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Collective reincorporation of FARC-EP and social and solidarity economies: beyond moral imagination

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ABSTRACT

Collective productive projects are an effective strategy to bring reconciliation and development to the most remote parts of the national territory. Incipient rural development was recognised in the peace agreement, signed between the Colombian government and the Armed Forces of Colombia People's Army (FARC-EP), as one of the causes of the armed conflict. However, social margins and precarious conditions are not exclusive to the countryside; exclusion also occurs in urban centres. Using ethnographic methods, we visited three areas of reincorporation to identify the socio-economic practices of collective productive projects. The findings suggest that the social solidarity economy is a promising alternative led by FARC-EP ex-combatants and host communities to resist socio-economic exclusion.

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Introduction

The negotiation process in Havana between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP) led to a series of discussions on the historical causes of the armed conflict.¹ One of the central aspects was the development of the population that inhabits the most remote territories of the national geography: the so-called rural periphery.² These are territories where peasants, indigenous people, and Afro-descendants have received marked institutional neglect. Nevertheless, precarious conditions persist also at the urban margins.

The process of Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reinsertion, and Reintegration (DDR)³ began in veredal zones that were later transformed into 24 Territorial Spaces for Training

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¹Gobierno de Colombia, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). Acuerdo final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera (2016). Bogotá November 10, 2021.

²Presidency of the Republic of Colombia, National Planning Department. National Council for Economic and Social Policy. National Policy for the Social and Economic Reincorporation of former FARC-EP members, Pub. L. No. Document CONPES 3931, 1 (2018).

³In the case of the FARC-EP, since it is collective and does not obey a process of surrender, it has been called Reincorporation, although in international literature still named Reintegration.

and Reincorporation (ETCR) in 2016.⁴ Progressively, according to figures provided by the former guerrillas, 65 New Reincorporation Areas (NAR) were created de facto. Those who have laid down their arms have begun their social, political, and psychological reincorporation process there, based on a social solidarity economy model.⁵ According to Economías Sociales del Común (ECOMUN), a sort of collective organisations created by FARC-EP ex-combatants and contained in point 3 of the peace agreement⁶ in charge of social economies and cooperatives, the productive projects are governed by principles of gender equality and participation; fair trade; self-sufficiency and food sovereignty; decent work and economic growth; and sustainable communities that, above all, pursue integral reincorporation.⁷ But the path for economic reincorporation has been not exclusively collective, it is also individual, and, in some cases, involved host community members, as will be discussed in the case studies.

The host territory is not an empty space, free of its own conflicts. Territory, as we address, it is a place of social exchange, where inequalities and violence are produced and reproduced.⁸ It is also a place of coexistence with local communities, often with diverse identities,⁹ interests and barriers, one of the most persistent concerns is the lack of opportunities and the ongoing violence. For six years, ex-combatants and communities are creating, restoring, and maintaining different levels of interaction. In some cases, based on territorial limitations, they decide to cooperate to find collective solutions to rural backwardness and economic exclusion. Interactions can respond to different degrees of involvement, and productive initiatives could encompass a wide range of activities, such as livestock farming, poultry projects and chicken farms, fish farming, agro-industry, food crops, or, in urban areas, shops, mini-markets, weaving, hairdressers, food businesses, mechanical workshops, among others. We argue that collective productive projects with host communities represent the most promising strategy for linking territorial development, reconciliation, and sustainable peace. These diverse ventures not only contribute to economic inclusion but also foster social cohesion and build trust between former FARC-EP combatants and the local population, promoting a shared vision development and local resistance. By embracing social and solidarity economies, the reincorporation process goes beyond moral imagination and becomes a tangible pathway towards collective transformation and empowerment.

The peace from below, proposed by John Paul Lederach,¹⁰ has increasingly taken centre stage in peacebuilding discourses. It emphasises the ‘importance of local actors

⁴Peace Accords Matrix (PAM), Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. Five Years of Peace Agreement Implementation in Colombia: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities to Increase Implementation Levels, December 2016 – October 2021 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.7274/0C483J36025>.

⁵ARN – Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización. Resolución 4309. Por el cual se establece la Ruta de Reincorporación, Pub. L. No. 4309, 1 (2019). https://www.reincorporacion.gov.co/es/agencia/Documentos/Resoluciones/Resolucion_4309.pdf.

⁶Gobierno de Colombia, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, Acuerdo final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera (2016).

⁷ECOMUN, ‘Economías Sociales Del Común’ Website, <https://ecomun.com.co/> (accessed July 28, 2022).

⁸Luis Peña, ‘Territorializing Peace: How Do We Make Peacebuilding Territorial?’ *Policy Brief*, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.7274/CR56N01348K>.

⁹PRIO and PNUD, *Lights and Shadows of the Implementation of the Peace Agreement in Colombia: Attitudes and Perceptions in the PDET Territories* (Bogotá, December 9, 2020) <https://www.prio.org/publications/12731>.

¹⁰John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (The Little Books of Justice & Peacebuilding. Good Books, 2014); John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997); and John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

and the non-governmental sector and links to local knowledge and wisdom'.¹¹ As a counter-hegemonic model, it places at the core Afro, indigenous, peasant and vulnerable groups, and their unique and crucial contribution to peace. However, peacebuilding from below implies complex situations. Local communities are also sites of power asymmetry, precariousness, violence, and resistance.¹²

This research aimed to contrast the socio-economic reincorporation experiences of FARC-EP ex-combatants in two collective reincorporation areas (Mutatá village, Venus village) and one city (Medellín). We decided to visit NARs instead of ETCRs because the NARs have received less attention from national and international agencies, making them relatively unexplored despite having a larger number of ex-combatants residing there, and more settlements compared to the ETCRs. We implemented a qualitative design using ethnographic methods to gain a comprehensive understanding. The findings highlight the significance of Social and Solidarity Economies (SSE) in bridging territorial gaps and fostering productive partnerships for sustainable peace. However, it is important to acknowledge that solidarity economies face challenges in providing employment for all members and fully replacing the basic income of ex-combatants. In Colombia, solidarity economies are intertwined with the political economy, and cooperatives are sometimes associated with communism or socialism, affecting their perception. Addressing these challenges and perceptions is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of SSE in economic reintegration and peacebuilding.

Moreover, we emphasise that collective productive projects necessitate territorial imagination and transitional leadership to harness local capabilities effectively. Notably, cooperatives are a novel concept in the context of DDR in the country,¹³ and their interrelation with social, economic, and community reincorporation is an area that lacks unified national studies. This research aims to contribute to filling this theoretical gap and shedding light on the socio-economic conditions where reincorporation is taking place.

The text is composed of the following sections: an exposition of the theoretical bases of the study; a description of the methodology used for data collection and processing; the results section; and finally, a discussion and conclusions in the light of central concepts such as territorial attachment, shared spatiality, precariousness, and territorial transformation.

Literature review

Economic reincorporation of ex-combatants and productive normalisation has been a central research topic in conflict and peacebuilding studies.¹⁴ It requires a great

¹¹Oliver Ramsbotham, 'Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall', in *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*. 4th ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 274.

¹²Ramsbotham, 'Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall', 276.

