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Retos y perspectivas de la política criminal | Marcela
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**“Femininity” and
“memory” in
disarmament,
demobilisation, and**

reintegration programmes in Colombia

*Feminidad y memoria en programas de desarme,
desmovilización y reintegración*

***Rebecca Gindele et Gustavo Rojas
Páez***

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Résumé

This article seeks to show the ways in which DDR programmes have an impact on the construction of the memory of female ex-combatants of guerrilla groups in Colombia. The article revolves around the following question: To what extent, the discourse on reintegration and participation surrounding the official frameworks of memory are adequate to the task of making visible the voices of female ex-combatants who participated in guerrilla organizations? In addressing this question, the article highlights two influential aspects in the construction of memory of women who were part of Colombia's armed conflict as guerrilla fighters. On the one hand, women want to remember their experiences as combatants, and, on the other hand, in the phase of "reintegration" to civil life, women are confronted with expectations on femininity, which traverse their identity. The article suggests that it is important to broaden the analytical frameworks that define the role of the formation of memory of ex-combatants and take into account, the processes of agency advanced by former female fighters and their role as political subjects.

Este escrito busca destacar cómo los procesos de Desarme, Desmovilización, y Reintegración (DDR) tienen un impacto en la construcción de la memoria de las mujeres excombatientes en Colombia. El escrito da cuenta de dos aspectos que influyen la construcción de la memoria de mujeres que participaron en el conflicto armado con grupos guerrilleros en distintos contextos. En primer lugar, las mujeres desean recordar y contar sus vivencias como combatientes. De lo anterior surge la pregunta ¿hasta qué punto el discurso de la reintegración y la participación

en la paz permiten visibilizar las voces de estas mujeres dentro de los marcos oficiales de la memoria del conflicto? En segundo lugar, nuestra indagación explora las formas como las excombatientes afrontan las transformaciones de identidad y las construcciones de feminidades, dentro de los grupos armados y en la reintegración, cuando la sociedad exige los criterios establecidos de feminidad. El capítulo sugiere que es importante ampliar los marcos analíticos sobre la memoria de las mujeres excombatientes y dar cuenta de distintos procesos de agencia desarrollados por ellas como sujetos políticos.

Entrées d'index

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identity, femininity, memory, gender, ddr, transitional justice

Palabras claves :

identidad, feminidad memoria, genero, , justicia transicional

Texte intégral

INTRODUCTION

“Esta es una sociedad que aceptó a los hombres que venían del conflicto como héroes y rechazó a las mujeres porque el rol de las mujeres no es el de la guerra ni de la política y entonces eso hace que sea más aceptado un excombatiente [hombre] que una excombatiente” (Monroy, 2005). [This is a society which accepted the men who returned from the conflict as heroes and rejected the women because a woman’s place is not in a war or in politics, and thereby a male ex-combatant is more acceptable than a female ex-combatant]

(Translated by the authors).

- 1 Gender inequality and the role of female ex-combatants are two complex issues in Colombian society. The discussions surrounding the demobilisation of women and their experiences and memories of joining and being part of an armed group illustrate the deeply ingrained structural and cultural gender inequalities that exist in the country. These are important topics that must be addressed within the context of the current peace talks and in the wider processes of peace

building and conflict resolution, in order to ensure a sustainable peace and bring an end to violence.

- 2 Women have participated as combatants in all armed groups throughout Colombia's history: including the patriot army that fought the independence war, paramilitary organisations, guerrilla groups such as the M19, the EPL, the FARC and ELN and in the Colombian armed forces. This study looks specifically at women's experiences in guerrilla groups and through demobilisation processes to understand their narratives through a gendered lens.
- 3 The focus of this research on former female guerrilla combatants arises from the expected significant demobilisation by the FARC and at some point the ELN, with an estimated 30-40% of FARC comprising of women (McDermott, 2002; CICR, 2003; VerdadAbierta. com, 2014; Mendez, 2012). This future DDR process will not be the first experience of reintegrating former combatants nor the first time the government has negotiated a form of collective demobilisation.
- 4 DDR processes have been presented as instruments of restorative justice, understood as a form of justice that seeks to build social peace in a horizontal way, through a dialogue in which victims, offenders and any other member of the community can participate and solve their conflicts freely in a dignifying manner (Gutiérrez 2015). As will be shown, the narratives of female ex-combatants raise concern about the restorative character of DDR processes in Colombia. After the cold war, an array of conflict management instruments emerged to address political transitions. Processes of reintegration took place in many parts of the world promoting the idea that combatants and their stories were similar everywhere. As a result, female combatants' narratives did not play an important part in the design of policies of memorialization that gave meaning to new political regimes.
- 5 The overall aim of this contribution is to provide an overview of the ways by which the narratives and experiences of female combatants have been constructed through different DDR processes in Colombia³. The driving question is to what extent

