

**Mobilizing without Arms: Activist Struggles of Former Guerrillas during Colombia's
Transition to Peace**

by

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This research seeks to understand how and to what extent the political and social context in Colombia is allowing FARC (former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) activism after the 2016 peace accords. I conducted interviews and ethnographic observations in 2018 with former guerrillas living in La Fila, a transition zone in Colombia. Drawing from literature on armed guerrilla movements, biographical consequences of activism, and social movement continuity, I show the dilemmas of being unarmed revolutionary people transitioning from living among a collectivity to living in a capitalist society where individuality is valued and demanded. Engaging in civic organizations, gender activism, or political participation, ex-guerrillas are facing challenges related to neoliberal political and economic structures. While their current mobilization is possible thanks to their experiences before and during their time in FARC, and as result of the peace agreements, the right-wing politics of current government and persisting violence are the main threats to activism as a transition path towards peace.

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1.0 Introduction

This research is inscribed within the field of Latin America revolutionary movements, war, and peace. By studying the case of FARC (former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia),¹ a guerrilla group that demobilized in 2017, I intend to contribute to the understanding of how ex-combatants with long experiences of warfare, like those in FARC, find a place in peacetime. I hope to understand the experiences of ex-combatants after their demobilization, especially those engaging in post-peace accords social movement activism. My primary research question is how and to what extent the political and social context in Colombia is allowing FARC (former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) activism after the 2016 peace accords.

I conducted interviews and ethnographic observations in Summer 2018 with former FARC guerrillas living in La Fila, a demobilization zone in the municipality of Icononzo located two hours away from Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia. Drawing from literature on armed revolutionary movements, feminism, war, and biographical consequences of activism, I show the dilemmas of being unarmed revolutionary people transitioning from living among a collectivity like FARC with an ideological commitment to socialism, to living in a capitalist society where individuality is valued and demanded.

¹ Before the peace agreement, the acronym FARC meant Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. After the peace agreement, FARC means Common Alternative Revolutionary Force. Common has two meanings. First, communist people in Colombia are usually called “los comunes”. Second, *Común* or common also means something very ordinary. So the new FARC name is a play on words that indicates that FARC are communist, but also that they belong to the common people, to the ordinary people, they belong to “la gente del común” or “everyday people”.

My central finding is that after two years of the peace accords, ex-guerrillas are trying to maintain their commitment to collective action by engaging in civic organizations, gender activism, or political participation. However, such collective action occurs under particular structural constraints to their activist expectations: the expectation of self-sufficient collective civic organization under neoliberal-oriented peace-building strategies; the expectation of ex-guerrilla women's empowerment in the context of gender mainstreaming strategies; and the expectation of political participation in a system reluctant to political equality.

While their current activism is possible thanks to their experiences before and during their time in FARC, and as result of the peace agreements where national and international actors have played a role in imagining peace-achievement strategies, the current right-wing government and the violence against former guerrillas are the main threats to activism as a transition path towards peace.

1.1 Colombian context

Guerrilla movements like FARC, The National Liberation Army (ELN), and The Popular Liberation Army (EPL) were born during the sixties, in the context of agrarian struggles, political exclusion, political violence, and international revolutionary projects. FARC was launched in 1964 as a communist guerrilla. It defined itself as a revolutionary organization ideologically guided by Marxist-Leninist principles. Their objective was the seizure of state power by the exploited masses and the struggle against the oligarchy and US imperialism (Medina Gallego 2009).

All these guerrilla groups were marginal until the eighties. They were almost defeated by the government and had little repercussion at the national level. In the meanwhile, during the

period of the *Frente Nacional* or National Front², several elements contributed to the levels of violence reached in the eighties: the absence of an adequate agrarian reform that might have reduced rural inequality, government's support for landlord interests, the violent persecution suffered by leaders of peasant movements, the expansion of the agricultural frontier without state support³, the increasing militarization of social conflicts, and increasing income inequality (CHCV 2015).

With the end of the Cold War and the success of the Nicaraguan Revolution, the first three guerrilla organizations recovered, and new guerrilla movements were born (M-19, Quintín Lame, Corriente de Renovación Socialista, etc.). It was also a moment when the drug cartels irrupted and when paramilitary groups gained strength. The latter were formally organized as The United Self-Defenders of Colombia (AUC) in the nineties. The State and its military forces played an active role in the organization and deployment of paramilitaries (Duncan 2006). With all these armed groups and the causal factors mentioned, civilian deaths, combatant deaths, as well as political violence increased. At the end of the nineties and the beginning of the new century, armed conflict reached its highest levels of violence (GMH 2013).

From 2003 to 2006 AUC members demobilized within a widely questioned negotiation process led by the president at the time Alvaro Uribe. After paramilitaries demobilized, their illegal connections with public officials, politicians, and other government representatives began to be

² Elitist pact of the Colombian Conservative and Liberal parties in which the presidency was alternated every four years (from 1958 to 1974) with no place for other political parties (Gutierrez 2015).

³ The agricultural frontier is the rural soil limit. Its expansion has to do with the occupation of land not initially destined for human settlement. It is usually used for agricultural and livestock purposes. These are lands colonized without state planning.

publicly known (López 2007). Guerrilla groups were weakened by paramilitaries and public forces (in some cases through joint actions) and by some paramilitary dissidents reorganized in criminal bands (*Bandas Criminales* or BACRIM). It is in this context, in 2012, when the peace negotiations between the FARC guerrilla and the government of former president Juan Manuel Santos started.

After 52 years of conflict and four years of negotiations between the Colombian state and FARC, the peace agreement was officially signed in November 2016, leading to the demobilization of the oldest existing guerrilla group in Latin America. The peace accords contemplated a process of disarmament that would start in March 2017 and end three months later under United Nations supervision. This process was carried out in 26 transition zones around the country where FARC demobilized. In terms of political participation, the agreements also state that FARC can participate as an election-contesting political party. Although the peace agreement implied the end of FARC as an armed group, as of March 2019, the country is hardly at peace or in a post-war phase. Around 18 FARC dissident groups remain armed, with a presence in at least 13 departments (out of a total of 32 departments) (Álvarez, Pardo, and Cajiao 2018), other guerrilla groups keep fighting (like the ELN), and paramilitary groups are still active. Moreover, drug trafficking and criminal mining are still causes of current violence.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Biographical consequences of activism

My research is situated within the literature on outcomes and impacts of social movements. According to Goldstone and McAdam (2001), there are four bodies of literature in this field: first, studies interested in the origin of contention on a macro-level; second, studies looking at life-course factors that motivate or prevent movement activism from a micro-level approach; third, studies of contention as a macro-force for aggregate change in life-course patterns; and fourth, studies focusing on the biographical consequences of individual activism at the micro level of analysis. My study particularly draws on the last category, i.e. on the effects of activism on the life-course of individuals who engaged in movement struggle (McAdam 1999).

Giugni's review (2013) on the biographical outcomes of individual activism shows that there are two main categories of research in this field: 1) studies about highly committed activists and 2) studies about less committed activists. In the first category, Giugni reports research on how less committed activists have continued to espouse leftist political attitudes; have remained active in contemporary movements or other forms of political activity; have been concentrated in teaching or other "helping" professions; have divorced or remained single in far greater numbers than their age peers; have lower incomes than their age peers; and were more likely than their age peers to have experienced an episodic or nontraditional work history (p. 2).

In the second category, the emphasis is put on the individual effects of engagement in activism by not-so-committed members. These are people who do not strongly identify with a movement and its objectives. Less committed activists have held more liberal orientations, selected

occupations in the “new class”, gained more education, “held less traditional religious orientations and were less attached to religious organizations, married later, and were less likely to have children than nonparticipants” (Giugni 2013, 2).

Based on a gender perspective, Van Dyke, McAdam, and Wilhelm (2000) found that the women’s movement of the New Left of the late 1960s and early 1970s, included an explicit critique of gender inequities related to the patriarchal system, marriage, reproductive rights, and family life. These critiques translated into new behavioral patterns: female activists had higher incomes than non-activist women because they pursued a career to lessen dependence on husbands and mother roles, and they were less likely to get married and to have children compared to both men activists and non-activist women.

In turn, in her research on the Palestinian Federation of Women’s Action Committees (PFWAC), Hasso (2001) documented three types of women participants in this movement: employees who came to work but did not commit to PFWAC activities; not-so-committed activists who occasionally attended demonstrations; and very active women. Once the PFWAC disappeared, the women who were most deeply influenced by their PFWAC political and social experiences were also the most likely “to have a gender egalitarian sensibility and a high sense of self-efficacy that improved their individual situations” (Hasso 2001:668). On the contrary, for some other women the disappearance of PFWAC implied the loss of institutional support for nonconforming action. In sum, after the disintegration of the movement, women’s personal lives were positively affected, but feminist activism did not continue.

2.2 Ex-guerrillas and movement continuity

So far, the literature on biographical consequences has focused on life-course decisions of activists who no longer participate in a movement because it has come to an end. The US New Left or the PFWAC are examples of that. Nevertheless, what happens when a movement does not end, but is transformed? In Colombia, FARC demobilized as an armed movement, but as agreed to in the peace accords –and as stated by almost all ex-guerrilla members during my fieldwork– FARC will not disappear as a movement, but it is transitioning to a new phase. As I will show later, a large number of FARC members intend to keep fighting for their objectives through activism without arms.

Taylor (1989) and Corrigan-Brown (2012) have focused on trajectories of participation in the context of social movement continuity. By studying the continuity of the US women's rights activism, Taylor showed that contrary to the belief that the US women's movement came to an end after the suffrage victory in 1920, and was then re-born in the sixties, there were some women that remained committed in the forties and fifties to the political vision of the suffrage movement. Taylor developed the term "abeyance" to depict "a holding process by which movements sustain themselves in nonreceptive political environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilization to another (Taylor, 1989, 761). Abeyance structures are born when there is not space in society to integrate remaining activists after movements supposedly end. These are usually mass movements with some degree of success in building support base and influencing society.

In turn, Corrigan-Brown (2012) points out that social movements are not only composed of lifelong activists. Instead, the real picture of activism is "one in which many people engage, in a multitude of ways, and with varying degrees of continuity" (p. 3). After identifying two main trajectories of participation, namely persistence and disengagement, Corrigan-Brown proposes

two additional intermediate trajectories: individual abeyance and transfer. In the former trajectory, “individuals disengage from their social movement organization or protest activities, but return to participation later in life” (p. 7). The latter is a trajectory in which individuals disengage from their social movement organization or protest activities and then engage again in another activist group or cause: “These individuals disengage from the original movement organization but not from contentious political participation” (p. 7).