¹³German Dario Valencia, Fredy Alexander Chaverra, German Dario Valencia Agudelo and Fredy Alexander Chaverra Colorado, 'Cooperativismo y Reincorporación Socioeconómica de Exintegrantes de Las Farc-EP En Colombia', *Revista de Paz y Conflictos* 12, no. 2 (February 26, 2020): 227–48. <https://doi.org/10.30827/revpaz.v12i2.10236>.

¹⁴Ernesto Cardenas, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Luis Carlos Guevara, 'Network Structure of Insurgent Groups and the Success of DDR Processes in Colombia', *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 29, no. 4 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2018.1488416>; and McEvoy Kieran and Peter Shirlow, 'Re-Imagining DDR: Ex-Combatants, Leadership and Moral Agency in Conflict Transformation', *Theoretical Criminology* 13, no. 1 (January 14, 2009): 31–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480608100172>.

institutional effort and structural reforms, in a far-reaching process.¹⁵ Taking combatants to DDR programmes has become the standard peacebuilding strategy for ensuring the peaceful transition of combatants back into civilian life.¹⁶ This process of normalisation is considered critical for reducing the risk that ex-combatants return to violence and crime, thereby ensuring the long-term stability and development of post-conflict countries.¹⁷ Despite its importance, reintegration remains the least understood aspect of DDR or the ‘weakest link in the DDR chain’,¹⁸ it has often been referred to as the forgotten R. The reason can largely be attributed to the complex nature of reintegration and the difficulties involved in how to define, operationalising, and measure,¹⁹ for instance, noted that FARC-EP adopted Reincorporation to distinguish the normalisation of their ex-combatants from previous experiences.

Contextual factors such as economic opportunities and security can also affect the prospects for reintegration. Frequently, the communities where ex-combatants resettle are so poor and unstable that prospects for reintegration are severely limited,²⁰ thus the ‘absorption capacity’²¹ is low. The case studied converges these common landscapes, first, Colombia is the most unequal country in the Latin America region,²² the informal economy is more than 60%,²³ and the monetary poverty was 39.3% and extreme monetary poverty was 12.2%.²⁴ Second, violence and armed conflicts continue²⁵ and additional conflicts have emerged (for instance, FARC dissidence groups)²⁶; the high assassination rate of social leaders makes the country one of the most dangerous places for human rights defenders,²⁷ and

¹⁵ Andrés Escobar-Espinoza, Jorge Armando Luna-Amador and Nicolas López-Verhelst, ‘Reintegración Económica: Conceptualización y Estrategias Implementadas En Colombia y Otros Países’, *Saber, Ciencia y Libertad* 14, no. 1 (2019): 118–39. <https://doi.org/10.18041/2382-3240/saber.2019v14n1.5211>.

¹⁶ UN – United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Resource Centre, ‘The Integrated DDR Standards’, UN. <https://www.unndr.org/the-iddrs/> (accessed March 25, 2021); and ‘What Is DDR?’, http://www.unndr.org/what-is-ddr/introduction_1.aspx (accessed January 13, 2019).

¹⁷ Vicens Fisas, ‘Introducción Al Desarme, Desmovilización y Reintegración (DDR) de Excombatientes’, *Quaderns de Construcción de Pau*, no. 24 (2011); Guáqueta Alexandra and Gerson Arias, ‘Transitional DDR in Colombia: Useful or Counterproductive?’ (2008); and Theidon Kimberly, ‘Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia’, *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1, no. 1 (2007): 66–90. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijm011>.

¹⁸ Robert Muggah and Chris O’Donnell, ‘Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration’, *Stability*, (2015): 4. <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.fs>.

¹⁹ Simon Saldner, ‘Contextualizing Reintegration: Conceptualizing and Measuring Ex-Combatant Reintegration Relative to Civilians’, (2019).

²⁰ Saldner, ‘Contextualizing Reintegration’, 2.

²¹ Alpaslan Özerdem, ‘A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration: ‘Social Reintegration’ approach’, *Conflict, Security and Development* 12, no. 1 (March 2012): 51–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2012.667661>.

²² Regional Development Index, ‘IDERE LATAM’, <https://ediciones.uaautonoma.cl/index.php/UA/catalog/view/84/173/556-1>.

²³ See DANE – Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, ‘Empleo y Desempleo’, Bogotá, <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/mercado-laboral/empleo-y-desempleo> (accessed November 30, 2020).

²⁴ See Monetary and Multidimensional Poverty DANE – Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, ‘Pobreza Monetaria y Multidimensional En Colombia 2019’, <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/pobreza-y-condiciones-de-vida/pobreza-y-desigualdad/pobreza-monetaria-y-multidimensional-en-colombia-2019#pobreza-multidimensional-nacional-y-departamentos> (accessed December 31, 2019).

²⁵ See Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), ‘Crisis Group’, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia>.

²⁶ See Post-Farc Armed Groups, ‘Fundación PARES’ <https://www.pares.com.co/post/grupos-armados-posfarc-gapf-una-nueva-espiral-de-violencia-en-colombia>.

²⁷ See INDEPAZ, <https://indepaz.org.co/lideres-sociales-defensores-de-dd-hh-y-firmantes-de-acuerdo-asesinados-en-2022/>.

violence against ex-combatants has not ceased either.²⁸ Third, the country presents marked regional poverty, mainly where settled Afro-Colombian and indigenous people with extraordinary levels of poverty and extreme poverty.²⁹ Furthermore, the situation of precariousness extends beyond rural areas; in urban centres, violence is particularly pronounced in marginal and peripheral³⁰ areas characterised by informal economies, where ex-combatants may face additional challenges, such as paying double taxes to criminal gangs, highlighting the need for further urban studies on the process of reincorporation. This reality raises the essential question of ‘reintegration into what?’³¹ and prompts us to consider ‘reintegration into where?’. The local turn in peace and conflict studies has highlighted local actors, community contexts, and everyday peacebuilding practices,³² and the collective turn, in the case of FARC-EP, could serve as a strategy to combat poverty and precariousness, not only in the countryside but also in urban areas.

Colombia is one of the countries in the world with the greatest experience in DDR, some institutions have been created 17 years ago to accompany the comprehensive reintegration of people who have laid down their arms.³³ In terms of the socio-economical inclusion of ex-combatants, there is extensive work.³⁴ Research has been carried out into the factors conditioning their reintegration: family ties, persisting ex-combatant contact, moving from neighbourhood.³⁵ There is research on skills that ex-combatants must develop to remain legal,³⁶ alliances with other sectors,³⁷ and to navigate the labour market, when they must dissociate themselves from their shared history and identity in the armed group.³⁸ The research conducted by Fundación Ideas para la Paz

²⁸Since the signing of the Final Agreement, The UN Mission has Recorded the Killing of 342 ex-combatants, United Nations Security Council, ‘Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia S/2022/513’, (accessed June 27, 2022).

²⁹In the most vulnerable territories in the country (called PDET) there is a gap of almost 18 percentage points more than subjective poverty perception, while the national average of multidimensional poverty stood at 16% of the population, in the PDET territories this figure rises to 28%. DANE Multidimensional Poverty Index in PDET, 2021; DANE Monetary poverty with a differential approach 2021 <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/pobreza-y-condiciones-de-vida/pobreza-monetaria>.

