Understanding Ex-Combatants
Central Themes in the Lives of Former Paramilitaries in Colombia

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The President:

Prof. Ernst Mohr, PhD

Preface

This dissertation is based on conversations with a large number of demobilised persons. They shared their ideas and wishes with me without asking for anything in return. I am immensely grateful for their participation in this study. Hopefully, this thesis contributes in some way to a better understanding of their lives. I truly believe that empathy among persons, who share seemingly nothing with each other, is one of the most basic elements for the Colombian society to find a way out of the conflict trap. Disrespecting and distrusting the 'other' – especially the political and social other – is a highly detrimental social practice that is unfortunately very common in Colombia.

Although writing a doctoral thesis is a solitary task, without the unconditional support of advisors, colleagues, family and friends, I would not have been able to conclude it. I am very grateful for the openness and confidence of my advisors who from the beginning, believed in my research project and me. My 'Doktormutter' Yvette Sanchez took good care of me and motivated me when I went through crises. My 'Doktorvater' Christoph Frei guided me around methodological problems. During my stay in Colombia, repeated meetings with a group of other doctoral students helped me sharpen my ideas. Thank you very much Juan Esteban Ugarriza, Rocío Rubio and especially Kimberly Howe who made an incredible effort editing the whole thesis. Many thanks go to my students and invited speakers of the seminar 'DDR Processes in the World' (2009-II and 2010-I) at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá for their inspiring statements and essays; to my research assistants María Marta Álvarez and Camila Osorio; to my private mentors back at home Ferenc Biedermann and Hans Peter Fagagnini; to my advisors in Colombia and other places María Lucía Méndez, Brodie Ferguson, Bernd and Mariela Marquardt, Carlos Jiménez, Angelika Rettberg and Juan Munévar; to my contacts at the ACR in Bogotá who helped me to organise the interviews with former combatants, such as María Lucía Upegui, Felipe Martínez, Rodrigo Sepulveda, Joshua Mitrotti; my ACR contacts in the field Sandra Céspedes, Lida Padilla, Liliana Cogollo, Julia Buelvas and all the other people of ACR who sometimes despite adverse circumstances, make an impressive personal contribution to peace in Colombia. Last but not least, I would like to thank my friends and family who always supported me through this time. My parents Graziella and Sandro, my brothers Maurilio and Enrico, my various roommates Nina, Stefan, Pablo, Suzanne, Gini and Tobi, and above all Magda, mi señorita.

Bogotá, December 2010 Enzo Nussio

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Acronyms

ACCU	Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá (Rural Self-defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá)
ACR	Alta Consejería para la Reintegración (Office of the High Counselor for Reintegration)
AD M-19	Alianza Democrática M-19 (Democratic Alliance M-19)
ASI	Alianza Social Indígena (Social Indigenous Alliance)
ANAPO	Alianza Nacional Popular (National Popular Alliance)
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-defense Forces of Colombia)
Bacrim	Bandas Criminales (Criminal Groups)
BICC	Bonn International Center for Conversion
CCDDR	Cartagena Contribution to DDR
CERAC	Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos (Conflict Analysis Resource Centre)
CIDDR	Congreso Internacional de DDR (International DDR Congress)
CITPAX	Centro Internacional de Toledo para la Paz (Toledo International Centre for Peace)
CNN	Consejo Nacional de Normalización (National Council for Normalisation)
CNRR	Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación (National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation)
CODA	Comité para la Dejación de Armas (Committee for the Disposal of Arms)
Convivir	Cooperativas Comunitarias de Vigilancia Rural (Communitarian Cooperatives for Rural Vigilance)
COW	Correlates of War Project
CRO	Centro de Referencia y Oportunidades (Reference and Opportunities Centre)
CRS	Corriente de Renovación Socialista (Socialist Renovation Current)
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (National Administrative Department of Statistics)
DAS	Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (Administrative Department of Security)
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
DeJuSticia	Centro de Estudios de Derecho, Justicia y Sociedad (Centre for Studies of Law, Justice and Society)
Dijin	Dirección de Investigación Criminal (Superintendence of Criminal Investigation)
DNP	Departamento Nacional de Planeación (National Planning Department)
DRG	Dirección General para la Reinserción (General Secretary for Reinsertion)
DRP	Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Army of Liberation)
ERG	Ejército Revolucionario Guevarista (Guevarist Revolutionary Army)
ERPAC	Ejército Revolucionario Popular Anti-subversivo de Colombia (Popular Revolutionary Anti-subversive Army of Colombia)
FARC-EP	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – Army of the People)
FIP	Fundación Ideas para la Paz (Foundation Ideas for Peace)
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front – El Salvador)
GAM	Free Aceh Movement