the narratives and experiences of female ex-combatants have been taken into account by dominant discourses on reintegration and memory that have emerged globally over the past decades. In analysing narratives, the authors highlight the political dimensions of the experiences and memories of female ex-combatants in Colombia. The narrative approach is the central element of the methodological framework, based on the anthropological work of M Jackson (2002). Jackson's work proves useful in looking at the inter-subjective relations in social scenarios traversed by violence. Moreover, studying narratives of female ex-combatants is important in order to shed light on our understanding of the formation of political identities and femininities and to add to the diversity of narratives within the historical memory in Colombia and increase the visibility of narratives that could be considered as officially unpopular.

PART I. DDR WITHIN THE COLOMBIAN CONFLICT

- 6 Figures from the *Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración* (Spanish Acronym, ACR)⁴ show that up to February 2014, the agency had demobilised 56,197 people (ACR, 2015). Colombia's experience of DDR programmes includes both collective and individual demobilisation processes following collective disarmament agreements with guerrilla groups, such as the M19; paramilitary groups as well as from the ongoing programme to encourage individual demobilisation of people involved in armed groups and captured combatants. This state driven form of individual demobilisation has a military emphasis that only seeks to remove the enemy from the field of combat and presents the guerrilla fighter as a deviant subject that has left his family and society behind and needs to return to the fold of civilised society. For instance, an advertising campaign in the Colombian media that encourages guerrilla fighters to join the demobilisation programme run by the Colombian Ministry of Defence, has as its motto/message addressed to the members of the guerrillas: "*Guerrilla fighter demobilize... your family and Colombia are waiting for you*"

(El Comercio 2014). The message of the advertising campaign is heard by large sectors of society and does not produce much reaction, which is very telling of how violence has become normalized in Colombian society.

- 7 Colombian everyday life has been marked by multiple forms of violence which have given way to a permanent scenario of social indifference. This has been described by many scholars and writers, to the extent that some of them have developed an academic tradition known as "Violentology" (Sánchez 1991). Social indifference is entrenched in Colombia's everyday language as shown by expressions such as "*desechable*"-which means disposable in Spanish-used to refer to homeless people. The use of the expression is very common and dates back to the campaigns of social cleansing implemented by death squads of the 1980s and 1990s. Death squads targeted different marginal groups and assassinated various homeless people in many large cities of the country. Phenomena like the latter prompted anthropologist M. Taussig to coin the term "spaces of death" and "culture of terror" (Taussig 1984). In the culture of terror, Taussig argues, human rights violations prevail and create "spaces of death" where murder and torture are normalized and opposition is silenced (Taussig 1984)⁵.
- 8 Against the above backdrop, it comes as no surprise that the management of certain aspects of the conflict such as demobilisation do not raise widespread concern in Colombia. "Normalized violence" is present in Colombia's everyday life and interrelates with "structural violence", understood as the ways in which historically engrained, large-scale, political economic forces cause harm on the socially vulnerable (Bourgeois 2009, drawing on Farmer 2004, p. 18)⁶. Thus, the combination of structural and normalized violence renders violence invisible and gives way to social indifference. According to Philippe Bourgeois, normalized violence is "the set of institutional practices, discourses, cultural values, ideologies, everyday interactions, and routinized bureaucracies that render violence invisible and produce social indifference" (Bourgeois 2009, page 19)⁷. The notion of normalized violence

proves useful in understanding the complexity of Colombia's history and provides some answers to questions regarding how the Colombian internal armed conflict, being the longest conflict in Latin America, persists within one of the oldest democratic regimes in the region.