The literature on former guerrillas shows such degrees of activist continuity since most ex-guerrillas transform into political parties as part of peacebuilding processes (Lyons 2010; Söderström 2016) or into postwar social movements. By studying the individual paths of ex-combatants from Colombia urban guerrilla M-19 (*Movimiento M-19*), Söderström found that after its disarmament, political mobilization was successful only in an individual basis since the subsequent political party *Alianza M-19* soon disintegrated because of organizational problems and violence from paramilitaries. Ex-combatants exhibited a decrease in political mobilization sometime after the disarmament (what she denotes as the removed type of ex-combatants), while others followed the same path but came back to politics (the remobilized type). And finally, she found ex-guerrilla members who sustained and increased their political mobilization (the resilient type).

How successful these parties, social movements, or individual activists are depends on structural, organizational, and individual factors such as to what extent the skills gained in guerrillas are used in postwar mobilization. For instance, several scholars show that wartime gives post-war activist skills depending on gender. First, some scholars deny that wartime experience produced benefits for post-war women because guerrilla warfare is patriarchal, often reinforcing the sexual division of labor (Lobao 1998); or because women ex-combatants face pressure from

family or community after war subsides, which recreates prewar gender roles without space for activism (Moser and Clark 2001).

A second set of scholars claim that war does provide women with skills for future postwar activism because revolutionary movements can promote egalitarian values and provide women with confidence, organizational skills, and supportive networks that become useful for postwar feminist movements like in the case of Nicaragua (Isbester 2001; Kampwirth 2004). Viterna's (2013) research on El Salvador makes a third argument: even if women gained activist skills, these can only be used if society does not stigmatize women's participation in armed groups, and if women receive support from various institutional channels (specially NGOs).

2.3 Movement continuity and FARC

The literature reviewed poses some questions. In terms of Taylor (1989), was FARC a mass movement? Did it have influence in Colombian society? Are the peace accords an example of a receptive political environment? Regarding the first question, and as I will show later, FARC repertoires included working with social bases such as peasant and indigenous communities, the poor urban working class, students, and social leaders. While it could not have the same level of mass support as an un-armed movement (as in the case of women's organizations or in the case of the activists of Freedom Summer), FARC counted on varying levels of approval from various circles in society. In addition to some more progressive, leftist political circles, more general social support towards FARC existed, but it changed during time depending on how violent they turned out to be with civil society. FARC armed actions used to be seen as a defensive violence against state persecution, and sometimes socially accepted and justified, but "when FARC became an

organized army, relatively well armed, and offensive, [...] a good part of the Colombian society was on the side of legal and illegal actors who tried to repel such aggression [joining] the opinion stream that rejects war and all forms of violence” (CNMH 2014:20).

It cannot be denied that FARC has influenced society in a number of ways along its history, especially in rural regions. FARC violently fought against state institutions, private companies, and large landowners, among others. This guerrilla also brought violence to civil communities through homicides, forced displacement, kidnapping, bombing, and forced monetary contributions. Thus, of course, FARC highly shaped Colombia in terms of violence. On the other hand, it is hard to say that FARC had a great influence in national politics (through traditional movements’ repertoires like lobbying or letter writing) since it was not considered by the state as a legitimate, political actor. Nevertheless, in those geographies where FARC had a stronger social base, like the department of Caquetá, it worked along with peasant communities to improve roads, build bridges, and help to solve communitarian conflicts, with the corresponding political and ideological work. Therefore, FARC influenced some disadvantaged, rural communities in infrastructural and political terms.

In theory, the peace accords are finally the receptive political environment sought by FARC since its beginnings, at least in theory. The peace recognized the historical origins of the armed conflict, recognized FARC as a political actor, and opened electoral spaces for ex-guerrilla’s participation. However, some sectors in Colombia, especially right-wing, conservative sectors, do not welcome FARC demobilization under the terms of the peace accords. Right-wing party, Centro Democrático, headed by former president Alvaro Uribe, and whose member Ivan Duque is currently the Colombian president, are openly against the peace processes. Sufficient to say that

they were behind the 50.2% of the “no” victory in October 2016, when Colombians had to vote in a plebiscite that asked if they supported the peace accords.

In sum, current FARC activism after the peace accords can be considered the continuation of the struggle initiated back in the sixties when this guerrilla was born, but now without arms. Drawing on Taylor’s insights, and as I will show later, FARC activism might be going through an abeyance process since it is trying to sustain itself in a new context of political inclusion allowed by the peace accords, but also in a continuing context of “war-against-subversion” led by right-wing sectors.

Now, what can we say about Corrigan-Brown’s (2012) argument in the case of non-ordinary people like FARC participants? What are their degrees of commitment after signing the peace accords? What are their trajectories of activism? Are there ex-guerrilla members who do not want to continue in any kind of activist engagement? The FARC case could be analyzed from the perspective of lifelong movement participants that transform into ordinary people with various degrees of commitment. All the ex-guerrilla people I interviewed spent between 10 and 35 years in the armed struggle, so they are lifelong movement participants. Although commitment while in armed struggle is hard to determine in the present, a good measurement of it is the fact that those who voluntarily joined a group like FARC knew that the armed struggle could end up with their lives, and yet they continued in guerrilla for a long time period. But is their commitment in this post-accord phase as strong as it was before the peace dialogues? Are all members committed at the same level?

As I will show in the results section, this is a moment of high commitment in which the majority of FARC members are following activist paths or a persistent trajectory of commitment in Corrigan-Brown’s terms. This is for two main reasons. First, FARC people in La Fila are

enjoying peace, even if violence is a constant threat. They enjoy having the opportunity to participate in local politics without having armed confrontations with the state or the police. Second, national and international actors, along with the broader Colombian society, are closely following FARC's progress, and that pressure, as stated by many of those I interviewed, is a good reason to keep active and prove to themselves and to the Colombian society how committed they are to peace-building and peace-keeping.

3.0 Methodology

I conducted ethnographic work in Colombia during Summer 2018. In particular, I traveled to the Transitory Normalization Zones -or Zonas Veredales Transitorias de Normalización (ZVTN)- of Icononzo, a municipality located two hours from Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia (see figure 1). Around 442 ex-guerrilla people are now living in La Fila⁴, the village in Icononzo where they arrived since December of 2016 (see figure 2). Since August of 2017 it is officially known as “Espacio Territorial de Capacitación y Reincorporación Antonio Nariño” (or the Antonio Nariño ETCR⁵ -Territorial Area of Training and Reincorporation). Importantly, former armed combatants consider such space as a permanent, non-transitory place (see figure 3).

⁴ Caracterización comunidad FARC-EP (Universidad Nacional de Colombia 2017)

⁵ Antonio Nariño was one of the fronts under the FARC's *Bloque Oriental* [or Oriental Block]. It was named after Antonio Nariño, a military and political leader of the independence movement in New Granada (formed by present Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panamá) under the Spanish empire.



Figure 1. Map of Icononzo and other Colombian municipalities with ETRCs – 2019.

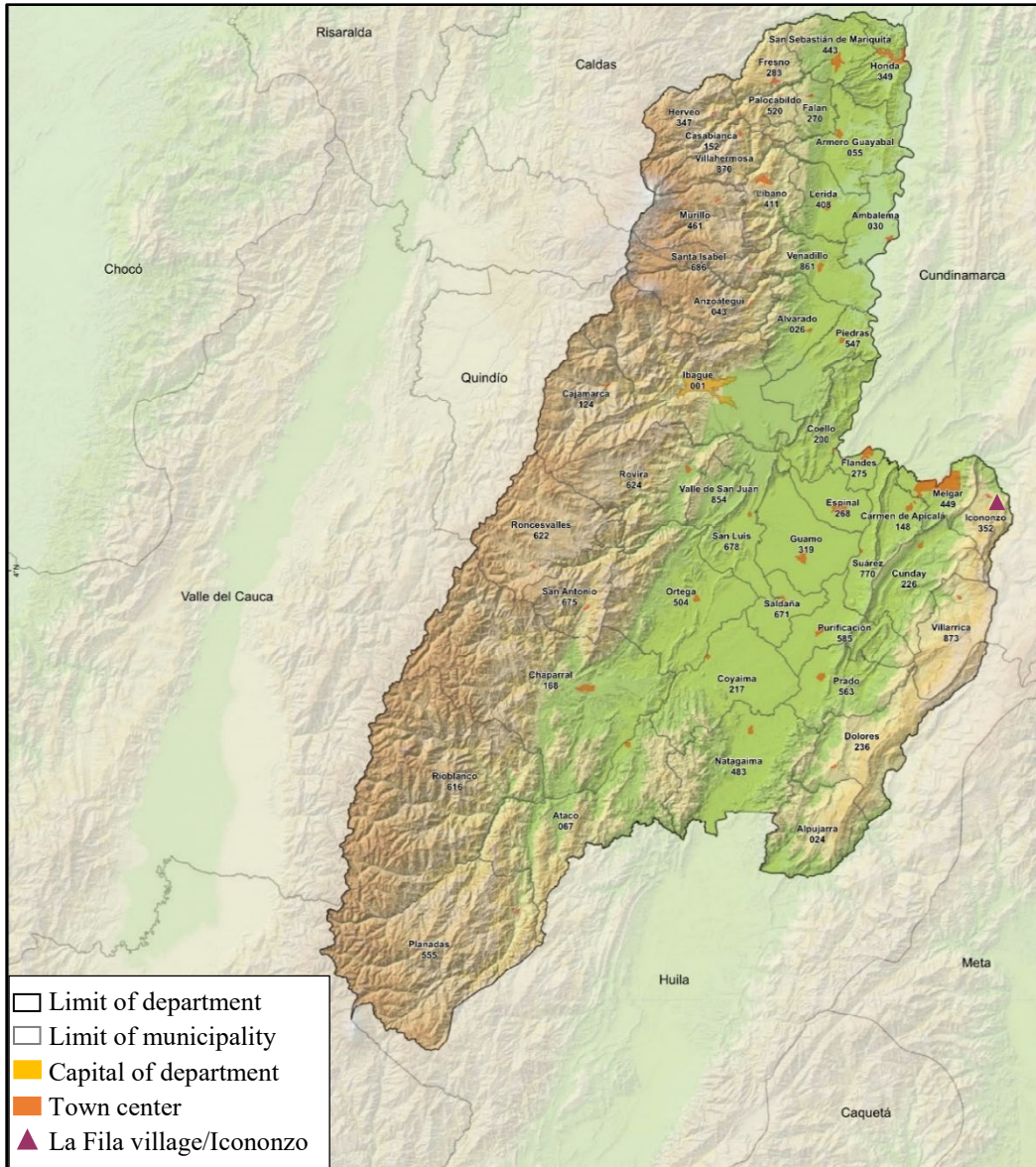


Figure 2. Map of ETCR La Fila in Icononzo. Department of Tolima.



