caravans dedicated to them through the exhibition of their collective biography. The idea was to let them build the space they temporarily "inhabit" during the NGO activities, by painting on it.

The device deployed in this article took place over 7 workshops and mobilized 4 facilitators and about 50 young people in a free and voluntary way, during a period of about 3 weeks. The participants are young people (girls and boys between 15 and 25 years old) who have been selected by the coaches on the basis of volunteering and interest in the activities. We report on the project conducted by male animators with young men.

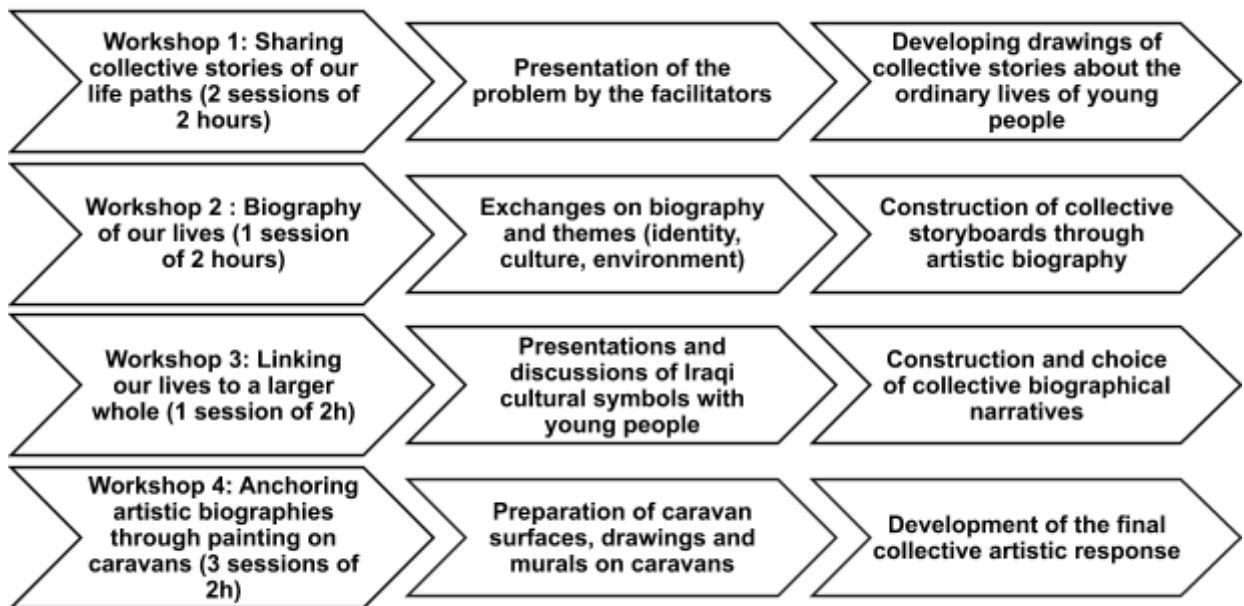


Table 1. Different phases of the "Painting our caravans" device

A similar and less documented project was carried out with girls. This series of activities was prepared and conducted by the coaches. The practitioner-researcher observed the activities and supervised the device process. We report on the different phases of the process at work in these workshops. We will not go into detail about the full content of the workshops. It should be noted that the workshops are introduced by icebreakers activities and feedback at the end.

## 4 RESULTS

It is not intended to be exhaustive on what resilience is, but rather to propose indicators of entry into it. We consider resilience not as "given", but as it requires a "presence". This "presence" is complex and multifaceted. We recognized the presence according to three themes that emerged from our observations: 1) self-involvement in the collective work, 2) recognition by the coaches, and 3) self-recognition in the final work.

## RESILIENCE THROUGH THE SELF-INVOLVEMENT IN THE COLLECTIVE WORK

The problem was exposed to young people from the very first meetings. The scheme was launched on the basis of the young people's ideas. The coaches introduced workshops in a participative way by developing the understanding of these young people about their own existence. Through a reflective sharing on artistic biography and by confronting the group of young people with their own lives and considerations (identity, culture and environment). Some of the considerations had not been thought of by the young people. Opening up such philosophical perspectives unlocked some of the stories. Such a process had never been proposed to them before. The young people discussed what they were learning and were helped to develop their self-awareness.