³⁰See Tobón Santiago, Chirs Blattman, Gustavo Duncan and Ben Lessing, ‘Gangs of Medellín: How organised crime is organised’, (forthcoming).

³¹Kathleen M. Jennings, ‘The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR Through the Eyes of Ex-Combatants in Liberia’, *International Peacekeeping* 14, no. 2 (2007): 204–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310601150800>.

³²Thania Paffenholz, ‘Unpacking the Local Turn in Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment Towards an Agenda for Future Research’, *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 5 (May 4, 2015): 857–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1029908>; Thania Paffenholz, ‘International Peacebuilding Goes Local: Analysing Lederach’s Conflict Transformation Theory and Its Ambivalent Encounter with 20 Years of Practice’, *Peacebuilding* 2, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 11–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.783257>; and Mary Kaldor, Marika Theros and Rim Turkmani, ‘Local Agreements -an Introduction to the Special Issue’, *Peacebuilding* 10, no. 2 (2022): 107–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2022.2042111>.

³³Kristina Daniels and Sabine Kurtenbach, *Los Enredos de La Paz. Reflexiones Alrededor Del Largo Camino de La Transformación Del Conflicto Armado En Colombia* (Bogotá: FRESCO – Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung en Colombia, 2021).

³⁴One of the most outstanding collective demobilisations in Colombia occurred during 2003–2006 when more than 50.000 combatants from AUC laid down their arms.

³⁵Aileen van Leeuwen, ‘Breaking with the Past, How Colombian Ex-Combatants Reintegrated into a City Dominated by Armed Groups’, *PAX et BELLUM Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 5, no. 1 (2018): 37–56.

³⁶Oliver Kaplan and Enzo Nussio, ‘Explaining Recidivism of Ex-Combatants in Colombia’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62, no. 1 (April 25, 2018): 64–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002716644326>.

³⁷Escobar-Espinoza, Luna-Amador and López-Verhelst, ‘Reintegración Económica: Conceptualización y Estrategias Implementadas En Colombia y Otros Países’, 118–39; and Larissa Rhyn, ‘Overcoming Stigma and Fostering Participation: Mechanisms for Community Reintegration in Colombia’, *Conflict, Security and Development* 19, no. 2 (2019): 195–222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2019.1586157>.

³⁸Laura Andrea Cristancho and Adriana Otálora Buitrago, ‘Inclusión laboral de los desmovilizados del conflicto armado en Colombia’, *Revista de Sociología*, no. 1 (May 27, 2018): 169–96. <http://revistas.uned.es/index.php/Tendencias/articulo/view/21366>.

(FIP) provides a baseline for understanding the tensions after the signing of the peace agreement and their implementation.³⁹ It also has been studied obstacles, strategies, and structural transformation for economic reincorporation.⁴⁰ However, in the case of the FARC-EP, three novel – or completely unprecedented – elements converge: collective reincorporation in rural spaces, collective productive projects with the FARC-EP, and collective productive projects with the host communities. Literature exists in community reincorporation⁴¹ but is not exhaustive in terms of collective productive projects⁴² because previous experiences in DDR in Colombia were predominantly individual, urban, and non-territorial. Although the concept of territory is used indistinctly throughout the text as space or place, in line with CINEP/PPP it will be understood as:

a physical space endowed with certain productive conditions that have an impact on human activities at the same time as these transforms it according to the patterns of appropriation of space and the representations that individual and collective subjects make of it in contexts traversed by power relations. The territory is, then, a co-production of nature and society that makes the processes of its configuration dynamic, changing and, above all, contested both in the field of material life and in the field of symbolic life.⁴³

As a way to achieve territorial peace, a novel approach to conflict transformation,⁴⁴ the need for territorial development is also pointed out in the peace agreement as one aims to revert the rural gaps. But the notion of development usually adopted is not free from criticism because some scholars question the narrow notion of development, its Western, colonial heritage, in a top-down logic, presenting a strong global north.⁴⁵ In contrast, there is increasing discussion of alternative, inclusive, diverse, and bottom-up models of development, in which communities are active actors and can make use of their collective agency.⁴⁶ The demand is not to limit development to economic income, like positive peace⁴⁷ should include well-being and social justice. The current challenges for peace

³⁹María Llorente and María Méndez, *La Reincorporación de Las FARC Tres Años Después Desafíos y Propuestas Análisis de Coyuntura* (Fundación Ideas para la Paz [FIP], 2019), 22; and Harold Martínez and Iona Lefebvre, *La Reincorporación Económica de Los Excombatientes de Las FARC. Retos y Riesgos a Futuro*, Vol. 9. (Bogotá: Fundación Ideas para la Paz [FIP], 2019).

⁴⁰Jorge Armando Cañon, *La reincorporación económica de las FARC: entre obstáculos estructurales y apuestas transformadoras de ex Insurgentes* (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2021). <https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/81374>.

⁴¹Oliver Kaplan and Enzo Nussio, 'Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia', *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 35, no. 2 (April 25, 2015): 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894215614506>; Javier Alonso Cárdenas Díaz and Nadia Stefania Pérez Páez, eds. *Reintegración Comunitaria de Excombatientes En Colombia: Una Mirada Desde Lo Territorial* (Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario, Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización, Presidencia de la República, 2018). <https://doi.org/10.12804/TH9789587841640>; and Angela J. Lederach, 'Youth Provoking Peace: An Intersectional Approach to Territorial Peacebuilding in Colombia', *Peacebuilding* 8, no. 2 (April 2, 2019): 198–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1616959>.

⁴²Valencia, Alexander Chaverra, Dario Valencia Agudelo, and Alexander Chaverra Colorado. 'Cooperativismo y Reincorporación Socioeconómica de Exintegrantes de Las Farc-EP En Colombia', 227–48.

⁴³Andrés Aunta and Víctor Barrera, *Conflictividades y Agendas Territoriales* (Publicaciones CINEP, 2016), 11.

⁴⁴Heriberto Cairo, Ulrich Oslender, Carlo Emilio Piazzini Suárez, Jerónimo Ríos, Sara Koopman, Vladimir Montoya Arango, Flavio Bladimir, Rodríguez Muñoz and Liliana Zambrano Quintero, "'Territorial Peace': The Emergence of a Concept in Colombia's Peace Negotiations", *Geopolitics* 23, no. 2 (2018): 464–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2018.1425110>.

⁴⁵Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁴⁶Mesa de Género del Consejo Nacional de Reincorporación, Entidad de las Naciones Unidas para la Igualdad de Género y el Empoderamiento de las Mujeres (ONU Mujeres), Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Colombia, Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, and (PNUD), *Herramientas Para La Inclusión Del Enfoque de Género En Procesos de Reincorporación Económica* (Bogotá, 2019).

⁴⁷Thania Paffenholz, Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Erin McCandless, 'Peacebuilding and Development: Integrated Approaches to Evaluation', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 2, no. 2 (2005).

practitioners are to support local, transformative initiatives⁴⁸ based on practices of peacebuilding from below.