Figure 3. ETCR La Fila, 2018.

Photo: Natalia Duarte

Icononzo is one of the 26 municipalities where ETCRs are located. This municipality belongs to Tolima, one of the departments with important agrarian struggles in the first half of the 20th century and an epicenter of armed conflict in the fifties where FARC originated in the form of peasant armed guerrillas. Icononzo is important to study not only because of its link to the history of FARC, but also because it is the closest ETCR to Bogotá. This implies the likelihood of greater access to goods and services, given the proximity of the central government. But it is also an area that can be easily controlled and monitored by the state, and where the violence that is currently hitting other places farther from Bogotá does not seem very strong. As stated by an ex-

guerrilla member “I think that all the world has its eyes on Icononzo because they’re expecting this to be the place where the peace accords can work very well.” In other words, geography matters a lot in the success or failure of FARC’s reintegration into civilian life and, more broadly, of peace. Most ETCRs are located in the south of the country in areas where the state has been historically weak and where paramilitary violence and National Army operations are forcing some ex-guerrilla members to abandon such zones.

There are also two practical reasons to study the ETCR in Icononzo. First, it is easier to travel from Bogotá. It takes a three-hour bus to arrive to the municipality and then a moto or local taxi to travel to the ETCR in La Fila. And second, when interviewed about the security conditions, an ex-guerrilla woman working in the FARC political party strongly suggested that I go to this municipality since other ETCRs have been facing major violent episodes by paramilitaries, some FARC dissidents, and other criminal structures.

I interviewed 19 people: 9 men and 10 women between the ages of 23 and 58. During our interviews and informal conversations, all of them mentioned several times the identity terms they identify themselves with as part of their personal stories (see table 1). They brought identity terms such as: “As a male Afro-Colombian I’m aware of the struggles of black communities in this country”, “For me as an urbanite it was really hard to walk through the mountains” or “you could tell who an urbanite was because we as peasants are accustomed to hard labor, so FARC tasks were easier for us”. These terms let me realize one of the ways in which they saw themselves in the context of armed conflict and how such identities played a role in their motivations for the armed struggle.

Table 1. Demographics and other characteristics of research's participant

<i>Total cases</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Current age range</i>	<i>Urban/rural and race/ethnicity auto identifications⁶</i>	<i>Time in guerrilla – range</i>
19	10 women 9 men	22-58	8 peasants, 1 also Afro-Colombian 8 urbanites 3 indigenous	8-35

I used the snowball method to have access to the ETCR in Icononzo and to recruit research participants. I treated my interviews following a case study logic applied to in-depth interview-based studies, “such that the latter may be conceived as not small-sample studies but multiple-case studies” (Small 2009:24). This approach allowed me to proceed sequentially so each interview or case generated increasing understanding of my research question. This logic does not seek representativeness since each case or participant had its own probability of selection and I applied different questions to different cases. This means that my first case provided findings that informed the questions I applied for the next case.

Indeed, I followed a semi-structured interview protocol with pointed questions such as “Where are you from?” or “Where did you grow up?”, but also with open questions like “How was your life before joining FARC?”. This allowed systematic comparison as I was asking the same initial questions to all my respondents. My protocol evolved over the course of my fieldwork, so I was constantly including questions that came from my ethnographic observations and the

⁶ Based on identity terms used by them and not on terms prompted by me. Only one person identified himself as both peasant and Afro-Colombian. Interestingly, none of the three indigenous males identified as peasants or vice versa. When I asked them about their tribes, they did not mention indigenous names, but the departments from where they come from. Whenever they brought their identities as indigenous peoples, they talked about themselves in the context of FARC war stating how valuable elements they were for war tactics because of their connection with nature and the expert knowledge they have on navigating inhospitable territories.

respondents' answers: e.g. "I have observed/I was told that FARC people in the zone have been organizing local committees, would you tell me what this is about?"

I consider I achieved saturation since my last case (the 19th interview) gave me little – although interesting- new information and confirmed what previous cases were telling me. To ensure saturation I employed literal and theoretical replication through snowball methods: "Through 'literal replication' a similar case is found to determine whether the same mechanisms are in play; through 'theoretical replication' a case different according to the theory is found to determine whether the expected difference is found" (Small 2009: 25).

For instance, during my first interviews and observations, I learned that ex-guerrilla members were working in different local committees and were mobilizing around political participation. So, I kept asking participants if they could recommend me people doing similar things to interview them (literal replication). Because of my initial theoretical framework on guerrilla, gender, and women, I knew that not all ex-guerrillas mobilize after war for various reasons, so I asked participants if they knew people not involved in any kind of mobilization or organized in local committees and if I could be introduced to them (theoretical replication). That is how I learned that some ex-guerrillas want to exclusively raise their children, others want to work and receive a payment without having to join any organization or mobilization cause.

I observed the activist strategies of former guerrilla people living there, as well as the tensions and challenges they face in their everyday lives. I also noticed their different views on community organization, gender, feminism, and/or political mobilization within the context of the new right-wing government that threatens the peace agreements. I collected my observations and impressions in the form of field notes in a field diary.

I also had access to some memoirs of FARC. For example, I obtained the history of the former guerrilla (from 1930 to 2010) told through drawings that were created collectively and assembled in a booklet by an indigenous ex-guerrilla woman. I also made use of part of the published diaries and correspondence of Manuel Marulanda, the deceased maximum commander and co-founder of FARC. Likewise, I used a small book of insurgent poetry published in 2016 and written during the nineties and 2000s by Jaime Nevado, an ex-guerrilla, as well as a booklet containing a biographical homage to two deceased commanders of FARC by an unidentified author.

I did not audio-record three interviews because of interviewees' security concerns, but I was allowed to take notes and reproduce excerpts of our interviews and informal encounters in this paper. I changed the original names of my interviewees in order to preserve their anonymity.

3.1 Data analysis

I analyzed my data using the qualitative software MaxQDA and following the coding procedures of both flexible coding of in-depth interviews (Deterding and Waters 2018) and the grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2014). Since my fieldwork was initially informed by a theoretical framework on guerrillas, social movements, gender, and women, I did not enter the field following a truly grounded study. Nevertheless, most of its coding procedures worked very well for my research. Deterding and Waters' (2018) approach on flexible coding of in-depth

interviews seemed to better fit my initial coding process⁷. Following their steps, I first indexed transcripts to broad codes or *attributes* related to the personal information of interviewees such as demographics and educational background (see table 2). Then I created *index codes* based on the main organizing categories that came from my original interview protocol. In total, I organized all my textual data under 27 index codes (table 3).

Table 2. Attribute codes

	<i>Codes</i>
<i>Demographics /identities</i>	Age, gender, race/ethnicity, place of origin, place where person grew up for most part of life, age of joining FARC, time in guerrilla, urban guerrilla member, peasant guerrilla member.
<i>Formal educational background</i>	None, primary school, middle-school, high school, technician, technologist, college, masters, doctorate.

Table 3. Index codes

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Codes based on original interview protocol</i>
<i>Pre-guerrilla experiences</i>	Childhood experiences
	Adolescence experiences
	Adulthood experiences
	Family experiences
	Experiences living in particular geographical units (neighborhood/municipality/city/rural area)
	Education experiences
	Activist experiences
	Work experiences

⁷ Detering and Water (2018) assert that their approach may have limitations for projects that: 1) have a small number of interviews (fewer than 30); 2) collect data to answer a single question for a single paper (so revisiting data might not be important); 3) draw on less intensive data collection methodologies like ethnographies or historical case studies; and 4) follow a truly grounded theory study. What I found for my research is that even though it is based on 19 cases and on ethnography, I produced a big amount of textual data that was better organized through the initial coding process proposed by the authors. Besides, I plan to revisit my data for future studies and increase my qualitative cases, so organizing my data with index codes will allow me for quick future retrieval.

<i>Experiences while in guerrilla</i>	Reasons to join FARC
	Everyday tasks
	Military roles/hierarchies
	Rules/prohibitions
	Punishments/sanctions
	Battlefield experiences
	Non-battle field experiences
	Relationships with comrades
	Relationships with superiors
	Education experiences
	Military training experiences
	Relationships with local community
	Perceptions on peace negotiations/accords
<i>Post-guerrilla experiences</i>	Family experiences
	Education experiences
	Working experiences
	Activist experiences
	Relationships with peace actors (national, international, local, others)
Perceptions on the peace process	

Once I had most of my transcripts and field notes organized under index codes, the next step is analytical coding according to Deterding and Waters. However, I decided to follow the line-by-line grounded coding approach (Charmaz 2014), because it allowed me to prioritize participant's voices by closely coding feelings, actions, opinions or meanings. While I was classifying my transcripts and field notes with these index and line-by-line codes, I was also creating respondent-level memos for each transcript and cross-case memos to start connecting transcripts and create first analytical hypothesis (Deterding and Waters 2018; Charmaz 2014). As a result, I produced 245 memos and 1864 line-by-line codes: 1596 for my transcripts and 268 for my field notes (see table 4).

Table 4. Line-by-line codes (some examples on the post-accord experiences category)

<i>Index codes</i>	<i>Line-by-line codes</i>
<i>Family experiences</i>	Reuniting with dad in La Fila, witnessing family happiness because of disarmament, explaining to family what a guerrilla person was, having a baby after disarmament...
<i>Education experiences</i>	Learning philosophy in jail, getting high-school education, rejecting education opportunity because of daughter, graduating as technologist in agriculture last year...
<i>Working experiences</i>	Working on building the kindergarten, serving in local hostel, working on fast food restaurant, looking for jobs in Bogota, not gaining salary for his work with the crops...
<i>Activist experiences</i>	Being the local board president, attending feminist workshops in Bogota, organizing local communities, belonging to agriculture committee, expressing organizational fatigue...
<i>Relationships with peace actors</i> (national, international, local, others)	Expressing frustration with state, receiving help from universities, trusting on United Nations, learning to interact with local police, playing soccer with local community...
<i>Perceptions on the peace process</i>	Claiming fear about being killed, expressing uncertainty about continuation of stipends, stating everyday capitalism is exhausting, claiming the government failed to adequate zone...