- 9 A conflict has been ongoing in Colombia for over half a century, starting in 1948 with the conflict between the Liberal and Conservative parties, a period known as *La violencia*. Since then the country has moved from one period of violence to another with actors and issues being redefined and transformed (Chernick, 1999). More than 60 years of conflict have resulted in the largest and most enduring displaced populations in the world, numerous atrocities committed by all armed groups, unprecedented scales of forced disappearances and sexual violence and countless other acts of violence and human rights abuses suffered by the civilian population (ICTJ: 4). State actors have played an important part in the conflict, and the relationship of the Colombian armed forces with paramilitary groups has been well documented. Many rulings of the Inter-American Human Rights Court (IAHRC) show the link between right wing paramilitaries and the Colombian armed forces⁸. Human Rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch have also published reports detailing the extensive links between the army and the paramilitaries⁹.
- 10 The construction of the enemy by the Colombian state has shifted throughout the years as the conflict has adopted various discourses on anti-insurgency (1960s-1990s), and both the war on drugs (late 80s to present), and the war on terror (2002-to date). The idea of the combatant has been influenced by discourses on deviance that have downplayed the actual reasons combatants joined armed groups.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR DDR IN CURRENT PEACE TALKS

- 11 Colombia's legislation has facilitated negotiation and has included laws related to the implementation of DDR programmes since the late 80s and early 90s. At that time, the

Colombian Government signed peace agreements with a number of guerrilla groups, and between 2003 and 2006 signed one with the paramilitary groups. In the 1980s the ruling government created a body of laws that aided the talks with armed groups, such as Law 35 (1982), which for the first time provided benefits including “legal, rehabilitation and socio-economic programmes, land programmes, housing, finance, small enterprises, health, education” (Herrera, 2013). Additionally, Law 49 (1985) and Law 77 (1989), established “alternative policy solutions to grant clemency to guerrilla groups, recognizing their crimes as political and extending the possible benefits to related crimes” (Herrera, 2013). As Herrera argues, the legislation has adapted over the years so that DDR has moved from a traditionally military approach to include aspects of political participation and access to education i.e. a more participatory and holistic perspective (Herrera, 2013). Law 418 of 1997 and subsequently in 2002 (Law 782), legislated for dialogue with illegal armed groups and in 2003, through Decrees 128 and 3360, Law 418 was modified, and included new legislation regarding reintegration into civil society. By 2005, Resolution 513 established the conditions for granting, suspending and retracting of benefits provided by the Program for Reintegration into Civilian Life of Persons and Armed Groups, and thus opened the political space for the enactment of Law 975 (2005) or the Justice and Peace Law as it is commonly referred to (Herrera, 2013). Despite the fact that Law 975 uses the discourse of transitional justice and proposes alternative punishments for demobilised paramilitary fighters, as long as they confess their criminal acts, the restorative spirit of the law was encumbered by the extradition of paramilitary leaders to the US. These leaders and their forces demobilised on the condition of receiving a lenient punishment in Colombia and telling the truth about their crimes to both victims and the society. However, many leaders have been extradited to the US for drug trafficking and not human rights violations. This has been detrimental to victims’ groups, who are still waiting for the confessions of

many paramilitary fighters. In the confessions, the paramilitaries are supposed to tell the whereabouts of the mortal remains of hundreds of victims (Verdad Abierta 2008). We will return to this point in our concluding remarks.

- 12 The DDR programmes implemented in Colombia have included elements from the first and second "DDR waves" as described by Mugagg and O'Donnell (2015). According to these authors, the first wave of DDR emerged in the 1980s and focused on negative peace, whereas the second generation focused on positive peace. The latter meant the incorporation of new goals in DDR programmes in order to guarantee security and stability in the short term and measures for creating conditions for long term development.
- 13 In 2012 the Colombian government and the FARC commenced peace talks, with the goal of bringing about the end of the conflict. However, it is worth noting that the Colombian conflict includes multiple actors, including, the state, guerrilla movements, paramilitaries, and more recently former paramilitary groups who formed criminal gangs after their demobilisation (BACRIM). Peace talks have in the past addressed other actors but the current peace agreements are limited to two of the actors. These peace talks between the FARC and the Government have 5 discussion points: victims; land; drugs; political participation, and the ending of the conflict including the demobilisation of FARC fighters. Although it is difficult to be sure of definitive numbers, the FARC have almost 10,000 members, with numbers having decreased over the past 10 years. As previously stated, within this group the number of female combatants is estimated at being 30-40%, larger than in the right-wing paramilitary groups or in other groups with which the Government has previously negotiated (Gutierrez, 2008)