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTZ	Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit (German International Cooperation Enterprise)
HSFK	Hessische Stiftung für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (Peace Research Institute Frankfurt)
IAG	Illegal Armed Group
ICBF	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Institute of Family Welfare)
ICTJ	International Centre for Transitional Justice
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards
IEPRI	Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales (Institute of Political and International Relations Studies)
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
ILO	International Labour Organisation
Indepaz	Instituto de Estudios de Desarrollo y de Paz (Development and Peace Studies Institute)
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
Ley 975	Ley de Justicia y Paz (Law of Justice and Peace)
M-19	Movimiento 19 de Abril (19th of April Movement)
MAPP-OEA	Misión de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz – Organización de Estados Americanos (Support Mission to the Peace Process in Colombia – Organisation of American States)
MAQL	Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame (Armed Quintín Lame Movement)
MAS	Muerte a los Secuestradores (Death to Kidnappers)
MDRP	Multi-country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
Nuffic	Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education
OAS	Organisation of American States
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAE	Programa de Atención Especializada (Programme of Specialised Attention)
PAHD	Programa de Atención Humanitaria al Desmovilizado (Programme of Humanitarian Attention to Demobilised People)
PRT	Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Revolutionary Workers' Party)
PRVC	Programa de Reincorporación a la Vida Civil (Programme for the Reintegration into Civil Life)
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RUF	Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SENA	Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (National Education Service)
SIDDR	Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
SSR	Security Sector Reform (or Security System Reform)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-DPKO	United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations
Unifem	United Nations Development Fund for Women
Unita	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UP	Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Union)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Abstract in English, Spanish and German

Abstract

To date, the growing body of literature about Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) has focused primarily on questions of policy design. It has widely neglected the beneficiaries of policy and their lives beyond DDR programmes. The present study intends to balance this shortcoming by systematically describing the individual perspective of ex-combatants. Through a series of 62 interviews with former Colombian paramilitaries, the themes that are central to their lives are identified. The selection of the interviewees and the interview analysis draw on grounded theory. The goal of this inductive approach is to build a *substantive* theory that consists of interrelated categories grounded in qualitatively collected data. According to the present analysis, the central themes in the ex-combatants' lives are the *emotional legacies* stemming from their involvement in war, strategies to overcome *security challenges* and *economic difficulties*, as well as a *pact with the state*, *stigma within communities* and a *disrupted family life*. Some preliminary policy implications complement the empirical analysis of this study. The interviewed former combatants demobilised together with their units of the United Self-defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia – AUC). The AUC were a paramilitary federation mostly financed through drug-trafficking who fought against leftist guerrilla groups. After negotiating with the Colombian government, 31'671 members of the AUC demobilised between 2003 and 2006. Since that time, they have received support from a national reintegration programme.

Resumen

Hasta la fecha, el creciente número de publicaciones sobre el tema de Desarme, Desmovilización y Reintegración (DDR) se ha enfocado principalmente en cuestiones de diseño de política pública, mientras ha omitido en gran parte los destinatarios de esta política y sus vidas más allá de los programas de DDR. El presente estudio se propone hacer un aporte para nivelar este desbalance, describiendo sistemáticamente la perspectiva individual de los excombatientes. A través de una serie de 62 entrevistas con antiguos paramilitares colombianos, se identifican los temas centrales en sus vidas. La selección de los entrevistados y el análisis de las entrevistas se hacen a partir de 'grounded theory'. El objetivo de este método inductivo es construir una teoría *substantiva*, consistente en categorías interrelacionadas y fundadas en los datos cualitativamente recogidos. Según el presente

análisis, las vidas de los desmovilizados están marcadas por *legados emocionales* de su participación en la guerra, estrategias para superar *desafíos de seguridad* y *dificultades económicas*, así como un *pacto con el Estado*, *estigmas dentro de sus comunidades* y una *vida familiar perturbada*. Algunas implicaciones preliminares para la política pública complementan el análisis empírico de este estudio. Los antiguos combatientes entrevistados se desmovilizaron juntos con sus bloques de las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). Las AUC eran una federación paramilitar que combatía a los grupos guerrilleros de izquierda y estaba principalmente financiada por el narcotráfico. Después de negociar con el gobierno colombiano, 31'671 miembros de las AUC se desmovilizaron entre 2003 y 2006. Desde entonces han recibido apoyo de un programa nacional de reintegración.

Zusammenfassung

Die zunehmenden Publikationen zum Thema Entwaffnung, Demobilisierung und Reintegration (DDR) haben sich bis anhin auf Policy-Fragen konzentriert. Die Policy-Empfänger selbst sowie ihre Lebensweise abseits von DDR-Programmen wurden weitgehend vernachlässigt. Mit der vorliegenden Studie wird beabsichtigt, diese Leerstelle mit einer systematischen Beschreibung der individuellen Perspektive von Ex-Kriegsteilnehmern zu schliessen. Anhand von 62 Interviews mit ehemaligen kolumbianischen Paramilitärs werden die zentralen Themen in deren Leben ermittelt. Der Grounded-Theory-Ansatz dient zur Auswahl der Interview-Partner sowie zur Interview-Analyse. Diese induktive Herangehensweise zielt auf eine *substantive* Theorie ab, die aus vernetzten und im qualitativ erhobenen Datenmaterial begründeten Kategorien besteht. Laut der vorliegenden Analyse ist das Leben ehemaliger Kämpfer gekennzeichnet durch das *emotionale Vermächtnis* ihrer Kriegsteilnahme, durch Strategien zur Überwindung von *Sicherheitsherausforderungen* und *wirtschaftlichen Schwierigkeiten*, sowie durch einen *Pakt mit dem Staat*, *Stigmas innerhalb der jeweiligen Gemeinschaft* und einem *gestörten Familienleben*. Eine Reihe von vorläufigen Empfehlungen für die Durchführung von DDR komplementieren die empirische Analyse dieser Studie. Die interviewten Ex-Kriegsteilnehmer haben sich zusammen mit ihren Einheiten von den Vereinigten Selbstverteidigungstruppen Kolumbiens (AUC) demobilisiert. Die AUC war eine paramilitärische Föderation, die gegen linksgerichtete Guerrilla-Gruppen kämpfte und sich hauptsächlich durch den Drogenhandel finanzierte. Zwischen 2003 und 2006 haben sich 31'671 Mitglieder der AUC nach Verhandlungen mit der kolumbianischen Regierung demobilisiert. Seither erhalten sie Unterstützung von einem nationalen Reintegrationsprogramm.