Then I started focused coding (Charmaz 2014). The memos I had written gave me a sense of the significant topics in my interviews. I had written, for instance, that ex-guerrilla people seemed to describe the place where they grew up or the families they lived with before joining FARC, in socioeconomic and political terms, and that violence seemed to be a constant in all of these descriptions. This memo came from quotes like “my family was a poor peasant family that was constantly harassed by the army”, “my brothers and I were treated badly by my dad”, “paramilitaries often came to threaten us with recruiting my little brother” or “I grew up in a neighborhood of left working-class people”. These memos, then, helped me to create 53 focused codes (see table 5)

Table 5. Focused codes (some examples)

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Index codes</i>	<i>Focused codes</i>
<i>Pre-guerrilla experiences</i>	<i>Family experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describing family in socioeconomic terms - Describing family in political terms - Describing family in terms of domestic coexistence
	<i>Experiences living in particular geographical units</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describing violence in geographical units - Describing geographical unit in socioeconomic terms - Describing geographical unit in political terms
	<i>Activist experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being politically socialized in schools - Occupying particular community roles
	<i>Work experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being politically socialized in jobs - Working under unfair conditions
<i>Experiences while in guerrilla</i>	<i>Everyday tasks</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooking for the troop - Attending collective cultural hours - Guarding the camps - Marching with the troop - Discussing on politics
	<i>Punishments/sanctions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building collective latrines - Building community roads - Building trenches
	<i>Education experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting literate - Teaching reading and writing - Being socialized in FARC statutes and politics - Learning on community organizing
	<i>Military training experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting basic training course when joining FARC - Learning war specializations - Getting used to commander roles
	<i>Military roles/hierarchies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaining activist skills depending on hierarchy role - Gaining activist skills if close to commanders
	<i>Battlefield experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaining skills because of military missions - Gaining skills depending on violent events - Gaining skills depending on type of recruitment
<i>Post-guerrilla experiences</i>	<i>Family experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilizing if having family support - Mobilizing for future of families - Not mobilizing because of family
	<i>Education experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting high-school education - Getting college education - Getting technic/technological education - Attending peace-related workshops
	<i>Working experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building camp facilities - Planting collective crops - Serving local collective small businesses - Working as day laborers

<i>Activist experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing FARC political community - Creating local committees - Creating local cooperatives - Creating gender-based groups
<i>Relationships with peace actors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilizing because of international support - Mobilizing because of state support - Mobilizing for local communities
<i>Perceptions on the peace process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pointing out state failures - Pointing out peace's successes - Complaining about everyday capitalism - Validating support from international institutions - Not mobilizing because of different reintegration path

Finally, to ensure validity and reliability, I compared all the focused codes to all the transcribed data. As a result, these analytical procedures showed that after the peace accords ex-FARC people are active around three main types of activism: civic engagement, gender activism, and political participation. Violence, financial sustainability, and structural capitalist structural obstacles are the main constrains to their activism' continuity.

4.0 Results

One of the most recurrent topics during my fieldwork is the challenges of being a revolutionary in a capitalist context that is new for them on an everyday basis. The ex-guerrilla members I worked with state that it has been shocking to enter a capitalist, individual-based society after decades of living in collective ways. This capitalism, they state, is affecting their commitment to activism. I found that there are at least three activist paths that ex-guerrilla members are trying to follow: civic organizations, gender, and political participation. These activisms are not mutually exclusive; FARC people can choose to participate in more than one, or not to participate in any. In what follows, I will first explain how ex-guerrilla personal biographies linked to the political and social context in Colombia are restricting and encouraging these three types of activism.

4.1 Biographies and context

Several aspects of ex-guerrilla members' autobiographies are encouraging their activism. It is not only because of their experiences during their time in combat. Their current activist roles are also the result of what they lived before and what they are living after their time in guerrilla. Before joining FARC, ex-guerrilla people went through a variety of experiences: violence, community participation, and militancy in left organizations that shaped their political views, their decision to join FARC, and their current activism. Several rural combatants, for instance, came from contexts where they joined FARC under the pressure of a violent environment: physical

aggressions and harassment by the National Army, paramilitary violence, forced displacement, and domestic violence (especially in the case of women and children):

I was treated very badly by my dad. Then the army came and treated all of us badly too. That's why I joined the guerrilla. Also, the counter-guerrilla came to my house and attacked my mom or my sisters and me because she refused to give them any information about guerrilla. So I said 'no, no more violence' and then I joined FARC. (Yamile, 26 years old, 11 years in guerrilla)

Other combatants especially from urban contexts had access to public universities, so they were socialized in communist parties and organizations like JUCO (Juventud Comunista or Communist Youth) in those educational environments:

When I joined FARC, I had just left my college education. I didn't finish. I was about to start my fourth semester in industrial engineering. When I was in college, I was a militant in JUCO and I also was part of the party (Communist Party). That's why I'm telling you that I got tired of theory: one thing is to be a cafeteria revolutionary, where one can talk a little too much, and [another thing] is practice, the real confrontation. (Daniela, 44 years old, 22 years in guerrilla)

It is necessary to recall that FARC guerrilla was mostly composed by peasants (66% by the time they turned over weapons). Before joining FARC some of them were also involved in left organizations, while others gained activist skills through their roles as social leaders. Others joined FARC looking for their protection because of the violence in the zones where they lived (like in the case of Yamile showed above). While not all experiences before joining FARC translate into activist skills, I am arguing that in some cases both activist and violent experiences gave combatants a purpose to fight for, or a reason to join the armed struggle.

It is well known that FARC also forcibly recruited combatants either as children or adults. Although none of my interviewees told me about forced recruitment in adults (neither in their own cases or in their comrades' cases), I heard about one case of forced child recruitment in the case of an indigenous male: "I lived with guerrilla since I was a 7-year-old child, but I was actually recruited when I was 14 (...) Guerrilla was all the time in our community. They played with you, they left, they came back. You could see guerrilla all the time, so I decided to go with them because I admired them a lot: the uniforms, the guns, their songs" (Juan, 25 years old, 18 years in guerrilla).

The time in FARC was the continuation of political struggles by taking up arms for those who were already activists, and the beginning of political armed confrontation for those who were not active in politics. They all received political training from a Marxist perspective, and they were taught about the importance of mobilizing –and particularly about the importance of armed mobilization and armed revolution. They read about the Cuban revolution or the history of social movements in Colombia from a non-official, bottom-up perspective. They also learned about military collective organization and how to work with surrounding civil communities to create strong social bases. Every day while in FARC, they were reading on Colombian news, and arguing about the political elite class and political issues:

When you first join, the first thing you have to do is a basic course about elemental notions of military tactics, political formation, the FARC statute, the norms, the whole bylaws. Also, notions on Marxism. And, if you don't know how to read or write, which was the case of lots of peasants, then they are taught to read and write. (Ivon, 33 years old, 12 years in guerrilla)

In the basic course you learn that you have to wake up at 4am every day, right? It doesn't matter if it's raining, thundering, or lightening, you have to pick your house up, pack your equipment in an organized way. You also learn to adapt to *ranchar*: when it's your turn, you wake up at 2am, you cook the food of the day [...] you also get used to guard duty. (Afranio, 58 years old, 35 years in guerrilla)

It was a three-month-basic-course. A comrade teaches you how to march, how to form, everything related to the military part. Also, you are taught about our FARC principles, the politics, why is that we do what we do, what our ideology is and stuff." (Sandra, 33 years old, 17 years in guerrilla)

The basic course is politics doctrine to develop military activity. You first understand why is that you have to grab a gun, and then you grab it. (Daniela, 44 years old, 22 years in guerrilla)

As expected, FARC members were trained under strict military discipline. FARC statutes had specific rules on faults and their respective punishments. As stated by all the ex-guerrilla people I worked with, most of the faults were not severe, so the punishments were usually not severe either. In most cases, when they fell asleep on guard duty, or when they were late cooking the food for the group, the punishment consisted of building something of collective use, including *chontos* or trenches, latrines, roads, or crops improvements for surrounding communities.

The first time I fell asleep while on guard duty, I had to come up with a three-page document explaining the risks of falling asleep. The second time I had to build trenches or holes for trash. Sanctions were to the benefit of everybody. Your punishment was a job that couldn't be wasted, that could be useful for the collectivity. For example, since we cooked with wood, people could be punished by bringing wood. (Afranio, 58 years old, 35 years in guerrilla)

In brief, war while in FARC was an additional transformative experience for ex-guerrilla people in terms of collective organization, collective work, political training, and informal education that gave combatants a number of activist assets that they are using today.

In addition to all this accumulated experience that war gave them –both before and during their time in FARC- the peace accords have opened new spaces to foster activism. That is the case of the so-called insurgent feminism. The post-agreement phase is giving ex-combatant women feminist activist tools through the influence of UN Women and national feminist organizations. While some women assert that they were already feminist when FARC was a guerrilla, the peace process has opened an opportunity in which FARC women have more autonomy to advance a feminist activism compared when their time in a mainly class-oriented guerrilla organization.

Feminist workshops are conducted in major cities where FARC women learn and share on feminist experiences and dilemmas, and then they transmit their knowledge to the various transition camps around the country; or the organizations themselves travel to these zones to discuss what feminism is. Other examples of how the peace accords are shaping activism include international and national support for building regional political communities where both traditional party actors and FARC members can participate in electoral politics and community problem-solving discussions.

In sum, there are three elements in ex-guerrilla people's biographies that are shaping their current activism. First, their pre-FARC experiences as leaders or members of rural/urban community organizations, as members of left circles, or as victims of violence who tried to resist violence by entering the guerrilla as a survival strategy. Second, their time in FARC, characterized by violence, collective modes of living and working, everyday military and educational training, and discipline rules. And third, their time after the peace accords where synergies are observed

between FARC feminist initiatives (for instance), and the economic, political, and practical support of national and international actors.

4.2 Activism, risk of violence, and material conditions of existence

Beyond the dilemmas of each type of activism, there are two most pressing obstacles to FARC activism in general: the high risk of violence and the worsening of material conditions. According to the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, 87 ex-guerrilla members have been killed at the national level since the peace accords were signed: “This underscores the importance of provision of effective security for new settlements outside the territorial areas for training and reintegration, which are where the vast majority of these killings have taken place”⁸. Most of these crimes were committed by *Clan del Golfo* or Gulf’s Clan⁹ and, to a lesser extent, by the ELN guerrilla, FARC dissidents, and remnants from the extinguished EPL guerrilla, they all mostly involved in drug trafficking disputes.