Method and methodology

This research is part of the anthropology of experience studies,⁴⁹ and the intersection between anthropology and development.⁵⁰ Ethnographic methods and participant observation were used engaged interlocutors directly and to guide the descriptive process in the fieldwork.⁵¹ In each of the encounters, we carried out indirect interviews, informal guided conversations based on a systematic characterisation of cultural variables through indirect questionnaires, given from the initial categories of the research.⁵² The kind of questions were limited to socio-economic inclusion, trying to cover the type of job, means of sustainable economics, or sort of barriers to achieving it. We used auxiliary techniques, such as the in-depth interview, also additional technological tools for recording, common within multimodal anthropology,⁵³ such as videos, photos, voice messages, and social networks to maintain contact with participants and keep abreast of their productive initiatives. Virtual encounters were a great help during 2020 and 2021, considering that the COVID-19 pandemic restricted physical access to the field.

Ethical considerations

Access to fieldwork was requested through the governmental agency, Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN). The initial consentient consisted of accompanying the officials in their daily tasks with people in the reincorporation process taking on the role of observers. The frequency of the encounters made it possible reach to COMUNES party headquarters. Ethical and security criteria were established with participants, following the principles of respect for autonomy, non-maleficence (do no harm), and justice.⁵⁴ It was established ethics committee to guide five stages: preparation, entry, data collection, storage, analysis, and presentation.⁵⁵ We asked for consent to take photos, record interviews, and make videos. The informed consent stated that they could

⁴⁸Roger Mac Ginty and Pamina Firchow, 'Top-down and Bottom-up Narratives of Peace and Conflict', *Politics* 36, no. 3 (April 21, 2016): 308–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395715622967>.

⁴⁹Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, *The Anthropology of Experience* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Rodrigo Díaz Cruz, 'La Vivencia En Circulación. Una Introducción a La Antropología de La Experiencia', *Alteridades* 7 (1997): 5–15.

⁵⁰Arturo Escobar, 'Antropología y Desarrollo', *Maguaré* 14, (1999): 42–73; and Beatriz Pérez Galán, *Antropología y Desarrollo: Discurso, Prácticas y Actores* (Madrid: Catarata, 2012).

⁵¹E.G. Guba and Y.S. Lincoln, 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2011); Tobias Denskus and Nikolas Kosmatopoulos, 'Anthropology & Peacebuilding: An Introduction', *Peacebuilding* 3, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 219–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2015.1081124>; and Birgit Bräuchler, 'The Cultural Turn in Peace Research: Prospects and Challenges', *Peacebuilding* 6, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 17–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2017.1368158>.

⁵²Angel-B Espina, *Manual de Antropología cultural* 2aed. (Salamanca: Amarú Ediciones, 1997).

⁵³Samuel Gerald, Matthew Durlington and Harjant Gill, 'Multimodality: An Invitation', *American Anthropologist* 119, no. 1 (March 1, 2017): 142–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/AMAN.12826>.

⁵⁴See Susanna P. Campbell, 'Ethics of Research in Conflict Environments', *Journal of Global Security Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 2017): 89–101. <https://doi.org/10.1093/JOGSS/OGW024>.

⁵⁵H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 6th ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); Patricia Schettini and Inés Cortazzo, *Análisis de Datos Cualitativos En La Investigación Social* (La Plata: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de La Plata (EDULP), 2015).

choose not to participate, not answer a question, not to be included in the picture, or stop the recording at any time. Likewise, it was indicated that the audio-visual content would be used exclusively for academic purposes. The research design contemplated guides to include gender-sensitive questions,⁵⁶ and adopted checklists for the ethical treatment of the data.⁵⁷ Numbers are used to ensuring the anonymity of participants. The main findings were discussed with key actors, and it was offered to include them in one of the articles. Finally, security protocols were established: contact details were available for the people who thought the visit was concreted, and regular communication with the committee. In the countryside, places were visited through non-governmental agencies with visible identification on waistcoats.⁵⁸

Data analysis

The qualitative design included three fieldwork, two rural and one urban reincorporation areas, San José village, Mutatá (Antioquia), Venus village (Valle del Cauca), and the city of Medellín. The first encounter was during December-January 2017–18, we visited productive units in the city and established contact with key informants, which allowed us to reach more closed environments and implemented a snowball sampling. The second visit was in 2019 for three months including the rural areas and the city. The last fieldwork was in December 2021. Forty-five direct semi-structured interviews were conducted with informants from the now defunct FARC and some organisations in the territory supporting economic reincorporation. Certain actors have participated in several meetings from the beginning, they have been essential to reaching this population and maintain a climate of trust within the communities.

To reduce institutional bias, we contrasted the narratives of diverse actors at different levels and scales: FARC-EP ex-combatants who were territorial leaders, political leaders, and base ex-combatants; officers of the government agencies in charge of reincorporation; peace researchers from national NGOs; and managers of international agencies involved in productive projects in the territories. These include, but are not limited to, the COMUNES party, ECOMUN Solidarity Cooperatives, ex-FARC-EP leaders, National Council for Reincorporation (CNR), Agency for Reincorporation and Normalisation (ARN); SENA; COMFENALCO; FIP; SIVJRnR; UNDP.

The first step, for data management and analysis, was to establish initial categories based on the literature review and preliminary fieldwork in 2017. Afterwards, we select the thematic units⁵⁹ (labour reincorporation, informal work, productive projects, city, rural, individual, collective, women, men, productive vocation) and they were putting in a matrix of analysis. The matrix is a spreadsheet where each column cover: thematic units, questions, categories, sub-

⁵⁶Trine Rogg Korsvik and Linda Marie Rustad, *¿Qué Es La Dimensión de Género En El Ámbito de La Investigación? Casos de Estudio En La Investigación Interdisciplinar* (Cantabria: Editorial de la Universidad de Cantabria, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.22429/EUC2021.021>.

⁵⁷Alex Broom, 'Ethical Issues in Social Research', *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* 14, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 151–56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CTIM.2005.11.002>; and N.G. Chirk Jenn, 'Common Ethical Issues in Research and Publication', *Malaysian Family Physician* 1, no. 2–3 (2006): 74. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4453117/>.

⁵⁸A detailed description of the five phases of fieldwork, data analysis and 'situated knowledge' (Donna Haraway) will be included in a forthcoming publication. Findings on gender/sex analysis were also included in a separate article.

⁵⁹José Ignacio Ruiz, *Metodología de la investigación cualitativa*. 4a ed. (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 2007).

categories, excerpts of vignettes of single-coded participants, researchers' observations and notes, and the last column was dedicated to the literature review. Through a systematic and detailed process of listening and reading the field notes, we identified the extracts of interviews to be transcribed and translated. Alongside, we recognise emerging categories of analysis⁶⁰ (for instance, precarious conditions, social margins, resistance, and reparation). The matrix allowed us to compare categories through all the vignettes in the same row, discover patterns, trends, and guide the conclusions.⁶¹ The final step is the data triangulation based on⁶² fieldwork, theory, and self-interpretation for writing the overall theoretical construction.