'What I was doing there, killing people,
I can no longer do here, it's more difficult.
If you kill somebody, you have the police after you.
This is what changes from one side to the other.'[1]
Demobilised person from Bogotá, January 2009

Introduction

Combatants are the human resources of war. They know about weapons and violence. Turning them into inconspicuous members of society after their demobilisation poses a challenge to war-torn countries. This process does not always end well, as evidenced by former rebels in Nicaragua who have remobilised, ex-members of the Kosovo Liberation Army who are involved in criminal organisations, or cross-border mercenaries in Western Africa. How can such negative outcomes in the aftermath of demobilisation be avoided?

In recent years, the international community has developed specific policies to overcome security threats emanating from large numbers of ex-combatants in post-conflict societies. These policies became generally known under the label of DDR – Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration. During disarmament, armed groups surrender their weapons, thus demonstrating their commitment to peace. Demobilisation basically consists of changing the ex-combatants' uniforms to civilian clothes, and facilitating the short-term transition to a civilian life. Reintegration is a long-term process with the goal of converting demobilised persons into economically independent and socially accepted members of their communities. According to the United Nations' Report on Peace Operations (United Nations 2000, para. 42), the DDR of former combatants is key to 'post-conflict stability and reduced likelihood of conflict recurrence'. The first DDR programme with international assistance took place in Namibia in 1989 (CCDDR 2009). Until 2009, 60 DDR processes have been carried out, mostly under the auspices of the United Nations or the World Bank.

The present study is located in the thematic context of DDR. It intends to contribute to an understanding of ex-combatants' lives – a crucial requisite to policy design and one that is lacking systematic knowledge thus far.

[1] 'Lo que hacía por allá, matar a otro, eso aquí no se puede, aquí es más difícil, si usted mata a otro, tiene la policía encima. Eso es lo que cambia de un lado a otro.'

Research problem

Over the years, DDR policies have been improved through the contribution of practitioners and academics, which culminated in the United Nations' Integrated DDR Standards of 2006 (United Nations 2006a). When designing policy, it is necessary to know about the policy receiver – in this case the ex-combatants. What are they like? What is important to them? How do they cope? These are some of the questions that must be addressed to provide policy makers with background information. However, so far, contributors have invested their energies in other aspects.

Most existing DDR literature is policy-oriented. This means, it describes programmes and prescribes good practices. A large number of case studies on different programmes and conceptual studies on the main dimensions of DDR processes have been produced over the past years. Recently, there have been attempts to change this focus. Some scholars have looked at the receiving end of the policy, by examining the needs of ex-combatants with respect to DDR (see for example Gomes Porto, Parsons, and Alden 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2004). Others have called for a focus on contextual factors that shape DDR based on empirical evidence (see for example Berdal and Ucko 2009; Muggah 2009).

Although the new approaches have addressed some of the puzzles, there is at least one piece lacking – knowledge about the life of the ex-combatant beyond DDR policy. I assume that there is much more to the lives of former combatants than DDR programmes. Looking at them through a policy lens limits the understanding of their behaviour and thinking. However, there is little systematic knowledge concerning this broader understanding of ex-combatants' lives (few exceptions include Annan, Brier, and Aryemo 2009; Richard Hill, Gwendolyn Taylor, and Temin 2008; Schafer 2007; Wessells 2007).

Purpose and questions

The present dissertation intends to enhance the understanding of former combatants, addressing the aforementioned underexplored topic. The primary concern is the individual level of demobilised people, not the DDR programme in which they are participating. On the one hand, this undertaking will balance the prevalent policy orientation of academic DDR studies with a different approach. On the other hand, it will provide policy makers with systematic knowledge to make informed decisions in the field of DDR. Hence, this study is written with both academics and practitioners in mind.

Based on the purpose of this study, I asked about the *central themes in the lives of former combatants*. This general question set the exploratory research process in motion. During the

research, I refined my questions in accordance to the grounded theory approach applied to this study (see Method). Through this process, I encountered the following central themes in the lives of ex-combatants: emotional legacies of war, security threats, economic difficulties, a pact with the state, stigma within the community and a disrupted family life. Subquestions correspond to these central themes: *What are the ex-combatants' emotional legacies of war? What strategies do they apply to overcome challenging security and economic situations? How do they relate to different social entities such as the state, community and family?*

Furthermore, I attempt to provide hints about a crucial underlying question: *Why do some ex-combatants reengage in illegal activities and others not?* The reengagement of ex-combatants in illegality has been a constant challenge for DDR, and is one of the clearest signs of failure for the individual reintegration process. While there exists some literature on this topic (see for example Bøås and Hatløy 2008; Nilsson 2008; Ribetti 2009), the individual level approach used in this research will add to the understanding of this phenomenon.