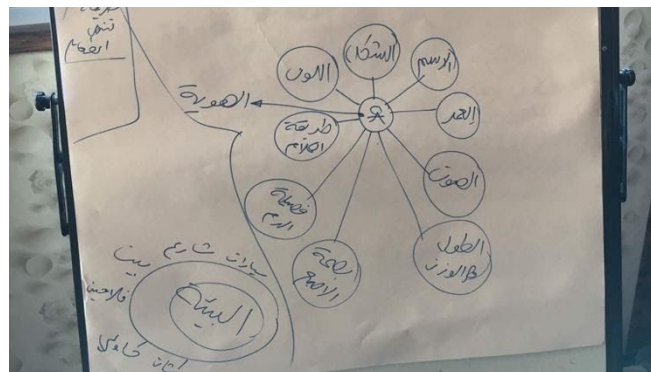


Image 1. Putting into perspective the presence of young people in a biographical way during a brainstorming

Picture (1) shows a flipchart where one of the coaches conducted an awareness workshop on "biography". On the first (central) figure: the central bubble represents the concept of identity to which the coaches have added elements that they believe are related to the concept of identity: the way of speaking, blood group, height and weight, imprint, age, voice, body shape, skin colour. In the second diagram on the bottom left, the central bubble corresponds to the young people (individually) and the bubbles around it correspond to the strata of the spatial environments of the young people.





This stage of the artistic biography aimed at externalizing and then transposing it from something of the self (self-analysis) directly into problem-solving through verbal exchanges. The power of discussion aimed at detachment from the self in order to transpose it to the collective work in a way that is attentive to it. A condition for engagement in a collective work would be to have the ability and confidence to "go for it". It is a matter of accepting the challenge of finding what is worthwhile. We believe that young people can develop a sense of mastery and control over their environment by identifying and naming the elements referring to their own life. This encourages their involvement in the collective work. Identifying and experiencing interdependencies can help rebuild a sense of solidarity and community, while promoting pro-social behaviors such as cooperation, communication and skills in non-violent conflict resolution. In this way, young people were encouraged to find solutions to common situations that occurred in their daily lives by using problem-solving tools. This was done using basic materials (sheets of paper, pencils, markers, colored pencils) to lay out the cultural biographical elements.

The image (2) is composed of 4 drawings made by a young man. The first drawing (top left) represents what he considers to be his identity. He has drawn himself working, with a pickaxe in his hand and next to a hen. His second drawing (top right) represents young cereal shoots that are grown in his home province. His third drawing (bottom left) shows a house. These two drawings represent the characteristic and, in his opinion, important elements of his spatial environment. The fourth drawing (bottom right) shows a particularly detailed tractor. This last drawing represents the element that most closely characterizes his crop.

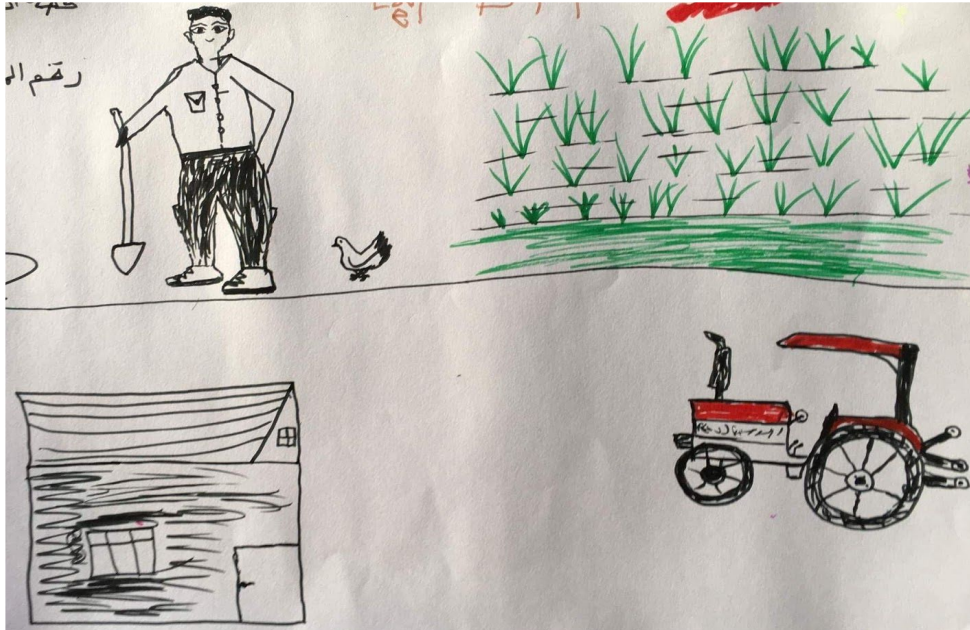


Image 2. Drawings by a young person representing biographical elements (identity, culture and environment)