WOMEN IN COLOMBIA'S CONFLICT

- 14 Women have shouldered a disproportionate burden in the Colombian conflict. As Meertens and Zambrano (2010) show, women are overrepresented in the population displaced by the

conflict and constitute nearly half of the heads of displaced households. According to Humanas (in Meertens & Zambrano, 2010), by 2007, women were the overwhelming majority of the 70,000 victims of paramilitary violence. Meertens and Zambrano also point out that rural women are often victims of sexual violence, a crime that has deliberately been used as a war strategy; figures are at such high levels that Colombia, alongside South Sudan, was named as a country of concern in the recent global conference on sexual violence in conflict (Meerteens & Zambrano, 2010). At least 17 percent of women, interviewed by the Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsperson's Office), reported physical aggression and sexual violence as the impetus for displacement (Colombian Ombudsperson cited in Meertens & Zambrano, 2010). Meertens and Zambrano's analysis also shows other forms of violence endured by women during the conflict: "forced recruitment of girls and young women; abduction of young girls by paramilitary leaders for the purposes of sexual slavery and domestic labour; forced contraception and forced abortions, particularly in the guerrilla forces (both FARC and ELN); and the assassination of women and girls by armed actors for varied motives, including suspicion of intimate relationships with 'the enemy'" (Meertens & Zambrano, 2010:194). Furthermore, the importance of highlighting continued gender violence within the institutional framework of transitional justice is of great significance in order that peace building clearly tackles not only the conflict-related violence that women in Colombia have endured, but also, the wider context of this violence for women's rights and political participation. Addressing gender inequality in post conflict Colombia is part of ensuring that violence against women will be reduced. According to a recent report on violence against women in Colombia, the *femicide* rate between 2009-2014 was of 5.7 per 100 thousand inhabitants, which means that 4 women are assassinated on a daily basis in the country (*El Heraldo* 2015).

15 Extensive literature on gender and DDR processes has been published as organisations have undertaken steps towards a

gendered analysis of DDR. The UN, the World Bank and leading think tanks have confirmed the importance of a gendered approach to DDR. Legislation such as Security Council Resolution 1325 which calls for the participation of women in post-conflict and peace building also supports DDR processes which specifically take into account women's experiences (UN, 2010). It is important to recognise the complex roles women play within conflict, peace processes and continued violence; therefore ensuring a gendered approach to DDR is key to ensuring long term reintegration (MAPP, 2012: 3). However, despite some progress, (DeWateville, 2002: 13) finds that the majority of demobilisation and reintegration programmes in 2002 treated combatants as a homogenous group, thus failing to address the specific needs of women and girls. In the Colombian context, an important study by MAPP-OEA (Support Mission for Peace Processes-Organisation of American States) in 2009 and 2010 developed an understanding of the experiences and specific needs of women who had demobilised from the AUC, FARC and the ELN (MAPP-OEA, 2012). It recognised advances the ACR had made in the implementation of a gender strategy and made recommendations for further gendered analysis in DDR programs, such as the participation of ex-combatant women in civil society; understanding the victims and those who perpetrate violence; dealing with issues of where the ex-combatants return to civilian life; children's upbringing; personal security (MAPP-OEA, 2012).

PART II. REINTEGRATION AND THE FORMATION OF MEMORY OF FEMALE EX-COMBATANTS

- 16 Whilst gender and DDR processes are now starting to be well documented, issues around gender identities and DDR are not so widely researched. In an interesting article rooted in the context of Colombia, Theidon examines the question of masculine identities in the gender and DDR debate and the role of masculine identities, weapons and violence for transitional justice (Theidon, 2009). Theidon argues that we can contribute to peace building by developing an understanding

of masculine identities within a gendered approach; she found that “the DDR program perpetuates gender stereotypes” (Theidon, 2009: 31). It is therefore important to acknowledge that DDR programs do not confront the “gender order”, and that they are full of gender assumptions as they are created reflecting the status quo and requiring ex-combatants to reintegrate into the socially acceptable behaviour¹⁰.

17 Just as gender is not synonymous with women neither are women an homogenous group and when discussing identity, experience and memory, it is important to bear in mind intersecting identities including sexual orientation, age and ethnic identity, amongst others. We cannot assume that an indigenous or black woman will have the same experiences within the FARC or other guerrilla groups as a white woman, and equally, memories of reintegration can vary depending on the woman’s intersecting identities. A gendered approach to women and DDR requires the understanding of women in armed conflicts – not only their role as victims but also as agents in these armed groups (Méndez, 2012: 12).