In addition to the original analysis of the central themes in the lives of ex-combatants, I also identify some preliminary policy implications. I say 'preliminary' as the policy implications are not the primary focus of this dissertation.

Context

In order to respond to the above-mentioned research questions, I explore the case of former paramilitaries in the context of the DDR process with the United Self-defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia – AUC). The paramilitary groups were an important actor in the prolonged armed conflict in this country.

The ongoing Colombian conflict reaches back to the 1960s when various leftist guerrilla groups began an armed rebellion against government forces. A mixture of political exclusion, revolutionary ideology and socio-economic marginalisation marked the initial years of this low-intensity conflict. Paramilitary groups mainly emerged in the 80s. They protected the status quo at the local level as a response to guerrilla influence. During the same period, the government began peace negotiations with different guerrilla groups. Some of these groups – such as the 19th of April Movement (M-19) – eventually demobilised in the early 90s in exchange for political reforms. However, the confrontation between the government forces on one side, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) on the other, continued and even intensified after the partial peace agreement with some of the leftist groups.

One consequence of this continued dynamic led to the expansion of paramilitarism. In 1997, various regional paramilitary groups formed the umbrella organisation AUC. The AUC experienced their major growth phase between 1998 and 2002, as peace talks were taking place between the government of Andrés Pastrana and the powerful FARC. The AUC not only reached military dominance in large territories, but also penetrated the social, political and economic spheres of society. The conflict reached its highest intensity during this period, with the paramilitaries being the main actor responsible for mass atrocities. The military activities of the AUC were mainly financed through drug-trafficking, and counted on, more or less, open collaboration with state authorities.

As soon as Álvaro Uribe was elected president in 2002, the government explored the possibility of negotiating the demobilisation of paramilitaries, with the aim of restoring a monopoly of force in the hands of the state. As a result of negotiations, between 2003 and 2006, 30'671 members of the AUC participated in collective demobilisation ceremonies. After demobilisation, the commanders and mid-ranking soldiers responsible for crimes against humanity had the opportunity to access a reduced prison sentence of up to eight years under the 'Justice and Peace Law'. The rank-and-file combatants were pardoned for the involvement in an illegal armed group and continue to receive benefits of a reintegration programme.

Since 2006, the Office of the High Counselor for Reintegration (Alta Consejería para la Reintegración – ACR) has been in charge of the reintegration policy. The ACR assists ex-combatants with education, vocational training, grants for micro-business projects, psychosocial support, healthcare and a monthly stipend dependent on participation. At the end of 2009, some 20'267 former members of the AUC were participating in the activities offered by the ACR programme. The ongoing conflict between government forces and guerrilla groups as well as the financial attraction of drug-related activities are thought to be major obstacles to the DDR process. New illegal armed groups emerged shortly after the demobilisation of the AUC. These groups are related to the paramilitaries in terms of personnel and coercion techniques. They are mainly interested in drug-trafficking and are often spearheaded by former mid-ranking AUC members.

The process with the AUC is somewhat unique as compared to other DDR processes. First, it is the result of a partial peace process, which means that it occurs while the main conflict persists. Typically, DDR is embedded in a comprehensive peace process. Second, and in parallel to the collective process with the AUC, the reintegration programme also receives a large number of deserters from the guerrilla groups who are called 'individually demobilised

persons'. Third, Colombia is relatively rich and institutionally strong in comparison to the mostly underdeveloped countries where DDR is taking place. Fourth, the process with the AUC is mainly financed and owned by the Colombian government itself while the involvement of the international community is comparatively small.

Uniqueness seems to be a fundamental characteristic of all the DDR contexts (CCDDR 2009). What could the processes with the Maoists in Nepal, the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone and the different armed groups in Bosnia have in common? Despite the generally limited comparability of DDR processes, there is much to learn from the example of former paramilitaries in Colombia, and also for other contexts. Bearing in mind the varying cultural, social and political contexts of DDR processes, ex-combatants from different provenances may still face comparable challenges and react similarly to them.

Method

This research project draws on a grounded theory methodology (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Grounded theory has rarely been applied to DDR-related issues to date (one exception is Annan, Brier, and Aryemo 2009).

The main goal of grounded theory is to inductively produce a substantive theory that consists of well-established, interrelated categories, which enhance the understanding of some social phenomenon that is grounded in qualitatively collected data. The research process does not start with a hypothesis, but rather with a question or a general research interest. Such an inductive approach is particularly appropriate in a field that lacks theoretical knowledge (as with the central themes in the lives of former combatants), for it potentially reveals hidden categories. Substantive theories, which emerge from grounded theory research, deal with a limited domain and are close to real-world situations.

The principal source of data for this study is interviews with former paramilitaries. Sixty-two interviews were conducted between January 2009 and April 2010 – most of them (fifty-four) with the logistical help of the ACR. Eight additional former members of the AUC were contacted through different channels. The interviews were conducted in four different sites (Bogotá, Medellín, Barrancabermeja and Tierralta), which correspond to different characteristics in terms of size, demobilised communities, security situations, conflict histories etc.