Results: towards collective reincorporation

Since the negotiation table, FARC-EP combatants sought collective reincorporation, as they pretended to reinforce themselves as a political actor with rural productive projects, accordingly with their peasant roots.⁶³ The collective emphasis was an achievement that changed public policy on reintegration in Colombia.⁶⁴ In these 6 years, they are struggling to achieve a sustainable reincorporation through three alternatives: employment, individual productive projects, and collective productive projects. For COMUNES's leader preserving group cohesion remains a priority:

The employment search is an individual consideration (...) but our focus is on productive projects of the collective initiative based on solidarity economy through ECOMUN cooperatives. That is the main focus, rather than employment in companies, the reincorporated population has the possibility that collectively, make the investment of 8 million pesos and undertake productive projects that generate income. That is the route we prioritise, we believe that this allows us a degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency that is more in line with our process and our political project. (Interview P11, 11.06.2019)

Group cohesion is a key factor in the ECOMUN initiative, where membership is voluntary, allowing individuals to invest seed capital of eight million pesos (approx. € 1.850) in a productive project collectively with comrades. It is worth mentioning that the seed capital comes from the stipend provided by the government to each individual combatant as part of the reintegration process. This aspect becomes relevant in understanding the commitment of the individuals to the collective project since they have the option to utilise their seed money independently if they choose to do so. The main projects aim to impact the peasant logic of the agrarian economy, but rural context presents it owns set of obstacles and barriers. Findings on socio-economical

⁶⁰Ángel Aguirre, *Etnografía, Metodología cualitativa en la investigación sociocultural* (España: Marcombo Boixareu Universitaria, 1995).

⁶¹Rosana Guber, *La Etnografía. Método, Campo y Reflexividad* (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2001).

⁶²Heidi Levitt, Michael Bamberg, John Creswell, David Frost, Ruthellen Josselson and Carola Suárez-Orozco, 'Journal Article Reporting Standards for Qualitative Primary, Qualitative Meta-Analytic, and Mixed Methods Research in Psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board Task Force Report', *American Psychologist* 73, no. 1 (2018): 26–46. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000151>.

⁶³According to the initial census, the origin of the FARC population is predominantly rural (72%), rural-urban in municipal capitals (17%), and urban in the country's large capital cities (11%), Universidad Nacional de Colombia. 'Caracterización Comunidad FARC-EP: Resultados Generales'. *Informe de Rendición de Cuentas de La Implementación Del Acuerdo de Paz*, 2017.

⁶⁴Francy Carranza-Franco, *Demobilisation and Reintegration in Colombia: Building State and Citizenship* (Routledge, 2020).

reincorporation will be grouped into four general categories: (1) in search of land; (2) facing precarious conditions; (3) transitioning from collectivisation to individualisation; and (4) embracing proximity.

In search of land: from ETCR to NAR

The reincorporation began in 2016 in 24 Territorial Training and Reincorporation Areas (ETCR), chosen by the government and FARC-EP delegation. In these places, ex-combatants received a living space, food support, and the institutional offer of education and training for employment,⁶⁵ and they started collective productive projects there. However, despite the theoretical benefits of the ETCRs, they encountered significant delays and infrastructural problems upon launch. This systematic failure at the national level highlights the challenges ex-combatants faced in their early initiative to reincorporate into society in the face of governmental shortcomings. Additionally, the geographical location of mostly ETCR in areas with strong absence of social institutions and limited infrastructure further complicated the reincorporation process; a military miscalculation justified by historical mistrust:

We chose these spaces with two criteria in mind: that they were areas where we had territorial control, and that, given a possible betrayal by the state, we could quickly regroup in the mountains. That is why they are so far from urban centres. This was detrimental to us because now it is very difficult to get any product out of there. (Interview P20, 04.07.2019)

Secondly, the sustainability of agricultural projects was jeopardised due to the lack of land access and ownership. Despite the national government acquiring 10 plots of former ETCRs in recent years,⁶⁶ the property titles do not belong to the ex-combatants. Faced with the desire to work on their own land, some have decided to relocate to New Areas of Reincorporation (NAR), around 60–90,⁶⁷ where a third of the of former combatants (4,500) have gathered. Thirdly, security conditions have worsened, leading to threats against the ex-combatants. Finally, another factor contributing to the fragmentation of collectivisation is the disinterest of some ex-combatants in continuing their association with the FARC-EP organisation, whether territorially, economically, or politically.

Precariousness conditions

The first NAR visited was the village of San José, located in Mutatá, Antioquia. The ex-combatants were initially assigned to ETCR Gallo, in Tierralta, Córdoba, according to a participant: ‘there was no water, no electricity, no sanitation, no connectivity, no food was reaching them [...] even worse, they were surrounded by paramilitaries, everywhere’ (Interview P24, 24.07.2019). The accelerated expansion of the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC)⁶⁸ and the threats made

⁶⁵María and Méndez, *La Reincorporación de Las FARC Tres Años Después Desafíos y Propuestas Análisis de Coyuntura*, 22.

⁶⁶Only 2310 out of 14.000 accredited ex-combatants live in ETCR, United Nations Security Council, ‘Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia S/2022/513’, <https://colombia.unmissions.org/en> (accessed June 27, 2022).

⁶⁷The UN Verification Mission in Colombia estimates the number at 65, but in interviews, the ex-combatants spoke of 90 NAR.

⁶⁸The Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) is a paramilitary group operating in Colombia. They are known for their involvement in various illegal activities and have been associated with violence and threats against communities and individuals, including ex-combatants of the FARC-EP.

by this illegal armed group against several ex-combatants led them to quickly find a new place. On their own, they move to Mutatá, a plot of land that was negotiated with a friendly civilian population for 30 million COP:

The comrades decided, out of the 2 million one-off normalisation allowance that was to buy clothes to change from military life to civilian life, these people decided, to invest it rather on land. So, each person put their two million and bought the 30 hectares. It was like a guerrilla camp, again, using machetes, because they didn't have anything, just plastic, and wooden sticks. Today it is a village, there are houses built. And that alone, through collective work, without government'. (Interview P12, 12.06.2019)

The self-managed initiatives in Mutatá have been an impact on surrounding communities. 'There were 78 of us with our families. We started to divide the work, building houses from one to one. At first, we lived in tents, but we were used to it. The mayor decided to help us and gave us funds to build an access road. We put in the labour and now it serves the whole community' (Interview P22, 11.07.2019). Mutatá is considered a success story – even a source of pride – for some members, 'it is the most advanced community in the national reincorporation process, and it is the one that has nothing to do with the [national] government' (Interview P12, 04.07.2019). While the ex-combatants perceive that their achievements in Mutatá were made 'without the government', the support provided by the local government, particularly in the construction of the access road, played a critical role the importance of local public sector leadership in facilitating such initiatives, distinguishing the national from the local level.

In Mutatá, they were engaged in various collective projects, including fish farms, small corrals with chickens and one tourist project, planting and building collectively. Although the construction of the road brought territorial benefits for ex-combatants as well as surrounding communities – improving their capabilities for commercial exchange–, in terms of selling products and buying supplies, distance with urban centres affects the final cost. As they said, for instance, many peasants do not prefer to plant coca, but the product is purchased on their doorstep by illegal armed groups without distribution cost.

Ex-combatants in Venus, the second NAR visited, also lived in the ETCR under rough conditions. Around 33 people in the reincorporation process decided to leave the ETCR Oso, in the municipality of Planadas, Tolima, because there was no aqueduct, nor connectivity, no basic drinking water, and energy services were just being installed. However, the strongest reason for moving to Tuluá was *rootedness in the territory*. As ex-members of the Víctor Saavedra Mobile Column, they operated in the area for many years just before the peace agreement, explaining family ties in the village. Venus also has a rough terrain: the road is not entirely paved, with narrow lanes, where only one car can pass at a time because on the other side of the mountain there is a gorge. They have been developing a collective productive project based on coffee, particularly challenging, among ex-combatants, peasants, and victims of the armed conflict. The peasants said that the Victor Saavedra Column had protected them from paramilitary groups during the armed conflict. For them, the coffee project was a unique opportunity, as they were receiving support (financial and technical) from national and international agencies.