18 Some initiatives have attempted to record and make visible the experiences of female ex-combatants, one of these was the publication in 2006 of the documentary and book “Mujeres no Contadas” which detailed the experiences of women demobilized between 1990 and 2003 in Colombia (Londoño, 2006). The particular focus of the research was to recover and incorporate the forgotten voices of these women into the history books in Colombia (Londoño, 2006). The issue of historical memory has, in recent decades, acquired increasing importance in many countries. For example, Argentina experienced an increased interest after years of dictatorship, and is now seeking the truth. In addition there is much debate about the politics of memory and how to prevent a monopoly on historical memory, which can be manipulated towards the imposition of an official report. The ways in which we remember and forget with excess or by default are dependent on “the relationship between social actors, moving within a margin where historical memory may be used or, abused more

or less explicitly" (Lechner, 2002). In Colombia, there is also this heated debate about historical memory and political interests and as the research around female ex-combatants, in many ways, the invisibility of the historical memory of some groups is a form of violence-especially when it excludes the memory of the most discriminated and marginalized. The lack of acknowledgment of historical memory can contribute to the loss of identity.

19 The importance of these initiatives is not only that they provide visibility to women's experiences but also that they help understand how women are different from men. The narratives of female ex-combatants provide insights into the underlying gender assumptions within the reintegration process and allow us to move away from the simplistic gender analyses of women as pacific peacemakers and mothers, that allude to a supposed peaceful nature, shrouded in a discourse on biology, and social constructivism on maternity following a tendency to think that women are better peacemakers (Ruddick 1995, Gilligan 1982). They allow us to emphasise a complex understanding of gender identities and women as agents within conflict. A report by the ICTJ acknowledges that women joining armed groups experience deeper identity issues than men do, as the required changes to behaviour leads to profound gender identity changes because they are "forced" to adopt the dominant culture present in the insurgent group (ICTJ, 2009:15). While the interviews offered a slightly different picture than women being "forced" to adopt a gender identity different in groups, this analysis would suggest to follow the work of women such as Luisa Dietrich (2012) when seeing identities within armed groups as functional constructions of femininity. Whilst often the feminine identity within armed insurgent groups in Colombia are seen by society as resembling masculine identities, gender identity are a functional.

20 Based on the interviews with female ex-combatants, the most striking similarities were both in the direct, structural and cultural violence, they experienced both as a reason for joining

and after their reintegration into Colombian civil society and linked to this the inability to share their experiences due to the stigma they faced. The stigma was not only experienced as ex-combatants but also as women. This is something that has been experienced in other countries where female ex-combatants do not fit social stereotypes of a 'good' woman and therefore attract the greatest social stigma in the post-conflict period (PeaceBuilding, 2015).

21 The ex-combatants interviewed came from a mixture of rural and urban backgrounds, however all were from low income families. Whilst being aware that ex-combatants come from diverse backgrounds and some from middle and upper class families, studies have shown that in the case of Colombia, within the FARC, ELN and AUC, the large majority of combatants come from low income families. Maarín in his interviews with ex-combatants found that 88% come from low income families (stratum 1¹¹) (Maarín, 2008).

22 Rosa¹² grew up in rural Colombia, her life marked by poverty and social exclusion and as a result she can barely read or write. She joined the FARC because she believed in their revolutionary aims and said that she found life hard in "el campo" (countryside). Carmen¹³ joined the group when she was thirteen years old; coming from a poor barrio where she had problems, which she described as "ill treatment", with her father. She decided she needed to get away from that place and from her father. She had been active in the neighbourhood 'colectivo' along with a friend from the neighbourhood who introduced her to the guerrillas. During her time with the guerrillas Carmen says it was hard work, for example, coming from the city meant she found walking in the mountains very difficult. The women in the group had to carry and work the same as the men in order to prove themselves. Women also took part in combat, but despite this, gender roles in the group were still defined in the same way as in society. She herself became pregnant whilst in the guerrillas and had her first child with her partner who was also in the group. Usually when women were pregnant in the M19 they would be taken to a

peasant's house and allowed to give birth to their children there and keep their children with them. Carmen remembered that when they shared a camp with the EPL, there were even nurseries. In her case, in spite of the group accepting children, being a mother and a combatant was difficult. This is a common narrative from the women we interviewed, the changing of gender roles within the groups, the taking on of activities that society views as "unfeminine" such as bearing arms and carrying heavy loads; and then the rift between combatant and motherhood which is not reconciled by either armed groups nor society.