The projection of a medium through visual art is crucial for learners who may lack words to describe their feelings and emotions). Young victims of conflict develop the representation of their misfortune and reshape their feelings. That is why it is also important to work on cultural narratives, so that the traumatized can be reintegrated into their cultural context (CYRULNIK, 2015). These drawings show how he was confronted with an artistic problem, how he was able to order his thoughts in such a way as to transpose the concepts of artistic biography to his own existence. This composition is resilient because the young person engages in the artistic work and represents him/herself as resilient in artistic expression.



Image 3. Collective drawing illustrating the environment of the youth of this group with their land



In this drawing (picture 3) the group of three young people drew a pomegranate tree with pomegranates. It is accompanied by the words "The pomegranate tree of Iraq and Basrah", probably their hometown. Then below the flag with red and black stripes, a map of Iraq is shown. Inside, it reads: "The flag of friendship and the tree of friendship". This commitment is symbolized by the elements relating to identity: the grenade is an important symbol in Iraq, which is an important producer of it. Moreover, Islamic culture considers it as "the fruit of paradise" which young people here associate with friendship (understood as brotherhood). Moreover, the association of the republican symbol (through the flag) is associated with the territorial symbol (the map of Iraq). A presence of self and of the group through the commitment of "their friendship" through these symbols is a first step towards the biographical project. This first step was necessary for the subsequent collective narrative. They were then asked to create a scenario of a story representative of the common culture that could be represented on the caravans.

We could go into more detail in a future analysis through three key factors that impact on and shape individuals' lifelong capacity to fruitfully engage with others: the sense of basic self-confidence (which is related to how we were, and are presently, situated within loving relationships), self-respect and self-esteem (HONNETH, 1996).

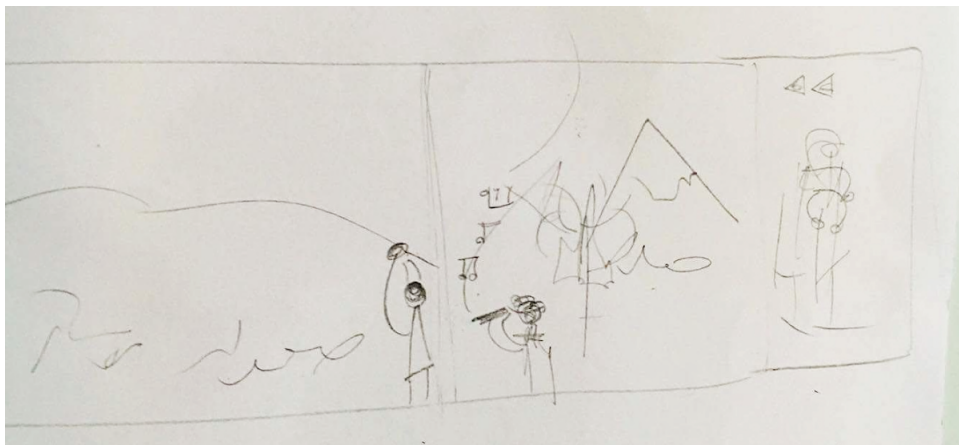
## **RESILIENCE THROUGH THE RECOGNITION OF PRESENCE BY COACHES**

The coaches guided and facilitated the collective narrative rather than impelling new choices in its content (integration of elements in the artistic biography - identity, culture, environment). It was a question of orchestrating the stories (finding rhythms, developing catchy beats, developing an overall coherence) but not of changing the meaning. All of the productions were the subject of exchanges of presentation to the other groups, debriefing and exchanges in order to raise questions about what to do next.