A majority of the homicides have occurred in the departments of Antioquia, Caqueta, Cauca, Nariño, and Norte de Santander, where there are illicit crops and illegal mining¹⁰. Although

⁸ Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. (S/2018/1159). 8450th meeting, 26/12/2018.

⁹ Current major narco-paramilitary group in Colombia that reorganized after paramilitaries demobilized in 2006.

¹⁰ Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. (S/2018/1159). 8450th meeting, 26/12/2018.

there is no reported killings in Icononzo¹¹, all the FARC members I worked with in La Fila pointed out their concerns about their comrade's lives and their own. As stated by Afranio, a 58-year-old man who was in the former guerrilla for 35 years, "We need to go on with the accords and to keep together. Because if one disperses, one can get killed faster, as has been happening in other parts of the country".

Others fear government retaliation from the current right-wing government in open opposition to the peace accords: "the biggest issue is the politics against peace. For instance, productive projects are required to solve the land problem, and that's one of the problems that faces the most obstacles in this country since it is one of the cornerstones of the JEP [*Justicia Especial para la Paz* or Special Jurisdiction for Peace¹²]" (Luisa, 36 years old, 16 years in guerrilla).

Effectively, the unsolved agrarian reform in Colombia is a problem recognized by the peace accords. The first point of the peace accords seeks to tackle such issue by granting land access and usage to poor, landless peasants, formalizing of property titles, protecting peasant reservation zones, and modernization of the rural cadaster, among other initiatives. Since this statement of the Comprehensive Rural Reform (as it is formally known in the peace accords) was publicly presented in 2013, the *Centro Democrático* or Democratic Center party has criticized it.

The second big obstacle to FARC activism is that they depended mainly on the monthly basic income paid by the government as agreed in the peace agreements. These money

¹¹ Only one event has been reported in the department of Tolima. A FARC family member was killed in the municipality of San Antonio (see Map 2) (INDEPAZ 2017).

¹² It is a transitional justice model in favor of victims agreed between the Colombian government and FARC in the 2016 peace accords.

transferences were supposed to finish at the end of 2018, but the government extended such payment till August 2019. Ex-guerrilla individuals have been receiving 90% of the legal monthly minimum wage but only if they demonstrate that they do not have a contractual, labor, legal and regulatory relationship, or a contract of any nature that generates income¹³. Regardless of such money, there is concern about what comes next for their daily surviving. The national context is characterized by high rates of unemployment in an already vulnerable population¹⁴ to which FARC people are entering with the additional burden of their past in armed insurgency that could hinder job opportunities.

Housing instability also forms part of the material concerns that FARC members are experiencing. According to census data collected by Universidad Nacional in Colombia, 77% of the 10,015 ex-guerrilla national members did not have a house when they demobilized. When they arrived at the ETCRs, there was no infrastructure for living quarters. The state was in charge of building temporary houses so FARC could live there right after the hand-over of weapons. However, FARC members had to build a camp –as they used to do while in armed struggle– because of state delays (see figures 4 and 5).

¹³ Article 8 of Decree-Law 899 of 2017

¹⁴ By January 2019, the national unemployment rate in Colombia was 12.8% (DANE-Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares 2019)



Figure 4. First FARC settlements in La Fila. March, 2017.

Source: Publico.es. Photo: Jairo Vargas



Figure 5. FARC's members building first settlements in La Fila. March, 2017- Before disarmament.

Source: Verdad Abierta.com - Photo: Andres Celis

When house materials started to arrive, there was an additional delay for bringing construction workers, so FARC settled and built their own houses on land that is not their own, discouraging the making of improvements: “This land is not ours to begin with. If the state could buy it and give it to us, then we could say that we at least have our own homes. But the state is paying rent to a local owner [...] so what is the purpose of making it better? What if the local owner or the state evict us at any moment?” (Aurora, 32 years old, 18 year in guerrilla). Under these circumstances, FARC activists fear having to choose between activist mobilization or fighting for their material and physical survival.

These are not the only challenges. I will show specific tensions related to each kind of activism in what follows.

4.3 FARC activisms and their constraints

Andrea, a 31-year-old woman who was in guerrilla for 12 years, received me as soon as I arrived at La Fila. She gave me the hostel key where I would stay during my fieldwork. Once in the hostel, Andrea showed me my room: “here you have blankets, pillows, soap, a shampoo and a towel if you need. And let me know if you need food: we give you breakfast, lunch, and dinner here”. We left the hostel that is located at the entrance of the ETCR zone and walked along the main road towards the houses in the area. These are prefabricated white houses with one floor and red roofs. Several of them have the image of FARC commanders who have been killed, images of Che Guevara, and famous phrases that accompany these characters’ paintings. After a short 5-min walk we arrived at a restaurant at the end of the road, in the upper part of the zone: “here, I leave

you with Leonor, the person in charge of food there's a store over there, in that blue house. And if you want me to prepare something special, just let me know beforehand", Leonor concluded.

I was walking down to the "Brisas de Paz" [Peace Breezes] store, and Andrea meets me halfway: "*Mami*, where are you going? Don't you need interviews? Sit down and relax, and drink something with us [a group of people sitting in chairs outside Andrea's house]. I will introduce to you someone from the board of directors tomorrow". At 7pm, after hanging out with her and some of her friends, Juan stood up and said "time to go to sleep". "But it's so early", I replied. "Yes, lady, but tomorrow I have to wake up early to work on the crops here".

During my time in La Fila I observed days full of work. Ex-guerrilla members were busy building a public minitejo court¹⁵, cutting trees to build furniture, or taking care of crops. Some declined to be interviewed by me: "I'm sorry but I have to attend school, and then I have a meeting for the communitarian kindergarten thing", a young woman told me. These are a few examples of the activities that FARC members are engaging with after the peace accords, and that they are closely related to their activism.

Twelve out of nineteen of the FARC members I worked with described themselves as active combatants without arms rather than as demobilized people. As a matter of fact, after asking an ex-guerrilla man how his life was since demobilization, he answered: "Do I look to you like a demobilized person? What part of everything you see here [pointing his hand to our surroundings] does look like we demobilized? We are not demobilized people. We turned over our weapons, but we are more active than ever to mobilize for peace. This time without arms, though" (Alvaro, 40 years old, 22 year in guerrilla).

¹⁵ Minitejo or tejo is a traditional throwing sport in Colombia. Players throw a metal disc (tejo) to small targets containing gun powder. The objective is to make the targets to explode with the tejo.

As a result of my ethnographic observations and interviews, I identified three types of activism in which ex-guerrilla people are currently engaged in: civic organizations, gender activism, and political participation (table 6).

Table 6. Current activist engagement of 19 ex-guerrilla people in the ETCR La Fila

	<i>Civic activism</i>	<i>Gender activism</i>	<i>Political activism</i>	<i>None</i>
<i>Ivon</i>		X	X	
<i>Daniela</i>		X	X	
<i>Victor</i>	X			
<i>Jose</i>	X			
<i>Luisa</i>	X		X	
<i>Alvaro</i>	X		X	
<i>Veronica</i>	X	X	X	
<i>Yamile</i>	X	X		
<i>Sandra</i>				X
<i>Aurora</i>	X	X		
<i>Pedro</i>	X			
<i>Hugo</i>				X
<i>Afranio</i>	X		X	
<i>Luis</i>				X
<i>Yon</i>	X		X	
<i>Camila</i>				X
<i>Leonor</i>	X	X		
<i>Andrea</i>	X			
<i>Juan</i>	X			

Table 6 also shows that there are ten people who are involved in more than one type of activism. They started to participate in these types in different moments. When they first arrived

at La Fila and found that no infrastructure had been built by the government, they first built temporary plastic houses since there was not a single roof under which to live (see figures 4 and 5 above). At this point, they were still following military orders since full disarmament had not taken place yet: “but then we made the transition to civilian life and after the disarmament we changed our structure. It was at that time when we, the ones living in this zone, organized local committees (Afranio, 58 years old, 35 years in guerrilla).

When local civic committees were first set up to deal with the most urgent necessities in La Fila, political and gender activism immediately followed. At the beginning some of the ex-guerrilla members engaged in civic committees also participated in the new FARC local council. And after being selected by the new FARC national party to be part of FARC department directorships, they dropped out of their participation in civic committees, the board of directors, or the local council. In sum, ex-guerrilla people have been engaged in on or more types of activism in different moments or at the same time.

These results resonate with the idea of social movement continuity. FARC activism can be read as an abeyance process (Taylor, 1989) in which activism is one of the main tools used by FARC to provide a bridge of continuity from their recent past as an armed organization to their present as a non-armed and highly contentious organization in a hardly receptive political environment. Likewise, jumping from one form of activism to another one in different moments speaks to varying degrees of social movement continuity (Corrigall-Brown), which means that FARC activism might vary depending on the progress of local necessities, FARC national party agenda, and individual commitment. Thus, I want to point out that people engaging in any kind of activism right now might stop their participation in the future; just as people who are not participating in activism at all could become civic, gender, and/or political activists in the future.

In regard to current activism, the main thesis of this study is that transitioning from living among a collectivity like FARC with an ideological commitment to socialism, to living in a political and economic democratic society oriented towards capitalism poses a number of dilemmas for activism. Such dilemmas are linked mainly to neoliberal structural measures and political elites' efforts to keep their power unaltered. I now explain the three main activisms identified in this research and the tensions around them.

4.3.1 Engaging in civic organizations

Community organization in La Fila consists of a board of directors that was created by a local council in charge of political issues. The board of directors created a number of local committees, including those dealing with agrarian topics, health, education, environment, culture, gender, and embellishment of the zone with infrastructure improvements. In turn, each committee has the possibility to create cooperatives. Currently, there are three of them: services, manufacturing and industry, and agricultural. Of the 18 people I worked with, 13 are engaged in the board of directors, a local committee, and/or a committee.

Sometimes participation depends on their trajectories in FARC, so that those who were war nurses, for instance, are part of the health committee, or those who were in charge of political education are now in charge of education in La Fila. Participation also depends on personal tastes, so some ex-guerrillas see committees as an opportunity to develop personal interests as in the case of Yamile, who participates in the culture committee in charge of dance showcases because of her love for dancing, along with José, who is in charge of sports events.