The interview questions changed over time as a result of the ongoing analysis. While the first interviews consisted of open-ended questions related to the general research question, the interviews became more and more refined over the course of data collection, in accordance

with the feedback principles of grounded theory. The continuous analysis during the collection period allowed for the establishment of provisional concepts, which were later tested through additional interviewing. Thanks to this procedure, the central themes and subcategories from the lives of former combatants could be 'grounded' in the data.

The basic limitation of the present approach is the data itself. What is not in the data is not in the theory, and what does not surface in the interviews with former paramilitaries, does not appear in the findings. For example, context only enters the findings through the eyes of former AUC members. As I am primarily interested in the central themes of former combatants, this is not a large problem. I do not need to know about reality in an objective sense. Instead, I am interested in the subjective realities as perceived by the ex-combatants. These perceptions form the basis for their actions.

Terms and definitions

Some of the relevant terms used frequently in the present study are clarified here in order to prevent potential misunderstandings:

What is an *ex-combatant*? I use different terms to refer to the central object of study. Although there are some slight differences, I use the following terms interchangeably: ex-combatants, former combatants, demobilised persons, and for the specific Colombian context: ex-paramilitaries, demobilised paramilitaries, or former members of the AUC. In this research, a collectively demobilised paramilitary is a person who demobilised together with his/her block of the AUC between 2003 and 2006. Many kinds of demobilised people are included within this definition: people who performed different activities within the group, men and women, persons of different ages, blocks, education levels, origins and so on. Some of them may not have been directly involved into combat. I refer to them all as ex-combatants.

What do I understand by *reengagement in illegal activities*? After their demobilisation, former paramilitaries usually returned to a civilian life. However, there are a considerable number of ex-paramilitaries who reengaged in some activity outside of legal limits. These activities span from low-scale delinquency to full engagement in illegal armed groups. The terms reengagement, recidivism or according to ex-combatants', 'going back' and 'rejoining the group' refer to these activities.

What is a *central theme*? I use the term central theme to refer to the main categories that I developed from the analysis of the 62 interviews with former paramilitaries. The central themes are the same as the 'categories' of Corbin and Strauss (2008, 159). Categories are

'higher-level concepts under which analysts group lower-level concepts according to shared properties. Categories are sometimes referred to as themes. They represent relevant phenomena and enable the analyst to reduce and combine data.'

What is a *subcategory*? I refer to all the lower-level categories that are part of the central themes as subcategories. They relate to different properties and dimensions of the central themes. For example, the emotions, strategies and interactions within the domain of the central themes are considered subcategories.

What do I understand by *emotions*? I generally understand emotions as proposed by the cognitive theory tradition. From this perspective, emotions are the result of a conscious or unconscious cognitive appraisal of an event (see Arnold 1960; Lazarus 1991; Solomon 1993). The emotional legacies presented in the findings section are one specific example.

What is a *strategy*? By strategy, I mean a plan, a 'how', a means of getting from here to there to achieve a particular goal (Mintzberg 1994). The 'here' is a perceived problem and the 'there' is a solution to this problem. The means chosen to get from here to there are the strategies. They do not only depend on the perceived problem and the particular goal but also on the circumstances in which the ex-paramilitaries live.

What is an *interaction*? By interaction, I mean a specific action involving the ex-combatant and some other person, object or entity. While strategies are goal-oriented in nature and presuppose agency of the involved actor (see Bandura 2001), interactions may be the product of passive behaviours.

Overview

The present dissertation is divided into three parts. *Part One* prepares the conceptual ground. It begins with a chapter that introduces the *DDR literature*. This chapter refers to the DDR standards set out by the international community, the DDR processes carried out in the world and some recurring critical issues related to these processes. At the end of the first chapter, I reflect on the gaps in the existing literature and define the research questions. The second chapter describes the *Colombian context*. It begins with a short introduction of general conflict dynamics, and the emergence of paramilitarism in particular. After an excursus on the earlier demobilisation efforts in Colombia, it presents the negotiations, the legal framework, the institutional accompaniment and the open debates related to the process with the AUC. I conclude the context chapter presenting the Colombian DDR process in an international perspective. The final chapter of Part One explains the *methodological framework*. Basic elements of grounded theory set the stage for the research design.

Thereafter, I describe the selection procedures of the interviewees, the interview as a source of data and the techniques of interview analysis. The method chapter concludes with some reflections on specific limitations and biases of this study.

Part Two is dedicated to the empirical findings. In a short *introductory chapter*, I explain the central themes of the theory and their interrelatedness in general terms. The six subsequent *findings chapters* are each dedicated to one of the central themes: emotional legacies of war, security threats, economic difficulties, a pact with the state, stigma within the community and disrupted family life. Each of the six chapters on central themes is divided into three parts: related literature, detailed findings and policy implications. The sections on *related literature* are a service to readers interested in learning about the existing literature related to each central theme. Also, this literature helped to ask questions of the data and refine concepts, true to the advice of Becker (1986, 149): 'Use the literature, don't let it use you.' With respect to the *detailed findings*, I first give an overview of each central theme with the help of an illustration of its subcategories and then explore its inner life more closely. In the third part, each findings chapter has its own preliminary *policy implications*.