From collectivization to individualization

Ex-combatants moving to the city have been looking for job opportunities, widely absent in the countryside. Compared with the rural places visited, the main projects in Medellín were settled individually with high participation of family members and relatives. In the city, the houses were better equipped, in terms of basic services, but they were settled in ‘poor neighbourhoods’, popularly called ‘comunas’, where the typification of violence is higher.⁶⁹ We joined for three weeks staff of ARN in charge of monitoring productive projects of ex-combatants, mainly in their own homes: groceries stores and mini-markets, hairdressers, nail repair, fast food carts, dressmaking and tailoring, construction site tools, and mechanics’ tools, principally. The houses were small – crowded together – under construction or unfinished buildings, and narrow, one-way roads. Despite public transport arriving there, is slightly more expensive, contrary to the leasing of houses because in the city boundaries ‘the higher up, the cheaper it is’ (Interview, 24, 24.07.2019). Urban reincorporation was not planned in the negotiation phase in Havana, which was always discussed in rural and collective terms:

Urban reincorporation is the worst place for us. It was not thought out, it was not even contemplated what to do in the case of the 12500 FARC ex-combatants, 2000 or 3000 moved to the cities. How do we do it there, if there is no housing if there is no food, only basic income? That’s fucked up, very fucked up. That was not calculated. From FARC’s point of view, they are the ones that have fared the worst. Where we have been individualised the most, where we are most at risk. (Interview P34, 31.08.2021)

FARC-EP foresaw this problem from the start, hence their insistence on reincorporation rather than individual reintegration. In urban centres, ex-FARC-EP are more deprived of the group protection and collective benefits of ETCRs. It is also a barrier to collective action, without the proximity of co-inhabited space, the atomisation and fragmentation of the FARC-EP partnership is an imminent risk. In the case of women, it means more gender burdens⁷⁰ due to the prevalence of the private sphere over the public:

Most of the women are alone, alone I mean with families, they are the heads of the family. With one, two, or three children. They are in absolutely precarious conditions. In Bogotá and a small association in Medellín, they did some surveys of the reincorporated population. 57% live on less than the minimum wage, that is, the basic income. And on top of that, we found out where these people are, in the slums. There are women with three children, born after the agreement. That idea that they had of having a partner, of having children, of taking care of animals, of moving forward together, has not been possible. No one, voluntarily, is going to live in such deplorable conditions. (Interview P35, 29.10.2021)

Precarious conditions are not exclusive to FARC-EP ex-combatants; they also affect other vulnerable groups, such as racial/ethnic minorities. These conditions are characterised by poor housing or living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods⁷¹ limited access formal work, an insecure environment, and inadequate access to medical and educational services.

⁶⁹See Tobón et al., (forthcoming). The authors describe how criminal gangs have territorial control over legal economies, shops, removals, housing construction, must pay ‘vacunas’ to operate (i.e. extortion). They impose restrictions on mobility, producing forced confinement or forced displacement.

⁷⁰Isabel Lopera-Arbeláez, ‘Feminization of Female FARC-EP Combatants: From War Battle to Social-Economical Struggle’, *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15423166221120638> (accessed August 22, 2022).

⁷¹Rolf Pendall, Brett Theodos and Kaitlin Franks, ‘Vulnerable People, Precarious Housing, and Regional Resilience: An Exploratory Analysis’, *Housing Policy Debate*, 22, no. 2 (2012): 271–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2011.648208>.

These challenges are not only shared by ex-combatants but are also prevalent among more than half of the population in the country.

Proximity: solidarity economy

Reincorporation is settled down in places where they co-inhabit with local communities and neighbours. Communities are composed of civil society and local authorities, who share territory and, to some extent, equal resources.⁷² Due to the increase in interactions, ex-combatants and surrounding communities could establish several grades of acceptance/rejection⁷³ mobilisation,⁷⁴ and participation.⁷⁵ To confront the structural inequalities in the territories and enable recovery, FARC-EP ex-combatants adopted the creation of cooperatives as a socio-economic reincorporation strategy. They identify as ‘a commitment to community reincorporation, integral, collective, and with gender and ethnic focus [. . .] to promote solidarity economy, gender equality and participation, fair trade, self-sufficiency and food sovereignty, decent work and economic growth, and sustainable communities.’⁷⁶ The International Labour Organisations (ILO) defined it as:

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) encompasses institutional units with a social or public purpose, engaged in economic activities based on voluntary cooperation, democratic and participatory governance, autonomy and independence, the rules of which prohibit or limit the distribution of profit. SSE units may include cooperatives, associations, mutual societies, foundations, social enterprises, self-help groups and other units operating in accordance with the values and principles of the SSE in the formal and the informal economies.⁷⁷

The collective projects employ different levels of associativity to prevent the ‘individualisation’ or what could be the fragmentation of the political actor. At the first level are kinds of cooperatives composed, in origin, exclusively of FARC-EP ex-combatants.⁷⁸ Mutatá fits in this level:

Mutatá is the highest degree of collectivisation by individualising. As everyone has their own house, their own land, their own productive unit, but at the same time, they work half of the time collectively. So, you see them at 6 o’clock in the morning and you hear the whistles, and it’s the people already working, organising the collective work, then individual work. It’s the two things at the same time, they don’t exclude each other. There’s no contradiction between the individual and the collective. [. . .] so, we say that person [who wants an individual way], don’t individualise, don’t get lost of the collective. (Interview P12, 12.06.2019)

⁷²J. Abbott, ‘Community Participation and Its Relationship to Community Development’, *Community Development Journal* 30, no. 2 (April 1, 1995): 158–68. <https://doi.org/10.1093/CDJ/30.2.158>.

⁷³Rhyn, Larissa, 2019. Jareme R. McMullin, ‘Integration or Separation? The Stigmatisation of Ex-Combatants after War’, *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 2 (2013): 385–414. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210512000228>.

⁷⁴James A. Christenson, ‘Community Development’, *Rural Society in the U.S.: Issues for the 1980s*, (January 1, 2019): 264–72. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429305153-30/COMMUNITY-DEVELOPMENT-JAMES-CHRISTENSON>.

⁷⁵Kaplan and Nussio, ‘Community Counts: The Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Colombia’, 1–22.

⁷⁶ECOMUN, ‘Economías Sociales Del Común – ECOMUN’, <https://ecomun.com.co/>. (accessed October 21, 2020).

⁷⁷ILO – International Labour Organization, *Decent Work and the Social and Solidarity Economy* (Geneva, 2022), 14.

⁷⁸Depending on the type of participation intra o inter-grupal, they could also be clustered and entrenched social orders, according to Solveig Richter and Laura Camila Barrios Sabogal, ‘Dynamics of Peace or Legacy of Rebel Governance? Patterns of Cooperation between FARC-Ex-Combatants and Conflict-Affected Communities in Colombia’, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2022.2117824>.