What is interesting here is that this community organization is the legacy of FARC military organization (except for the gender committee). When it was a guerrilla, cultural secretaries of

each FARC squadron had to organize cultural events by contacting FARC poets or singers, or by organizing sports events: “We did a lot of cultural hours. We were dedicated not only to war as a lot of people think, but we also did a lot of theater plays, there were singers, writers, painters, craftsmen. I mean, it was a chain of learning that we did for ourselves” (José, 32 years old, 19 years in guerrilla).

Constant education was an everyday process in FARC. I already explained above what the basic training was about as soon as people joined guerrilla. After the basic course, as explained by several ex-guerrilla members, the quotidian was not war, but discipline and education:

A normal day started at 4am. We prepared the *tinto* or coffee, we did gym [physical workout], then we went to the classroom to read news, to listen to news, we were read the agenda of the day, then we carried out the activities that we were told in the reading of the agenda, and if you were done by 3pm, we always had a cultural hour. Also, we did a lot of training tasks: we were trained in nursery, medicine, propaganda, literacy, reading comprehension, geography, cartography. Ha! There was a lot of specialties and courses! Besides, there were commissions of organizing, propaganda, radio (Luisa, 36 years old, 16 years in guerrilla).

This civic organization is closely linked to their current work experiences. La Fila is one of only two ETCRs (the other is located in the south of the country), where there are collective projects currently working (El Espectador 2019). The collective project is on cattle raising and by September of last year 17 ex-guerrilla people had received an 8-million-pesos subsidy (around 2,500 dollars) as initial capital but money was not enough for buying cattle¹⁶. Meanwhile, they have been working on other collective projects funded mainly by FARC members and by capital injections from international resources to “immediate response entrepreneurs”. Some of the collective projects include tourist facilities, a kindergarten, clothes production, and beer production (see figure 6).

¹⁶ The collective project costs around 155,800 dollars: 43,500 should come from individual subsidies (the 2,500 dollars), and 112,200 should come from the UN-Multi-Partner Trust Fund for the Colombian Post conflict which channels funds from the international community.



Figure 6. La Roja beer – FARC production.

Source: Twitter Account @MujerFariana

Most collective projects, however, are related to agriculture. The agrarian committee, for instance, seeks to plant crops for developing food sovereignty in La Fila and for trading purposes as well. Since there is no longer a military situation, agrarian work depends on the voluntary commitment of ex-guerrilla members. The fact that only those who participate in this committee are investing in these crops by contributing labor and money, makes them wonder how fair it would be to collectively share the future benefits –both in terms of food and sales- with the other people in La Fila who are not investing money, time, or effort on these activities. While walking through La Fila, Yon, the president of the board of directors, explained this situation to me in a very illuminating way:

Over there you see a greenhouse full of tomatoes. On the other side you see a crop of avocados. Then there are crops of peas and potatoes. Right now, the land is collective. It takes around two years for these crops to start to produce some benefits. Those who have been working are only four or five people. They have associated among themselves: they put in the seedlings, they bought the chemicals for fumigation,

and they clean the crops. But in everybody else's minds these crops and their future benefits belong to everybody. What do we do in that case? I have potato crops, and believe me, my objective is for them to be collective, but I have invested money that I don't have on it, and then you have to add that the state puts a lot of obstacles in the way of funding collective productive projects. We will face a tremendous problem here! (Yon, 42 years old, 19 years in guerrilla).

All committees are dealing with bureaucracy, something that they knew about, but also something they had not experienced in a long time because of their participation in guerrilla. If committees need funds for community projects like building a kindergarten, maintaining the restaurant and hostel, or embellishing the zone with infrastructure improvements, they have to look for funding from government institutions or banks through tedious, long, and inefficient processes: “the health committee can't do anything. If we had a serious health issue [while in guerrilla], it had a quick solution because that's why we had well-formed doctors and nurses. There were even whole hospitals in the middle of the mountains. Now here we have constantly to fight with the EPS (health care institutions), with the health superintendence, with this, with that, only to solve the simplest health problem” (Luisa, 36 years old, 16 years in guerrilla).

During their time in guerrilla, members were granted all the things they needed such as clothing, war supplies, food, medicine, etc., but bureaucracy was never something they dealt with or something they imagined they had to learn about in order to carry out any kind of community activism:

We had to take a course on cooperatives with an organization that gave us certificates four months after we finished the course. When we got the certificates, they had a lot of mistakes like wrong last names and stuff. Some of them didn't even arrive. That hindered the whole process of getting funds for whatever we needed. Legality is a very *verraca* thing (something really hard). Everything is senseless procedural paperwork, *tramitologia* that makes people get tired to the point that out of three cooperatives only one, the agricultural cooperative, has absolutely everything in order. The other two need a bank account and that's a *camello* [too complicated] to obtain (Luisa, 36 years old, 16 years in guerrilla).

The moment of transition from military organization to civilian life in terms of civic organizations has implied a paradoxical effect. Luisa explains it this way: “That's why we went to fight, to get a better health system, to destroy state bureaucracy, to fight capitalist individualism,

competition, all of that. It's like nothing changed after all these years of struggle. And now we face exactly the same from the civic society side". Participating in and learning the same capitalist and state dynamics that they fought against while in guerrilla, seems to be their new everyday routine in transition times.

By analyzing the case of the agriculture committee, it can be said that the main structural dilemma faced in keeping up activist involvement is the disappointment caused by a neoliberal capitalist state that cares about the rural sector only in terms of economic profit. As research has shown over and over again, government and international institutions should focus not only on training people in productive agricultural skills or on funding agricultural projects with seeds, but on granting markets for the goods and services produced.

However, since the nineties the Colombian state has been constantly oriented towards a market economy based on agroindustry exportation and extractivism. The current National Development Plan precisely emphasized such orientation: "its approach is much more focused on stimulating development and productivity in the countryside by means of a strategy of property regularization and the development of agroindustry value companies that do not speak to small agrarian economies, or the ownership of the land" (Herrera 2019). In that sense, ex-guerrilla people involved in agricultural activism are concerned about whether the state can actually comply with the peace accords' point on agricultural reform.

These concerns do not come for free. Since the integral rural reform was proposed as one of the main points during the peace negotiations, involving not only the democratization of the land, but also the provision of rights like education, health, or housing, the main right-wing political party Centro Democrático (the political affiliation of current Colombian president Ivan Duque) challenged such proposition. Through 14 criticisms of this point, Centro Democrático

basically opposed the breakup of land concentration arguing that expropriations of huge properties should not proceed even if lands were exploited with purposes different from social or ecological usages (El Tiempo 2014). But people in FARC insisted on carrying out the land reform: “We know the elite of this country, we knew the point on the agrarian reform would make a lot of rich people to jump! What they do not understand is that we are not only looking for land and quality social services for us, we are specially fighting for *los campesinos*, because they were always excluded from the basics of human dignity” (Alvaro, 40 years old, 22 years in guerrilla).

These results resonate with the cases of Central America peace-building processes. When civil wars ended in El Salvador, Guatemala, or Nicaragua, national governments along with international financial institutions (the IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank) employed structural adjustment packages to keep up with global economic trends. These measures, however, have proved to harm peace processes since policies that were important to guerrilla combatants like agrarian or redistribution of wealth reforms were left out and inequality increased (Pearce 1999).

As Wade (2016) describes it for the case of El Salvador, ““liberal” peacebuilding, as it is often referred to by critics, seeks to establish democratic governments and market economies as the chief means of delivering peace and prosperity” (p. 4). According to Wade, this UN peacebuilding formula has been applied to various countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Mozambique, Rwanda, Bosnia, or Cambodia without respect to local cultures or realities. Kurtenbach (2007) also states that the realities of post-war contexts in Central America show that economic liberalization harms national unprotected peasant production, risking a return to armed conflicts and to subsequent violent outcomes. In the cases of El Salvador or Guatemala, economic elites became wealthier thanks to an agro export development model and investment into the

financial sector. In the end, oligarchical power remained almost untouched with higher levels of poverty after war (Burgerman et al. 2000; Kurtenbach 2007; Silber 2010; Wade 2016) although in none of these cases has there been a return to guerrilla warfare, at least so far.

All in all, FARC is entering into agrarian activist engagement without arms in a state context where agrarian issues have been historically neglected. They are basically experiencing what many peasants, peasant organizations, and social leaders have always experienced: bureaucracy, ineffective liberal measures to solve structural agrarian problems, and a sense of hopelessness with regards to state actions and real peace achievement.

4.3.2 Engaging in gender activism

Gender activism was listed as one of the activisms that FARC women have been working on. None of the men I worked with is engaged with it, and women involved with it confirmed that there is no active male participation. Gender activism exists in La Fila in two forms: women who do not consider themselves feminists (three in my sample); and women participating in the so-called insurgent feminism (three in my sample). They all work for improving women's conditions and equality in the gender local committee. The only difference so far in these transition times is that non-feminist women are less involved in political activity compared with the feminist women who are also active in political participation in the municipality.

Women participating in gender activism are working in several projects. They are building the communitarian kindergarten so parents –especially mothers- in La Fila and outside it can work or study after leaving their children in this facility (see figure 7). They are also working across other local committees to promote gender equality. That is the case of the agricultural committee,

where they take care of crops and attend meetings to assure that there is female participation in the discussions on land and crops benefits.



Figure 7. Kindergarten in La Fila.

Photo: Natalia Duarte

The women who do not call themselves feminists say so for two reasons: they do not know its meaning; or they reject it because they believe feminism implies fighting against men or changing their form of femininity: “No mija! I can tell you that the majority of women here don’t know what feminism is! I know my female comrades are working on it, and that’s ok. But I won’t see my guy friends as enemies for being a feminist (...) and then what? Will I have to take my bra off or start wearing guys’ clothes?” (Leonor, 52 years old, 26 years in guerrilla).

I heard two different accounts of the origins of FARC feminism expressed by all my interviews. On the one hand, most of the FARC members I worked with, regardless whether they

were feminists or not, claimed that feminism did not exist in FARC. Women talked about common experiences of sexism within guerrilla only if they were close friends, but not as part of formal feminist discussions. If a woman faced a problem (e.g., if she was beaten up by her partner), it was addressed like any other problem (if it was addressed at all): through the guerrilla justice system. It was also explained to me that feminism was never introduced in FARC because it was considered a bourgeois conception:

For us that word 'feminism' has a bourgeois connotation because I feel that feminism wants to be exempt from the class struggle. And we've received really bourgeois women talking about defending women's interests, but those are women similar to Marta Lucia Ramirez [current vice-president of Colombia], or Maria Fernanda Cabal, or Paloma Valencia [from the national right-wing party Centro Democrático] who represent upper-class interests. So that's why we are reluctant to feminism in the organization (Luisa, 36 years old, 16 years in guerrilla).