Part Three assembles the *concluding remarks* of the present study. I begin with a recapitulation of the main findings. Second, I identify some topics that could have been expected considering the DDR literature, but were rarely encountered in the data. Third, I repeat some of the most important policy implications related to programme design. Finally, I give an outlook on potential future research related to the present study.

Part One: Preparing the Ground

'In many cases, DDR is an inherently unfair process,
because it cannot offer the same level of support
to the whole community.'
Cartagena Contribution to DDR (2009, 78)

1. Introducing Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)

While for German speakers, the 'DDR' ('Deutsche Demokratische Republik') came to an end with the fall of the Berlin Wall, for practitioners and academics interested in peacebuilding, the decade after the Cold War has led to a new 'DDR' – Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration. Former soldiers have been an issue in post-war environments throughout history (Lamb 2008). However, the growing importance of internal wars in the 1990s has called on the international community's attention to systematically address the challenge of large numbers of ex-combatants within former civil war states. The label DDR has ever since been used to denominate these efforts. DDR has become a central element of peacebuilding efforts (Bouthros-Gali 1992; United Nations 2000) and an almost 'natural' context for many former combatants around the world. Simultaneously, a growing body of academic literature on DDR has been developed.

In this chapter, an overview of existing DDR literature is provided in order to help the reader grasp the fundamentals of this specific policy. First, I describe DDR as it should be. I examine current standards and definitions of DDR, especially those outlined by the United Nations. Second, I show DDR in practice, asking where and how it has been recently implemented. Third, I discuss critical issues encountered in the DDR literature. After acknowledging crucial elements, lastly, I identify the research gaps in order to propose a well-grounded question. As opposed to the DDR literature, which is mostly policy-oriented, in the present study, I ask for the central themes in the lives of ex-combatants – a fundamental topic for the development of policy but often left aside.

1.1. What DDR should be: standards and definitions

While the early DDR processes in the 1990s were implemented by 'trial and error', sizeable efforts have been made in recent years to consolidate a body of policy standards. The most influential international standards guiding DDR processes are primarily the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) set out by the United Nations (2006a) and secondarily the Stockholm Initiative (2006) as well as the Cartagena Contribution to DDR (CCDDR 2009).[2] The IDDRS draws upon the accumulated experiences, lessons learnt and best practices within the UN system. Together with an operational guide (United Nations 2006b) and the briefing note for senior managers (United Nations 2006c), the IDDRS were elaborated by an inter-agency working group of UN staff members. The Stockholm Initiative was organised by the Swedish government and directed by academics and Swedish government officials with the objective of creating a comprehensive approach to DDR, and particularly informing the involved UN agencies. The Cartagena Contribution to DDR as a third major effort of knowledge-sharing is the result of the first international congress on DDR (CIDDR). This congress was held in Cartagena in May 2009, was attended by academics and practitioners, and was designed as a 'response to the lack of global reflection on DDR' (CCDDR 2009, 10).

According to Table 1, the three initiatives coalesce around the overall objective of DDR processes – to contribute to security and lay the basis for sustainable development:

Table 1: Overall objectives of DDR

IDDRS	*'The aim of the DDR process is to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict situations so that recovery and development can begin.'*
Stockholm Initiative	*'The primary aim of DDR programmes is to contribute to a secure and stable environment in which an overall peace process and transition can be sustained.'*
CCDDR	*'The overall goal of DDR processes is to contribute to the re-establishment of security, stability, and the rule of law, and to help create the basis for a sustainable peace.'*

At the same time, the three initiatives disagree on the circumstances in which DDR processes evolve. The preconditions for DDR established by the IDDRS (United Nations 2006a, chapter 2.10) such as a negotiated agreement or the willingness of the parties to engage in DDR, presuppose a conflict context with identifiable, demobilisable groups. The Stockholm Initiative is in line with the IDDRS, focusing on peace agreements and

[2] Other initiatives such as those by the European Union (2006) or by a joint working group of German, Norwegian, Swedish and Canadian security and development institutes (Gleichmann et al. 2004) are not included here.

negotiations as the context for DDR processes. The CCDDR has a broader understanding of DDR. It includes a wide range of DDR-like activities in environments of 'live conflicts', it views DDR as a potential component of counterinsurgency or anti-terror campaigns, and even as a tool to fight against global crime. This view corresponds to the changed security situation in the context of 'new wars' (Creveld 1991; Duffield 1998; Duffield 2001; Chris Hables Gray 1997; Holsti 1996; Kaldor 1999; Münkler 2002). In the interpretation of the CCDDR, DDR seems to be a focal point for all types of peaceduilding policies. Such an expansive concept risks creating expectations that DDR will not be able to match. Therefore, I stick to the more narrow understanding of the IDDRS and the Stockholm Initiative.

Regarding the different DDR stages, the IDDRS (United Nations 2006a, chapter 1.10, 2) sets out a widely recognised definition:

> '*Disarmament* is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.
> *Demobilisation* is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilisation may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilisation encompasses the support package provided to the demobilised, which is called reinsertion.
> *Reintegration* is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance.'