23 Although the barriers to re-entering civilian life may seem to be the same for men and women, women will experience them differently and will be more prone to facing specific issues that would either not affect men, or which would affect them in a different way. Not only the challenges of overcoming the stigma as an ex-combatant and starting a new life but also the changes expected of them in terms of their feminine identities, e.g. where they change from a warrior to a traditional housewife. Women find themselves adopting an identity corresponding to society's view of masculinity and the ICTJ report finds that these are the women who can face greater difficulties when returning to civilian life (ICTJ, 2009: 16). As indicated in a recent research study, "it is precisely those in whom such assimilation is greater who afterwards are hardest hit emotionally by their experience in the war, more 'broken' in terms of the construction-reconstruction of their identity as women" (ICTJ, 2009: 16). As much as looking at the impact of the conflict on women, this finding in the ICTJ report is as much a question concerning the tolerance and understanding of Colombian society to accept a broad understanding of gender identities. One ex-combatant described the turmoil of high heels and skirts she was expected to wear in her job once she reintegrated into society. When women reintegrate into sexist societies such as Colombia they frequently feel disempowered as they lose their "male assimilation" which membership of the armed group provided (ICTJ, 2009: 16). This speaks very much

to the inequality of gender relations whereby masculinity and femininity correspond to power within society.

24 Carmen took the agricultural programme offered, buying land, but she knows that the majority of businesses set up by ex-combatants from her group have not prospered and that others who took the agricultural route have remained poor. Everyone was given the chance to study and to accumulate points towards finishing their school diploma but Carmen stresses this was all through a system of credits and loans and she disagreed with many people's impression that ex-combatants receive advantageous benefits and are given an easy route. During the demobilisation each individual was dealt with separately, the group dispersed and the military structures disappeared, making it difficult to reintegrate to life with a lack of orders to follow. Carmen also mentioned that she was scared of going into the city after being in the mountains for so long and described the particular difficulties faced by female ex-combatants entering into political life after demobilisation. "Women don't believe in women" she says, "we haven't supported one another and we don't believe in ourselves in politics. Many women though, don't get involved in politics because of the danger and because they have children." The stigma against a demobilised woman is so huge that many people, including some of her family, the people she works and those in her neighbourhood do not know of her past.

25 The issue of stigma against ex-combatants is echoed by Alejandro Eder, Government peace negotiator and chief presidential adviser on reintegration, who states that demobilised people "are often viewed as hardened criminals by society... finding it hard to win social acceptance as civilians" (Moloney, 2014). Despite government initiatives, few companies offer permanent jobs to ex-combatants, something that places particular financial pressure on women, especially if they have children, and feeds into expectations that women will return to domestic and care-taking roles or to employment in traditionally acceptable poorly paid roles for women (ICTJ,

2009). This was highlighted in the interviews where women had been offered beautician training as part of their demobilisation package. Female ex-combatants feel this alienation and stigma and Carmen ends by saying that Colombian society does not appreciate 'strong' women, "no nos perdonan que somos duras" (they don't forgive us for being strong), and that society only accepts women who are soft and fit their gendered role.

- 26 Apart from stigma, gender constructs impact specifically in their experience of DDR. For instance, a study of DDR in the Colombian department of Meta reveals that female ex-combatants tend to give their financial remuneration to their (mostly male) partners (Méndez, 2012). This same violence of poverty and abuse that ex-combatants cite as part of the reason for joining the armed group can often continue in civilian life. De Watteville (2002, 14) argues that in most cases, female ex-combatants are expected to obey their husbands and fathers after they have demobilized. This generates numerous challenges for these women. Many female ex-combatants refuse to reintegrate into their old communities because they have a hard time performing traditional female roles. Many of the women we interviewed, including Rosa, now lived in a particularly deprived area of Bogotá, where many displaced people have settled and living conditions are hard and where gangs, street dealing of drugs and domestic violence are common. This same structural violence continues in their demobilised lives and discrimination and poverty continues because of their exclusion from society and lack of participation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- 27 This article has examined existing studies and literature regarding gender and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration within the context of Colombia. Whilst there is an understanding that a gendered approach is important for DDR, such an understanding might be limited to notions of femininity that do not reflect the experiences and narratives of

female ex-combatants. Femininities in contexts marked by structural violence need frameworks that do not curtail the places of enunciation and subjectivities that emerge in post-war scenarios.