There was a great temptation to "overprotect" young people and to push them to find captivating stories when some were about ordinary segments of life. Certain

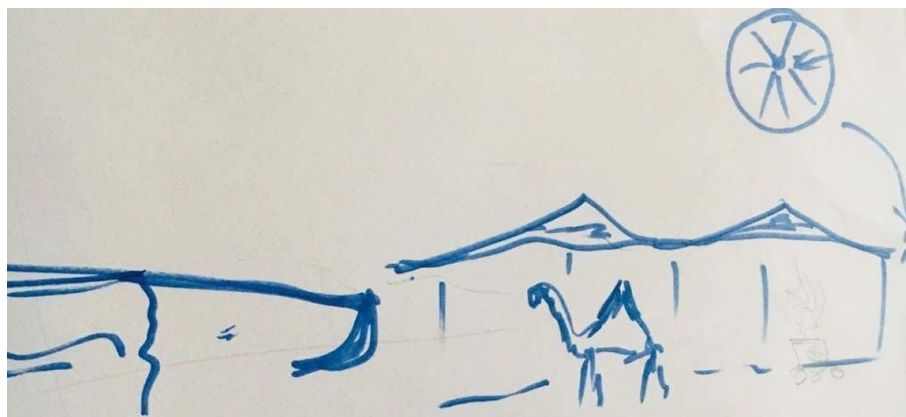


expectations and requirements had to be reviewed in order to meet the primary goal, which was the representation of the group in the final artistic work. Scenes of violence related to the war and shocking images experienced under ISIS were drawn at the beginning of the workshops. This corresponded to the biography instructions. However, it was chosen to reframe the young people on a different path rather than working directly on these scenes.



*Image 4.* Extract from a storyboard and projection of the groups in stories (flashback)

The image (4) represents a draft storyboard made by a coach to help understand the process of storytelling for young people. In the top right corner, the two triangles represent a "flashback" (or flashback in literary jargon). The two boxes in front of them represent a sketch with a singer and a dancer in the Iraqi countryside.



*Image 5.* Extract from a storyboard and projection of groups into stories (trigger moment)



The image (5) represents a draft storyboard made by a coach to help understand the "trigger" in the collective story. In the top right corner, the circled star and arrow represent this trigger that follows a scene visibly taking place in the desert. There are dunes and a dromedary.

The interactional process evolved the epistemic quality of presence into the mimicry of an artist (successively the writer and the painter). Narratives and overall coherences became increasingly fluid and integrated. We have seen that this process of guidance starting from the ideas of the young people and giving rhythm to their narration participated in the process of presence through its recognition. The "recognition" designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects in which each sees the other as its equal, one becomes an individual only in virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by another subject" (FRASER; HONNETH, 2003). This theory of recognition "argues that identity is irrevocably dependent on social relationships that recognize and validate personal experience; and that respect and understanding should be at the forefront of our relationships with others" (HOUSTON; DOLAN, 2008). This process of interpersonal recognition builds resilience. Furthermore, solidarity flows from the reciprocity of recognition within social networks (YAR, 2003).

## RESILIENCE THROUGH THE SELF-RECOGNITION IN THE COLLECTIVE WORK



*Image 6.* Young person making the first base (drawing) on the caravan





The image (6) shows a young person drawing on the wall of a caravan. Equipped with a pencil, he draws a palm tree (a biographical element of the environment). This is a first base that will be completed by painting. The palm tree is an important part of the Iraqi landscape. It was therefore drawn by several groups of young people. It was then integrated into the narratives and then used in the drawings on the caravans.



*Image 7. First phase of painting collectively on a caravan (environments)*

The image (7) represents a fresco composed of several paintings on a facade of the caravan. The different scenes correspond to several landscapes imagined by the young people. They are natural landscapes found in the countryside. The elements are green: grass, trees, flowers and other vegetation. A clear blue river appears central in a quiet landscape. In the second one, we also see large red and pink flowers and birds flying around the flowers. These drawings contrast with the beige, stony and dusty spaces and the bright colours. They also contrast with the destroyed houses they left in the hands of the jihadists. These drawings are resilient because they renew with a lost or hoped-for campaign. They do not show a melancholy with indicators of times gone by or even a break with an imaginary ideal.



These landscapes are made "theirs" because they have been chosen and worked on because they represent them and tell the story of their common and legitimated culture. They have a meaning that contributes to their well-being. Indeed, it is these landscapes that shelter them outside in these caravans dedicated to them and which have the vocation to be "hospitable".