The phases of disarmament and demobilisation are mostly technical in nature and hence do not cause major disputes between practitioners and scholars. The main topic of debate is the reintegration phase due to its complexity and the potential for failure. The IDDRS (United Nations 2006a, chapter 4.30, 4) acknowledge that reintegration is a complex task: 'Frequently, disarmament and demobilisation are carried out very effectively, but then reintegration fails, jeopardizing the DDR programme and the wider security situation.' The proliferation of additional R's standing for reinsertion, repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, or reincorporation, with the aim to specify subconcepts of reintegration shows

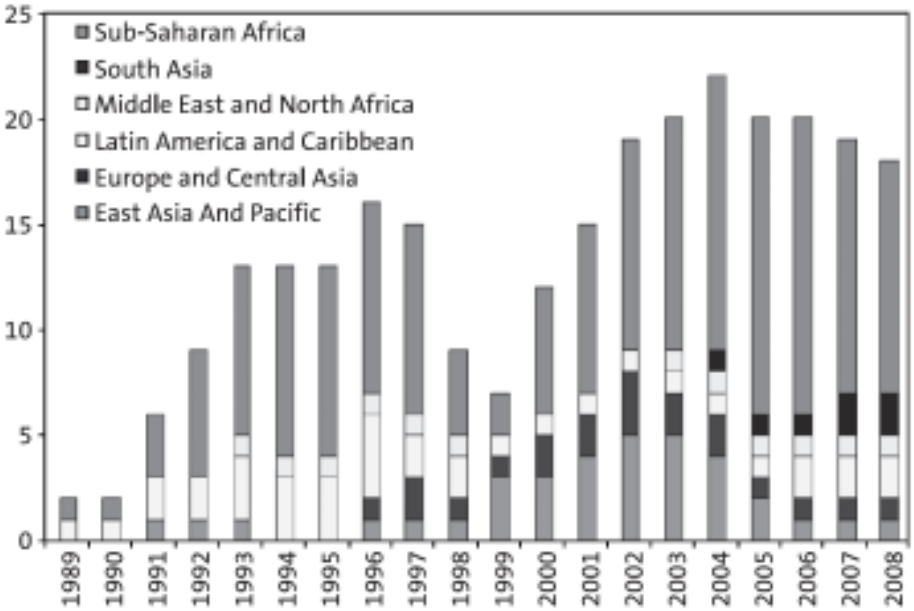
the variety of approaches. However, in agreement with Nilsson (2005, 28) I see no added value in an extension of DDR to DDRRR etc. 'Finally, all the new R's have the same ultimate goal as the traditional definition of reintegration, namely for ex-combatants and their families to become normal functioning members of civil society. There are therefore no obvious gains to be had by subdividing the concept of reintegration into several new phases.'

The IDDRS and the CCDDR define reintegration as an essentially social and economic process. The Stockholm Initiative along with different academics (Berdal 1996; Gomes Porto, Parsons, and Alden 2007; Nilsson 2005) introduces a political dimension to the reintegration process, stressing the need to convert ex-combatants in citizens with full democratic rights. Taking into account the psychological stress experienced during war activities and in the transition from war to peace, some academics (Kingma 2002; Pugel 2006) extend reintegration to the psychological realm. This is not surprising as there is no definite agreement on a single definition for the concept of reintegration in the academic world (CCDDR 2009; Pugel 2006). Most of the critical issues highlighted later are related to the reintegration phase.

1.2. What DDR is: processes in the world

Between 1989 and 2009, 60 DDR processes have been documented. In 2008, 15 DDR programmes were carried out worldwide (Caramés and Sanz 2009). As can be seen in Figure 1 below, current DDR efforts are concentrated mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 1: Geographic distribution of DDR operations, 1989-2008



(CCDDR 2009, 17)

In recent years, a large number of case studies either describing DDR programmes as such or some of its elements have been produced by academics and research institutes.[3] Different organisations have also focused specifically on DDR activities.[4] Gender-[5] and childhood-

[3] Some recommended case studies are listed here according to the country they refer to: Afghanistan: Chrobok (2005), Dahl Truelsen (2006), Giustozzi (2008), Özerdem (2002), Zyck (2009); Angola: Gomes Porto and Alden (2003), Gomes Porto et al. (2007), Mehreteab (2002); Bosnia and Herzegovina: Heinemann-Grüder and Pietz (2003), Romeva (2002); Burundi: Uvin (2007); Republic of Congo: Muggah (2004); El Salvador: Chávez (2008), Guaquetá (2005); Ethiopia: Muggah (2008); Indonesia: Beek (2007); Kosovo: Barakat and Özerdem (2005), Heinemann-Grüder and Paes (2001), Pozhidaev and Andzhelich (2005); Lebanon: Karamé (2009); Liberia: Bøås and Hatløy (2008), Hill et al. (2008), Jennings (2007; 2008), Paes (2005), Pugel (2006); Mozambique: Alden (2002), Granjo (2007), Schafer (1998; 2007); Namibia: Preston (1997); Northern Ireland: Rolston (2007); Rwanda: Verwimp and Verporten (2004); Sierra Leone: Humphreys and Weinstein (2004; 2005; 2007), Mitton (2008), Stovel (2008); Sudan: Muggah (2006a); Tajikistán: Torjesen and MacFarlane (2007); Uganda: Annan et al. (2009), Borzello (2007). The studies on Colombia are highlighted in the subsequent chapter.