- 28 The narratives explored in the interviews allow the authors to conclude that for future DDR processes in Colombia, at least two components need to be included. First, there is a need to include the participation of ex-combatants in decision-making and peace-building processes where their experiences and narratives are taken into account. Second, and interrelated, in order to have a better understanding of both the subjective aspects of conflict and the history of the Colombian context, the deviant character surrounding the notion of combatant should be examined and expanded. The current image of women in conflict as victims rather than participants and the need to expand or move away from the category of "victim" to recognize and facilitate women's agency.
- 29 The demobilisation process of the United Self Defence forces of Colombia (AUC-Spanish Acronym), has been controversial not only in terms of accountability for crimes, justice and reparations for the victims but also because of the growth of the BACRIM groups that came out of the AUC (Mendez, 2012). These groups were responsible for the majority of the violence in the country in the year 2012 (*El País*, 2012). Finally, previous DDR agreements have not dealt with the high percentages of women in armed groups so whilst previous DDR processes do encourage learning for the future, DDR agreements with the FARC will most certainly be different due to their demands for reintegration and political participation. Additionally, to date, because the state and its legal framework has treated FARC combatants as terrorists, reintegration and political participation processes will prove difficult during mass demobilisations and the question of how conducive this policy is to justice and peace needs to be addressed.

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Notes

3. Based mainly on qualitative data collection, this first research phase combines insights from social sciences, and critical approaches to Transitional Justice (Castillejo's 2007, 2014). The narrative approach from the anthropological tradition has been articulated for the analytical purposes. Sources are also diverse, ranging from legal documents analysis, to data extracted from interviews with female ex-combatants, whose names have been changed to safeguard their anonymity. The research is part of the project Law, State and Society. This project has an interdisciplinary focus and studies the relationship between transitional justice and structural violence, combining legal analysis, conflict analysis, human rights, and empirical studies of law. The project is coordinated by Dr Nhorys Torregroza at Universidad Libre. For these writing we conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with female ex-combatants whose names have been changed. Authors would like to thank Gearóid Ó Loingsigh for his insightful comments on the use of the English language.

4. Colombian Agency for Reintegration.

5. Social indifference is also illustrated by the ways in which the society reacts to Wayuu children dying of starvation in Colombia or the more than 30 endangered indigenous communities of the country. See ruling T 025-2004, Colombian Constitutional Court. Institutional practices also illustrate social indifference. In 2000, when president Bill Clinton visited Cartagena, the mayor of the city ordered the temporary "relocation" of the homeless people of the city. See <http://portal.critica.com.pa/archivo/08302000/lat1.html>. Between 1999 and 2001, more than 100 inmates from the major prison in Bogota were dismembered. Investigations on the deaths of those dismembered-including visitors to the prison-have only started this year. See <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/carcel-la-modelo-como-descuartizaron-y-desaparecieron-100-personas/461246>

6. As Bourgois shows, the notion of structural violence is associated with Marxism and liberation theology, although it was first coined by Galtung, See Bourgois 2009.

7. These concepts are explained by P Bourgois in his Pandora's box of invisible violence. See Bourgois 2009, page 19, figure 2.1.

8. This has been widely documented. See for example IAHRC case of Mapiripán (2005) and Ituango (2006) Also report Basta Ya <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/informes2013/bastaYa/basta-ya-colombiamemorias-de-guerra-y-dignidad-2016.pdf>
9. See, HRW (2000) The Ties That Bind: Colombia and Military-Paramilitary Links <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2000/colombia/>
10. The authors would like to thank Luisa Maria Dietrich Ortega for her valuable insights and time spent discussing her ideas and research.
11. In Colombia, society is divided into six different socio-economic strata for the purposes of designing public policy, which takes into account the strata of the socio-economic group and data is collected on this basis.
12. This name has been changed to protect the identity of the interviewee.
13. This name has been changed to protect the identity of the interviewee.

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