Image (6) and Image (7) illustrate the last two stages of the system put in place by young people and coaches. After the collective biographies have been drawn up. Choices were made to represent them on the 2 caravans. The choices were made in several phases: adding elements of the (spatial) environments, then adding cultural elements and finally symbols and figurations of identities. Instead of painting a single storyboard representing the whole group, several independent scenes were created. The major challenges were those related to the identity markers, which were hardly included in the final fresco. In addition, the elements of the mural mostly reflect the lost lands and the life before they hoped to regain. They could have been more fanciful or extravagant. These choices reflect the priorities of these young people and of this place in the making, that of finding roots.

As the objectives and skills to be developed were collective, the young people committed themselves to a common goal where cooperation was necessary. Achieving this (in all cases) brought self-confidence and self-esteem. The young people seemed to be uninhibited and confident in what they were producing. Asking questions and raising awareness of biographical relationships in a collective way fostered a deeper understanding of the social and cultural phenomena of their community. On the other hand, "dropping" oneself in the work could have included more expression of the human feelings and emotions that presided over its creation and govern the lives of these young people. Since our observations were made over a short period of time, it is not possible to perceive what a continuous presence could be over the long term. We cannot say whether this involvement in the work has an influence on youth participation in the long term.

Presence through self-recognition in the collective work developed is essential because it underlines the importance of solving the artistic problem in that it echoes



one's own existence. Thus, self-recognition through presence indicator is only possible on the condition that the young person has faced these artistic problems and has consciously contributed to the resolution of the problem through the collective work. Achieving resilience means recognizing one's own ability to bounce back and overcome feelings of revenge (central theme during war times). To go further, we consider joint actions of educators and young people produced in common in order to solve these problems collectively.

## **5 LIMITATION AND DISCUSSION**

As mentioned above, these activities were carried out as part of the implementation of a more global project. The advanced results cannot be extrapolated to the whole project or even to the whole of this type of practice. As such, we cannot formulate global results, or even impacts of what might be forms of resilience observed in the long term. We are aware of the methodological shortcomings, in particular the lack of description of interactions and their effects on the action of young people. A future approach will be to collect the discourse of the different actors and analyse it in relation to the interactions. Furthermore, individual follow-ups may be necessary if we wish to measure how individual trajectories contribute to producing collective resilience. It should be noted that the security contexts and the rules specific to authorities and NGOs in camps for displaced persons in the context of armed conflict imply particularly significant constraints on program content. This can result in little flexibility for the conduct of artistic expression activities. Furthermore, failures in engagement in the work and recognition processes in the didactic relationship or self-recognition should not be associated with "health habitus" or more specifically with the reductionism of "psychologization" (FRASER; HONNETH, 2003). It is a matter of understanding and identifying the processes of "resilience-presence" through the cultural habitus. This anchoring will allow us to rely on social, cultural, political and economic interactions and thus avoid the risks associated with relying on individual psychological failures. The point is to avoid linking impossibilities (or lack of knowledge) to "internal distortions in the structure of



the oppressed person's self-awareness, as there is only one step to blaming the victim" (ibid.).

At the same time, these nuances also imply that we must avoid any form of determinism that would associate severe forms of suffering with permanent injury and would necessarily be less resilient than others (GARRETT, 2010; DENO; SHEVELL, 2019). On the other hand, it would not be fair to say that the achievement of collective resilience has the absolute potential to improve social situations in conflict zones. Resilient communities can be drawn into conflictual relationships and chaotic management of social dynamics at work. GARRETT (2010) reminds us that resilient people can be predatory, racist and still misogynistic. People who are less resilient can live and act in ways that give esteem and recognition to others. The concept of mediation and, in particular, the didactics of joint action is essential to explain the transformations and inter-reciprocal influences at work (ibid.).

In view of the experience of the implementation of this mechanism, the difficulties encountered and the points of interest of the whole team, it seems to us that priority should be given to certain themes. For future studies, the four focal points to be questioned in order to model the applications of "presence" in our contexts of forced displacement: 1) Inhabiting the camp; both presence and physical anchoring enable us to inhabit the space is particularly symbolic and at the same time the central problem. In contexts of exile and uprootedness, presence in space is much more important than in so-called ordinary contexts; 2) "Being" in the present; waiting in the emergency leads to long periods of nothingness where little happens. Above ground in impersonal camps leads to dismal and mechanical routines. Thoughts oscillate between the bygone past and the impregnable future. A grasp of the present and an awareness of one's place in the world at the present moment is little achieved in empty and cumbersome presents; 3) Releasing emotions; the environment and secure relationships are conditions for developing emotional presence (RIENTIES; RIVERS, 2014). Emotional presence can sometimes be seen as a condition for building resilience and compassionate interactions. Young people face many blockages because they hold on to certain emotions that are difficult to