The second level of cooperatives involves people outside of the FARC-EP. According to them, it implies community reincorporation in the territory, with the aim of strengthening the social fabric, coexistence, and reconciliation'.⁷⁹ It is part of comprehensive economic sustainability and sustainable peace. Venus serves an example of this approach, where cooperative consists of FARC-EP ex-combatants, victims, and peasants. Together, they embarked on a coffee project, with the support of the UNDP, the Secretary of Peace of Valle del Cauca, and the Paso Colombia Foundation. During our visit to the NAR, they were waiting for a coffee roasting machine to sell the product at a better price. Through the combination of their various capabilities, they successfully strengthened the collective project: peasants and victims provided the land for planting, while ex-combatants contributed with seed capital and funds from cooperation. The tasks were divided and assigned daily, reflecting an organised and community-based work process.

Despite this achievement, two months before we visited the NAR, the leader of the local reincorporation initiative, Jorge Enrique Corredor, also known as Wilson Saavedra, was murdered in the same municipality. He was a former FARC commander.⁸⁰ This event has left a lasting impact on the community, and during our interactions, locals remained suspicious and cautious, leading to limited communication. He was not the unique case, as a climate of mistrust continues to prevail among the FARC-EP population, as previously described:

If you analyse point 3 [of the peace agreement] and draw the consequences of the FARC setting up cooperative or solidarity economy organisations in the territories where they were present, that FARC becomes an economic alternative for those regions, as a means of employment, as a way of bringing markets, boosting the market, etc., this will empower us politically. [...] The government always tries to depoliticise reincorporation, but this is totally false. It is not an individual who reincorporates, it is an organisation. That's why the issue is so different in paramilitary or other processes that have taken place. [...] Politically they cannot empower us, they are not going to kill us, but they are not going to let us empower [...] that is why they do not want us to reincorporate collectively. (Interview P34, 31.08.2021)

In addition to critical conditions of security, land access, and ownership, distrust in governmental institutions has been an important obstacle to implementing collective projects.

Discussion: territorial imagination and transitional leadership

The socio-economic reincorporation of ex-combatants unfolds processes of social inclusion and collective development. Previous studies agree that ex-combatants reintegrate, namely reincorporate in FARC-EP, into social margins,⁸¹ caused by stigmatisation and rejection, as well as the possibilities available to them. On the periphery, urban or rural, converge plenty of types of inequalities and precarious conditions⁸² and the institutional offer does not reach the territories equally. In other words, there is a differentiated

⁷⁹CNR-COMUNES, 'Equipo Comunitario – CNR Componente COMUNES', https://www.cnrfarco.co/?page_id=16008 (accessed July 27, 2022).

⁸⁰See Olga Criollo, 'Así viven los excombatientes de las Farc en el Valle del Cauca', *El País*, <https://www.elpais.com.co/proceso-de-paz/asi-viven-los-excombatientes-de-las-farc-en-el-valle-del-cauca.html> (accessed 8 September 2019).

⁸¹Özerdem, 'A Re-Conceptualisation of Ex-Combatant Reintegration', 51–73.

⁸²Aunta and Víctor, *Conflictividades y Agendas Territoriales*.

presence of the state⁸³ producing spatial segregation with fewer opportunities where reincorporation is taking place, mostly rural. In such a scenario, what could vulnerable groups do to cope with a model of development that has left them outside?

Arms of the weak

Due to the fact, most ex-combatants insert in informal employment; productive projects are an alternative to tackle poverty and achieve sustainable reincorporation. They are also a strategy to reduce the social exclusion and stigmatisation suffered by the former guerrilla population, enabling them to strengthen social ties. Nevertheless, previous experiences in the country show that 40% of individual productive projects have failed in the third year and those who survive are in the informal market.⁸⁴ Therefore, we argue collective productive projects seem to be a novel promising alternative.

Social and Solidarity Economies (SSE) are alternatives to resisting the development model that has left them out. Another form of resistance, of course, is illicit economies, but we prefer to attain legal pathways. Solidarity models take advantage of the shared capabilities, they also have been linked to more sustainable, green, cleaner, and inclusive development,⁸⁵ and have coped best economic crises.⁸⁶ In Colombia, SSE has been tackling informality and proving social protection to the most vulnerable groups.⁸⁷

The weapons of the weak, as James Scott called them, are strategies that are close at hand, with a proximal, everyday connotation.⁸⁸ Cooperatives and associations based on SSE strengthen their individual agency and protect them collectively but require an exercise of moral imagination to change the perceptions of local actors.⁸⁹ One of the central aspects of collaborative work is the re-establishment of relationships of trust⁹⁰ in most cases fragmented due to the roles played during the conflict.⁹¹ The change of perception, the transition from fear, rejection, and resentment is gradual; contrary to the production of peace recipes, each territory has its own particularities.⁹² To understand the social transformation between ex-combatants and local communities is vital to adopt a territorial approach.

⁸³Eduardo Álvarez Vanegas, Daniel Pardo Calderon and Andres Cajiao Vélez. *Trayectorias y Dinámicas Territoriales de Las FARC* (2018).

⁸⁴María and Méndez, *La Reincorporación de Las FARC Tres Años Después. Desafíos y Propuestas*, 22.

⁸⁵“Social Impact Measurement for the Social and Solidarity Economy: OECD Global Action Promoting Social & Solidarity Economy Ecosystems | OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Papers.

⁸⁶OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, ‘Social Economy and the COVID-19 Crisis: Current and Future Roles. OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)’, July 30, 2020. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/social-economy-and-the-covid-19-crisis-current-and-future-roles-f904b89f/>.

⁸⁷‘Tackling Informality in Colombia with the Social and Solidarity Economy – OECD’, <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/social-economy/tackling-informality-in-colombia-with-the-social-and-solidarity-economy.htm> (accessed November 16, 2022); ‘OECD Social Economy and Innovation Unit Centre for Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities Social Protection and Tackling Informality: Building on the Social and Solidarity Economy in Colombia’. OECD Social Economy and Innovation Unit Centre for Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions, and Cities, 2021.

⁸⁸For Scott, people are not passive recipients of oppression and abuse of power. James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁸⁹Lederach. *The Moral Imagination*.

⁹⁰Erin McFee and Angelika Rettberg, ‘Contexto de Los Desafíos de La Implementación Temprana En Colombia’, in *Excombatientes y Acuerdo de Paz Con Las FARC En Colombia: Balance de La Etapa Temprana*, eds. Erin McFee and Angelika Rettberg. (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.30778/2019.39>.

⁹¹Alonso Cárdenas and Stefania Pérez Páez, eds. *Reintegración Comunitaria de Excombatientes En Colombia*.

⁹²See note 89 above.

Territorial attachment

For Lederach, social transformation is linked to imagination and creativity.⁹³ Lederach presents four components of moral imagination, emphasising the ability to imagine ourselves in a network of relationships that includes our enemies, the importance of embracing curiosity without rigid dualistic thinking, the necessity of pursuing creative acts, and the acceptance of risks associated with venturing into an unknown future, which deviates from the familiar landscape of violence.⁹⁴ In the cases studied, a key driving factor was found to be territorial attachment – the profound link that individuals have with a particular place,⁹⁵ often referred to a sense of belonging, ‘place attachment’, or ‘sense of place’.