Likewise, some FARC members think that feminism is an imperialist idea created to cause divisions within revolutionary movements. For them the real problem while at war was not gender inequalities inside guerrilla but the survival of all guerrilla members; what matters the most is the struggle against capitalism, and gender issues would be addressed once capitalism could be destroyed. Within guerrilla, feminism seemed to be unnecessary in a supposedly already gender-equal group like FARC:

We don't care about feminism because FARC, as a progressive, left organization was always sensitive to gender equality. When you enter to guerrilla you are treated the same way, it doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman, because we are all comrades. You are asking me about feminism, but we don't need it because that is an imperialist idea from US created to divide our revolutionary struggle (Pedro, 29 years old, 5 years in guerrilla).

Some others, however, like the few women currently involved in so-called insurgent feminism, expressed the view that FARC feminism was born while in FARC, but they had to focus on more urgent agendas like the armed struggle. For them feminism seemed to be an informal kind of conversation used by some women to talk about common women's problems. The everyday vicissitudes of war, however, distanced them from the possibility of a more formal feminist organization. Therefore, even for women for whom feminist ideas were an important part of how

they mobilized for revolution, it was necessary to put their gender agenda on hold because the class-imperialism-oriented struggle of FARC came first.

Most interviewed ex-guerrilla members agreed that feminist ideas and practices were discussed more during the peace negotiations. When I asked who initiated the idea of so-called insurgent feminism, all of the people I worked with pointed out Victoria Sandino, a long-time fighter in the FARC. According to its official definition, “insurgent feminism seeks to create new masculinities and transform gender relations among people of all identities and sexual orientations. Insurgent feminism draws on the FARC’s anti-capitalist ideology linking women’s emancipation to class struggle. [For these women,] Colombia’s political and economic system can never fundamentally change if patriarchal culture continues to be reproduced in everyday life” (Boutron 2017). So far the only women in La Fila active in feminism explained: “we are trying to grab the best things from the existing feminisms, their good contributions, and then we want to add our own experiences, and the Colombian experiences, so we can create our own feminism (Daniela, 44 years old, 22 year in guerrilla).

The different versions of the origin of FARC feminism, as well as the gender discussions experiences while in war, lead to the question of to what extent current feminist activism is the result of pre-FARC experiences and/or the result of women’s experiences after they joined FARC. This question can be addressed through Molyneux’s (1985) definition of strategic gender interests and practical gender interests. Strategic interests come from the analysis of women’s subordination and from the formulation of more satisfactory alternatives to such subordination such as the abolition of the sexual division of labor or the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women. Practical interests, in turn, are generally a response to “an immediate

perceived need, and they do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality” (p. 233).

According to my interviews, most women entered FARC following a sort of practical gender interest, especially if they were peasants, as they were running away from violent environments and did not necessarily had a strategic gender agenda in mind. This is different from what Shayne (2004) found in her research in El Salvador, Chile, and Cuba. She argues that participation in revolutionary struggles was a survival strategy, an “ungendered” practical demand (p. 3). However, I do not think that this was an ungendered demand in the case of FARC women. At the end of the day, they ran away from very gendered kinds of violence like domestic abuse or paramilitary sexual violence.

It was during their time in armed combat in FARC that women started to exhibit clearer strategic gender interests: they informally started to talk about the role of women in FARC and society, and how FARC’s revolution could help to change gender inequality or overthrow patriarchal capitalism, although these were not the main public topics during the reading of the day’s agenda¹⁷ or during collective meetings. In brief, current gender activism is the result of skills that women acquired through a combination of experiences: gender violence before joining FARC (practical interests), and gender discussions when joining FARC (strategic interests).

Second, gender activism in La Fila can be also understood under Moghadam’s (1997) typology of gender and revolutions, namely: the patriarchal model or the modernizing model of revolution. While the former emphasizes gender differences and female domesticity, the latter advocates for gender equality and the full inclusion of women in public life. My data suggest that

¹⁷ The day’s agenda (or the reading of the day’s order) was the first activity guerrilla carried out in the mornings. Ranks lined up and heard their commander’s orders for the rest of the day.

FARC's commitment to gender agendas fits in a gray zone between the patriarchal and the modernizing models of revolution depending on the kind of treatment women received.

As happened with the inclusion of women in Central America guerrillas, women were present in FARC since it was born. At the beginning women joined guerrilla playing supportive roles. Then they increased in number and started to get involved in military combat, and some acquired visibility in troop-command positions (Wills 2005).

Participation in FARC gave guerrilla participants activist tools. As described in the previous section, they all received political training and they were taught about the importance of mobilizing. They learned about community organization because that was part of the guerrilla's work: "I had a lot of opportunities to speak up, decide, ask, and organize. I could work with communities, do political work with them, talk to them about FARC" (Ivon, 33 years old, 12 years in guerrilla). In this sense, FARC can be classified under the modernizing model of revolution, since women could participate in the same positions than men, and they both gained organizing skills.

However, "this incorporation in the battlefields does not bring by itself an opening of women's rights or a deep questioning of prevailing gender arrangements" (Wills, 2005, p. 72). Interestingly, all the ex-guerrilla people in my fieldwork stated that gender equality always existed in FARC. When asked what gender equality meant, they stated that it did not matter if they were women or men, all combatants had to do the same daily tasks and all could occupy a variety of positions in the FARC military hierarchy. And then, when I asked about known cases of sexual abuse, forced contraception, or forced abortion, only one person acknowledged that cases of gender violence actually occurred:

"Sadly, we have to recognize that there were some cases of gender violence, but that was not the general rule. We are also part of Colombian society and that means we also face the problems that the Colombian society faces in terms of gender violence. But those were isolated cases (...) Also, if a gay person

joined FARC, other comrades in the camp bullied them. I think we could have had better politics in terms of gay combatants.” (Ivon, 33 years old, 12 years in guerrilla)

In contrast to this person, the rest of my interviewees denied such events. The case of the next ex-guerrilla woman is an example of that:

“It is part of a smear campaign from the government and the media to make us look like FARC was a monster (...) a woman who has been trained in the conflict, in the middle of war with principles, and who also has a gun, how could she let herself be raped? And the abortion part: women voluntarily accepted getting an abortion, we knew we couldn’t bring babies to the war” (Luisa, 36 years old, 16 years in guerrilla)

Nevertheless, the National Center for Historical Memory (or Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, CNMH) has documented cases of abortion and rape within FARC and other armed groups:

“I told him I was pregnant, and he told me the child wasn’t his because he was using condoms. He ordered me to drink some waters, but I never did it (...). I was three months pregnant (...) when he called me because he wanted me to cover a road for him. When I arrived over there, I found him, he had ordered someone to bring injections and pills. I didn’t want to get the injections or the pills, so he bet me up (...) then he and other guy tied my hands and I got the shot (...) then he made me take two pills and inserted some of them [in her vagina].” (Natalia, FARC ex-combatant. Testimony collected in 2015 by CNMH 2014: 180)

“Gina was recruited when she was 9 in the department of Putumayo. After receiving a five-month training, she was assigned as bodyguard, along with other female children, to aka Raúl Reyes, a high commander of the FARC Secretariat: ‘I was his bodyguard for almost 16 years (...) and he grabbed female children for that (...) I had a lot of anger against him, he grabbed me and I was forced to be with him’” (Gina, FARC ex-combatant. Testimony collected in 2015 by CNMH, 2017, p. 189).

These stories of violence against some women show how FARC also followed a patriarchal model of revolution. Although FARC’s statutes¹⁸ explicitly prohibited sexual violence within the group, men were not always punished, or they received less severe punishments. During my fieldwork only one woman told me she was a victim of forced abortion and she is also the only woman who is not active in any kind of activism: “I don’t care about feminism, I don’t want to go to all these meetings women go, I don’t want to be in politics. I just want to keep doing what I’m

¹⁸ “Article 3rd. The crimes inside the movement are: (...) k. Rape. (...) ñ. Any activity against the revolutionary moral, against the healthy traditions of population, or that reduces FARC-EP prestige before the people” (FARC-EP statute, n.y., p. 28-29. In CNMH, 2017, p. 189).

doing. I feel safe here, I know how to do it (...) I knew I had to get an abortion, but I didn't imagine that could cause me so much pain (...) the good thing is that I have been getting professional help and that's what matters to me mostly now: to keep working and overcome my trauma" (Camila, 36 years old, 15 years in guerrilla). Although gender violence experiences can be empowering for some people, the case of Camila shows how violence is hindering her participation in any kind of activism since the urge for personal recovery is more pressing.

Now, beyond their personal biographies, some of the structural dilemmas impeding openness to feminism among mostly peasant FARC members have to do with the influence of what FARC feminist women refer to as liberal institutions. "There are a lot of things going on with insurgent feminism. You first have UN Women giving money to support feminist meetings, but sometimes this feminism comes through some feminists from Bogotá who come to teach us a feminism that makes no sense here" (Verónica, 42 years old, 17 years in guerrilla). Verónica is of the view that some national feminist organizations understand FARC women as a homogenous group, and she laughs when telling me this: "can you imagine when these feminists from Bogotá came here to give us personal defense classes? I got together a large number of women, and what for? That was ridiculous!". As stated by Verónica, FARC women resent having to adapt to urban, middle-high class feminisms that gave them personal defense classes since FARC women already know how to defend themselves.

These women also feel attacked by urban feminists who criticize FARC women's projects that involve having babies since that could bring them back to traditional gender roles and threaten the independence they gained while at war. For this reason, most peasant women are not necessarily interested in feminism as an activist path. This is for at least two reasons: first, some peasant women think that feminism is a threat to their desires of becoming mothers.

On this regard, Moran (2010) points out about the effects of gender mainstreaming contained in UN Resolution 1325 since gender projects are included in standards post conflict programs. According to this scholar, some of these programs “founder on unexamined gender assumptions, as when men are offered training in auto mechanics and women are presented with classes in dress making or cloth dying” (p. 266). While it is too early to assess if the gender component of the peace agreements through international institutions and NGOs is adequately working, I remain doubtful in terms of to what extent UN efforts and international funding could harm or benefit FARC women’s gender activism, in particular, and FARC women’s lives, in general.

4.3.3 Engaging in electoral and political participation

FARC -or the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force- officially became a political party in August of 2017 during its first national congress after disarmament. As a result, the new FARC internal structure formally includes: local *comunas* which are the basic party organization units consisting of at least 5 militants; local councils consisting of councilors of politics, organizing, finances, education, social movement work, communications, solidarity or other needed matters; department councils which execute the political plans agreed in department meetings; and the national council which executes the political plans agreed on the national meetings (see figure 8).