expose in these unstable times, and 4) Belonging to a larger whole; this is about inserting oneself into a larger whole and feeling that one belongs by creating something meaningful together. (BEAUREGARD et al., 2019). It is the result of the attention paid to oneself and others and then of the integration of oneself through artistic experience. Developing a link with the outside of the camp (as a whole) by building on cultural bridges can also contribute to an alternative vision of what it means to be a young person in these contexts of war and multiple violence. In that way, the exhibition of productions could be an important asset to share and communicate but also to enhance the creative process. It is only after all these conditions have been met that "artistic projects have an impact on the child, the teacher, the learning environment and the whole community, but this is true only of quality projects" (ibid).

We believe that emergency humanitarian programs should include more structured activities that incorporate a cultural dimension of resilience. The use of the arts would then be framed by "artistic problem-solving" processes. This could lead to the establishment of specific indicators based on artistic experiences. In a holistic way, evaluation and impact measures would bridge the gap between humanitarian standards and indicators and those used in arts education. The integration of an artistic response into humanitarian emergency programs would also be based on prevention, planning and mitigation measures through the arts. This type of artistic biography facility should be included in prevention programs in young people resilience that place importance on the assessment of strengths and the promotion of competence.

Much of this evidence thus seems to support the idea that social workers and educators "need to become familiar with the ethics and politics [of resilience and] recognition: if this new engagement occurs, it is implicit that practices may be improved in unintended and massive ways" (GARRETT, 2010, p.10). This ethic would thus serve a "culture of resilience". We note that by providing open and adaptable thematic work frames as proposed in the artistic biography, we potentially promote the empowerment of humanitarian workers. It is thus a question of adjusting





a tool that frames but does not limit. Few pedagogical or didactic tools seem to be available to practitioners and often suggest a 'tinkering' of practices in these contexts. Beyond the need for training, it seems to us necessary to accompany humanitarian personnel and in particular educators in their own personal and professional development. Often at the centre of the processes of resilience and the main interlocutors of young people's ills and questions, their capacity to respond and guide is influenced by their own resilience. It seems essential to include a specific response to the collectives of these humanitarian workers.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

We conclude our article in two points: recalling the importance of taking into account the volatile situation and the avenues for the development of research in this specific field. This study argues that artistic biography devices is a meaning-making process that can help young people equip themselves to deal with a problematic event and begin to make sense of their world. On the other hand, we do not wish to undermine the security and geopolitical conditions that have direct and immediate influences on young people's resilience. Even though The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has not controlled any geographical area in Iraq for more than two years, including Kirkuk and Ninewa Governorates, there are still sleeper cells, particularly in Kirkuk and Mosul and in the surrounding villages. Many IDPs have been asked to leave the camps at times under duress by the authorities. The two main camps in Kirkuk have been closed and the last camp is reported to be home to around 1,500 families. Most of the families have returned to their homes and have been resettled. Some families have been relocated or moved from one camp to another, sometimes to other parts of the province.

Concerning the development of research fields, we could develop and accumulate examples of the type developed in this article. In this way, we could feed concepts and theorization in order to contribute to the development of didactic tools and training for non-formal education through artistic training in these contexts. It would also involve participating in professionalizing an emerging field of practices.



BEAUREGARD (2014, p. 276) states that to facilitate the use of a preventive measure and that to achieve this, “awareness must be raised among decision makers and mobilization of those concerned by this change, namely teachers and school professionals”. Thus, we invite researchers to produce participatory action research with humanitarian workers in order to lead to the recognition of this field of practice. Through an analogy of examples and close cooperation with humanitarian NGOs on operations, we will be able to produce more consistent results, deploy rigorous methodologies and analyze possible improvements. In the didactic work, we could propose the implementation and analysis of the artistic biography device. This would particularly involve developing tools for analyzing the quality of (epistemic) knowledge and the quality of the system created. Our current thesis work will deploy a participatory action research in didactics in order to document the whole process of artistic biography in a more detailed way. In particular, it will put forward the different reframing necessary for the production of a device adapted and targeted to the problem-solving process.

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