In the NARs visited, this attachment to the territory fostered local alliances that aimed for collective benefit. Friendly communities and a reduced sense of rejection facilitated the transformation of collective action into a commitment to the place. This resulted in the transfer of collective capacities to communities more receptive to the presence of former ex-combatants, even when they were not explicitly invited. The road in Mutatá showcased a commitment to the place, symbolising permanence in civilian life and contributing to the overall territorial capacities, benefiting everyone. Similarly, the coffee cooperative in Venus offered an opportunity for joint cultivation, while the introduction of a roasting machine allowed peasants (even non-cooperative members) to process the final product independently, strengthening local capacity.

However, in urban areas, the spatiality of dwellings did not encourage a sense of partnership among FARC-EP members, which is crucial for collective action. This resulted in a more closed-scale fragmentation of reincorporation, primarily confined to families. Some failures in the design of the reincorporation policy might have contributed to this outcome: individual disbursements were quicker than collective ones, requiring fewer procedures. In contrast, collective projects required market research, a system of costs, a feasibility study, and specialised knowledge, close to a manager but far from war-know-how of ex-combatants. Consequently, collective projects began to be rejected, ex-combatants started to demand a project formulator or finally, opted for the individual path. In the successful cases, shared spatiality and territorial attachment of ex-combatants and host communities drove territorial imagination to tackle a common purpose: socio-economic exclusion.

Transitional leadership

Moral imagination is a component of social change but requires organised efforts to identify individual capabilities, direct collective efforts, and establish alliances with local actors. As Lederach identifies, local leadership is a key factor to achieve social transformation.⁹⁶ In the fieldwork, former FARC-EP leadership motivated the creation of cooperatives and solidarity projects (i.e. SSE) based on participatory, consultative, and

⁹³Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*.

⁹⁴Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 25.

⁹⁵Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages. Territory, Authority, Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400828593>.

⁹⁶See note 89 above.

sensitivity to members' different capacities. Leadership was highly valued by the groups, especially after the laying down of arms, when uncertainty and confusion prevailed regarding the path forward. While effective leadership was highly valued, the demobilisation process also revealed a shift in dynamics – leaders displaying authoritarian, despotic, or tyrannical behaviour were left behind once they had laid down their arms. In contrast, leaders who garnered trust and respect garnered support and recognition from their peers. Examples of such respected leaders were observed in Mutatá, where the former commander of the 58th front commanded respect, and in Venus, where Víctor Saavedra played a similar role. Additionally, Medellín also witnessed the rise of notable political and community leader. In these transitional margins, local agencies are flourishing,⁹⁷ as a participant said:

They don't need an agency from outside to tell them what to do. That is what generates the transformation, it is not even the irrigation systems, to provide materials, machinery, equipment, or funds for marketing, because it is what we do, but what we have really learned is that the transformation is not in those things. The transformation is in how the leaders can manage those projects, and how they can unite the organization in favour of that, which in this case is a productive project, but maybe tomorrow it will be the health centre, the school, the road. That is why we say that they are managers of development, not of productive development but general development. They are the ones who know their territory, know their peculiarities, and their weaknesses. (Interview P13, 13.08.2019)

In the places studied, former combatants' leadership has been a driving force in harnessing local capabilities and potentialities. Infrastructure is not important if there is no one to use it. The conversion of individual resources into collective capabilities is, in theory, more efficient in achieving their productive objectives.⁹⁸ FARC-EP ex-combatants contribute with organisational capacity – shaped, in part, to military order–, along with seed capital and foreign funds, whilst host communities provide their land and knowledge of economic organisation and grassroots productive activities. Although Venus and Mutatá have been relatively success with SSEs, they have not been free of everyday conflicts. In practice, problems can emerge within the group of ex-combatants and with the host communities. Issues such as equitable distribution of work, integrating all members into the workforce at the initial stage, and the lack of SSE-specific training and experience are common. A broader problem lies in the absence of a cooperative culture, limited education, and inadequate awareness-raising in the country, partly stemming from the misconception that cooperatives and associations are linked to communism, socialism, left-wing ideologies, or trade union.⁹⁹ Adding to the complexity, grassroots social organisations in Colombia have faced persecution, possibly to hinder organised collectives. As a consequence, taking up leadership roles for social transformation carries the risk of endangering one's life. These obstacles underscore the need for further advocacy and policy changes to foster a more conducive environment for collective initiatives and social progress. Taking the barriers and challenges for emerging solidarity economies into the arena of political economy.

⁹⁷Robin Luckham, 'Whose Violence, Whose Security? Can Violence Reduction and Security Work for Poor, Excluded and Vulnerable People?' *Peacebuilding* 5, no. 2 (May 4, 2017): 99–117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2016.1277009>.

⁹⁸Ingrid Robeyns, *Wellbeing, Freedom, and Social Justice: The Capability Approach Re-Examined* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0130>.

⁹⁹During the 1990s, with the changing role of the State in socio-economic development in favour of for-profit private enterprises, resources allocated to cooperative development declined sharply, ILO 2022, p. 55.

Conclusions

The reincorporation into poverty remains a concern for the inclusive transition to civilian life. For reincorporation to be successful, it must be sustainable economically and socially inclusive. Host communities play a central role in conflict transformation, they represent roots, a sense of belonging and territorial development. Otherwise, ex-combatants are excluded on small territorial islands.

For peace practitioners, the territorial approach is one of Colombia's benchmarks. Nevertheless, the concept of territorial peace could oversimplify the complex and multifaceted nature of conflicts. By focusing primarily on the geographical dimension of peace, it may overlook important social, political, and economic factors that contribute to the persistence of violence and insecurity in certain regions. Addressing underlying socio-economic inequalities, land ownership disputes, and historical injustices, achieving lasting peace in the territories remains challenging.

Although it is new in the country, cooperatives between ex-combatants, peasants, and victims are increasing. Lessons learned can foster collective reincorporation in other territories and enlighten a possible DDR policy with the ELN in Colombia. The systematisation of experiences¹⁰⁰ could be a useful methodology in the field of peacebuilding from below, everyday peace, and sustainable peace to understand the govern of the collective goods. In this way, local knowledge can be transmitted, confronted, and contrasted with current theoretical insights.

One of the practical implications of this study is the importance of valuate, screen, and otherwise identify 'friendly communities' to reduce stigma and social exclusion among ex-combatants in post-conflict settings. In other hand, to address the issue of individualisation in urban areas, a possible solution could involve a more neighbourhood-based approach, encouraging collective agencies at a 'block scale'. To achieve this, DDR professionals should prioritise and incentivise the collective approach and consider incorporating SSE into the reintegration portfolio. Early provision of information on cooperatives, along with support on project formulation, formalisation, and self-governance, can help avoid wasting valuable time and resources by creating initiatives without proper guidance.

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¹⁰⁰Dámari Expósito and Jesús Alberto González, 'Sistematización de Experiencias Como Método de Investigación', *Gaceta Médica Espirituana* 19, no. 2 (2017). http://scielo.sld.cu/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1608-89212017000200003; and O. Jara Holliday, 'Systematization of experiences, research, and evaluation: three different approaches', *International Journal for Global and Development Education Research* 1, (2012): 71–84.

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