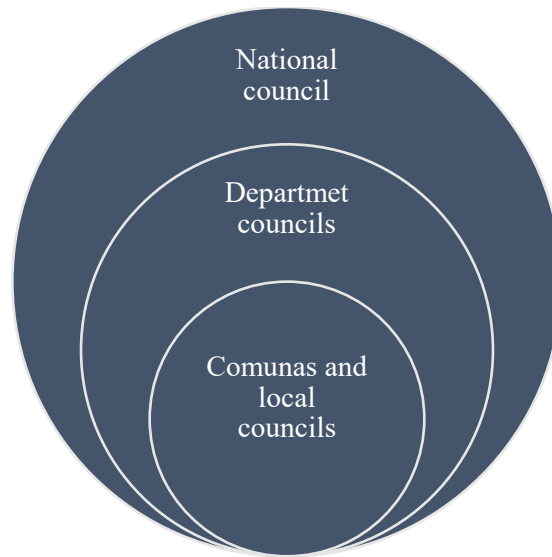


Figure 8. Chart of formal FARC internal structure.

Comuna's militants elect local councilors for a one-year period in annual meetings (or what they call annual local assemblies). Department councils are made up by comunas and council's delegates and they are elected in department meetings (or what they call annual department assemblies). And the national council is elected by department councils in national meetings (or so-called the maximum national assembly).

In practice, there are two FARC internal structures so far working in politics: a local council and what local FARC members call department directorships. On the one hand, according to my interviews, the local council is the main political body in each ETCR is composed of a president, a vice-president, and other party representatives from the comunas. This council decides who shall be on the local board of directors in this ETCR. They also gather with the community to talk about politics and ways to improve the zone they live in, and then the council raises local concerns to the FARC national party. In brief, the council is the local political body that connects the FARC

national party with people living in the four geographical *comunas* in La Fila: Brisas de Paz, 27 de mayo¹⁹, 22 de septiembre²⁰, and Jose Maria Carbonel²¹.

On the other hand, local council's delegates make up the department directorship of Tolima (which is formally known as the department council) and Cundinamarca, a department that borders the municipality of Icononzo. They try to work closely with the municipal and departmental governments, participate in local and regional meetings, and with surrounding communities:

Our political life in guerrilla consisted of political cells. Today we call those cells *comunas* [neighborhoods]. But our political life is not only here in the ETCR, but also in the *veredas* [other local rural spaces such as La Fila] from Icononzo and in Tolima, more broadly. That's what we do, political activism all the time. We get together with municipal authorities, we've gone to meetings with the police, with social leaders, and we go through the *veredas* doing peace pedagogy. The political activity is permanent. We don't keep up with all things we do. (Luisa, 36 years old, 16 years in guerrilla)

The main structural dilemma impeding political participation is political inequality exacerbated by the reluctance of some political elites to accept necessary political and electoral reforms. As part of the point on political participation in the peace accords, a Special Electoral Mission (*Misión Electoral Especial* or MEE) was constituted in 2017 made up of national and international experts among academics, civil organizations, and government representatives. The

¹⁹ FARC's anniversary. FARC was born in May 27, 1964.

²⁰ Jorge Briceno, aka "Mono Jojoy" was one of the FARC's top military commanders. He was killed by the Army on September 22, 2010

²¹ José María Carbonel was committed to the independence cause and had an active role in the insurrection of July 20, 1810 against the Spanish reconquest. Most of the people who live in this neighborhood belonged to a guerrilla unit named after him.

MEE presented a political and electoral reform²² to the national congress in April 2017, when former president Santos was still in office.

Basically, the reform proposed the creation of an independent electoral institution far from the congress' influence; the improvement of political representation in territories through the implementation of closed party lists (to attack clientelism, vote buying, and political corruption) and gender parity; the elimination of electoral turncoat²³; and the reduction of private funding by increasing state funding for financial transparency purposes (Gomez, 2017). Both the presidency (first with Santos and now with Duque) and the congress rejected the majority of the reform's recommendations (Bello, 2019). For these reasons, various political and academic sectors state that the normative balance of the peace accords regarding political participation is negative (El Espectador Newspaper 2017; Jimenez and Puello-Socarras 2019).

These efforts to alter political and electoral power directly relate to the breach of the peace accords on political openness. These efforts also represent the main obstacle for FARC local electoral participation since traditional models of local democracy in Colombia are based on electoral pockets of clientelism and regional powerful caciques. In that sense, as stated by Meiksins (2000) (cited in Jimenez and Puello-Socarras, 2019), in capitalist societies democracy is limited by socioeconomic positions that determine who has the right to citizenship. In the structure of political inequality in Colombia, then, greater political power always belonged to state elites who denied political participation to peasants, social movements, and other opposition forces.

²² Political and Electoral Reform. Proposals (MEE, 2017) Available in <https://moe.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Libro-Reforma-completo-2017-1-1.pdf>

²³ Party members changing party affiliation

FARC political activities to participate in electoral politics at the local level heavily depend on a state national agenda that so far has not complied with the peace accords. Although FARC will be able to run candidates in elections in municipalities and departments, its main strategy at least in Icononzo is the political work with communities, since the lack of an electoral and political reform will impact them negatively in terms of, for instance, funding.

Of course, how successful FARC political and electoral results will be also depends on other broader structures beyond political inequality such as social legitimacy. Building legitimacy after decades of armed political proselytism and violence against civilians is by all means challenging. Before decided to locate a transition site in Icononzo, the government and FARC had thought first of Villarica municipality (see map 1). As Colombia media reported, people in Villarica strongly objected to FARC living there:

‘Tell me, why here? Why don’t they leave us alone, just like the government always does? It was really hard to get guerrilla out of here, so that now they can come’, says Dirigenio Castro, a peasant who was born in Villarica in the 70s [...]. ‘There is no *vereda* where people from Villarica want FARC to return, even if they are disarmed. And if on top of it they come looking for votes, people will like guerrilla less. Nobody here loves them [...]’. War is far from being a memory. It is a reality that peasants see every day when they come down from their *veredas* to the central plaza and the ruins of the *Caja Agraria* building [a bank], blown up by guerrilla.” (Velez, 2016)²⁴

Although I did not find evidence in any of my interviews or my field notes on civil community refusal to FARC living in La Fila or doing political work, the municipality and department elections of October 2019 will reveal if local political activism worked and if FARC will overcome social hatred and other obstacles.

Electoral results and social support are hard to predict. After the 1992 peace accords in El Salvador, it took 17 years for the FMLN to achieve the presidency for the first time in 2009,

²⁴ La Silla Vacía. 2016. *En Villarica no quieren que las FARC regresen*. Retrieved on 3/3/2019. Available in <https://lasillavacia.com/historia/en-villarrica-no-quieren-que-las-farc-regrese-56388>

although the ex-guerrilla has been the main political opposition force since then (Silber 2010; Wade 2016). In the case of Guatemala, the URNG (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca) won the first presidential elections celebrated after the 1996 peace accords, but then it became a weak political force (Hauge 2008; Janzen 2014). And the success of the Nicaraguan revolution translated into the seizure of power and electoral victory from of Daniel Ortega from 1979 to 1990. But after the contra-revolution and the peace process, the opposition hold the presidential office since 1990 until 2006 when Daniel Ortega won elections again (Kurtenbach 2007; Kampwirth 2004).

In turn, after the transformation of the Colombian urban guerrilla M-19 in a political party in 1990, also as a result of peace accords, “popular support [was] critical for explaining their success as political part[y]” (Söderström 2016: 215). Even after the political party disappeared, some of its leaders remain active in politics such as former Bogota mayor Gustavo Petro, who was the main opposition candidate disputing presidency in the 2018 elections; or Antonio Navarro who was the mayor of the city of Pasto (1995-1998), a congressman (1998-2006 and since 2014), and the department governor of Nariño (2008-2012). Unlike M-19, nevertheless, FARC and the peace process do not have the same social support. As stated before, half the country voted “no” to the sign of the peace accords in 2016.

5.0 Conclusions

This paper has examined the different ways in which FARC member's biographies intertwine with current political and social structures in Colombia to promote or hinder ex-guerrillas' mobilization after the 2016 peace accords. By studying the case of La Fila, a Territorial Area of Training and Reincorporation in the municipality of Icononzo, I showed that the transition from collective ways of living in the everyday routines of armed mobilization to living in a capitalist society where individuality is valued and demanded has brought limitations for non-armed FARC's mobilization after the peace accords. Such limitations occur under concrete political, economic, and social constraints where the state and political elites have been creating neoliberal-oriented peace-building strategies that contradict some of the agreements achieved in the peace accords: land reform, gender equality, and political inclusion.

I also showed that this moment of transition is a moment of high commitment in which the majority of FARC members are following persistent trajectories of activist mobilization around three ways of local collective action: civic organizations, gender activism, and political participation. A question that deserves further investigation is how this level of engagement will change the more time passes after the peace accords? Will FARC members maintain the same commitment? Will they disintegrate?

One of the aspects worth to pursue for future research is related to a finding I came to notice at the final stage of my writing process. I think that the case of FARC in La Fila shows that the momentum factor and the type of spatial organization through which ex-guerrillas transition to civilian life matter for social movement continuity and successful reincorporation after decades of armed struggle. In other words, I suspect that the current persistent activist path of high

commitment has been allowed by two elements: *momentum* or how FARC collective engagement occurs within the window of opportunity brought by the peace accords; and *spatial organization* or how living permanently in concentration zones provides a geographical frame where to mobilize.

The ETCRs were designed for being transition spaces. That means that they were supposed to be temporary spaces for ex-guerrillas. But many of them expressed how their mobilization has been developing around the community they continue to create in La Fila and around the civil community that already existed there. It is possible that because of their attachment to this ETCR, FARC might be transitioning not only into something else (a political party, a social movement), but also into a social movement community (Staggenborg 1998). However, ETCRs will officially and legally cease to exist on August 15th. If community and physical spaces are what sustain activists, what will happen to FARC mobilization without the ETCRs?

Finally, my research also points to other field sites that deserve more exploration. If Icononzo is considered one of the successful cases of reincorporation to civilian life and yet it presents the challenges discussed, what could be happening in other ETCRs? Are they developing social movement communities as well? And what about FARC members outside these spaces and their possibilities for mobilization?

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