[4] Some of these organisations and projects include: Escola de Cultura de Pau: escolapau.uab.cat; DDR and Human Security project at the University of Bradford: www.ddr-humansecurity.org.uk; United Nations DDR resource centre: www.unddr.org; Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Program (MDRP): www.mdrp.org; Bonn International Center for Conversion: www.bicc.de; and the International Centre for Transitional Justice: www.ictj.org.

[5] Some studies that highlight gender aspects include: Conaway and Martínez (2004), Coulter (2006), de Watteville (2002), Douglas et al. (2004), Farr (2003), Myrttinen (2003).

based[6] approaches to DDR are common. Despite the plethora of documents produced, there are few efforts of comparative analysis. On a global level, the yearbook 'Analysis of DDR Programmes Existing in the World' by the Escola de Cultura de Pau gives a systematic account of ongoing DDR activities.[7] According to their latest report (Caramés and Sanz 2009), DDR programmes were executed in three continents in 2008 targeting more than one million ex-combatants (see Table 2): one in the Americas (Colombia), three in Asia (Afghanistan, Nepal, and the Aceh region of Indonesia) and eleven in Africa (Angola, Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Liberia, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, and Uganda). In their 2008 edition, authors Caramés and Sanz (2008, 10) arrive at a pessimistic overall conclusion: 'Thus far, no DDR process in the last few years has produced optimal results, due to deficiencies in various areas, whether defective planning, implementations that have not focused sufficient attention on the most vulnerable groups, or ineffective means for monitoring and evaluation.'

In what follows, I give a short account of some of the main findings of the 2009 edition of the Analysis of DDR programmes (Caramés and Sanz 2009) and some additional case studies to describe the wide variety of different DDR initiatives currently taking place. Where DDR has followed a peace agreement, it has not always been detailed in the agreement itself. An element often layed out in agreements and after the cessation of hostilities, are transitional justice measures. Most of the cases result in a general amnesty for the perpetrators of violence during war. Colombia and Rwanda are two exceptions (see Describing the Colombian Context). Burundi, Nepal, Indonesia, and Liberia installed a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In nearly all cases, DDR is targeted toward armed opposition groups and in some cases, toward the armed forces (see Table 2). In two cases, DDR was developed while the actual conflict was persisting: Afghanistan and Colombia.[8] In eight cases, the need to reform the security sector (SSR) was acknowledged and addressed. As the cases of Kosovo (Heinemann-Grüder and Paes 2001) or Nepal (Rynn and Greene 2008) show, SSR may even become the main ingredient of the peace process.

[6] Some studies that specifically focus on child ex-combatants include: Annan et al. (2006), Annan et al. (2009), Blattmann (2006), Honwana (2007), Jiménez Caballero (2009), Peters (2007a), Wessells (2007), Zack-Williams (2006).

[7] Other comparative literature usually address cases on a regional level: Berdal (1996) on Somalia, Mozambique, Angola and Central America; Colletta et al. (1996) on Ethiopia, Namibia and Uganda; Dzinesa (2007) on Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe; Edmonds et al. (2009) on Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo; Kingma (2000; 2002) on cases in Sub-Saharan Africa; Knight (2008) on African cases; Nilsson (2008) on the Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone; Spencer (1997) on Central American cases.

[8] The wider approach of the CCDDR (2009) includes Iraq and the Philippines within the cases of DDR that are evolving during the conflict.

Table 2: Beneficiaries of DDR programmes in 2007

Country	Combatants*	Composition	Demobilised persons (%)	Situation
Afghanistan	63000	Armed forces	63380 (100)	Reintegration
Angola	138000	105000 militias and 33000 armed forces	97114 (70)	Reintegration
Burundi	78000	41000 armed forces, 21500 militias, and 15500 guerrillas	23185 (29)**	Demobilisation and reinsertion
Chad	9000	Armed forces	9000	Reintegration
AUC, Colombia	32000	Paramilitaries	31671 (105.9)	Reintegration
Cõte d'Ivoire	40000	42500 militias and 5000 armed forces	-	Demobilisation
Eritrea	200000	Armed forces	200000 (100)	Reintegration
Haiti	6000	Militias	500 (8.3)	Prospecting
Aceh, Indonesia	3000	Guerrillas	3000 (100)	Reintegration
Liberia	105000	12000 armed forces, 93000 guerrillas and militias	101945 (97)	Reintegration
Nepal	15000	Guerrillas	19602 (126.6)	Demobilisation
Niger	3000	Militias	3160 (100)	Reintegration
Central African Republic	8000	Militias	7556 (99)	Reintegration
Democratic Republic of the Congo	190000	170000 militias and 20000 armed forces	150000 (79)	Demobilisation
Republic of the Congo	30000	Militias	17400 (58)	Reintegration
Rwanda	36000	20000 armed forces and 16000 militias	26536 (73.7)	Demobilisation
Somalia	53000	Militias	1266 (2.3)	Pilot phase
Sudan	79000	Militias must integrate into armed forces prior to being demobilised	-	Demobilisation
Uganda	15000	Guerrillas	21500 (140)	Reintegration
Total (19)	1103000	621000 non-state forces and 482000 state forces	776452 (79)	

* Estimates at time of planning demobilisation
** Does not take into consideration the demobilisation of armed forces.
Adapted from Caramés and Sanz (2008, 21)

According to the DDR standards, special attention must be paid to particularly vulnerable groups. Women, children and disabled persons compose some of the commonly denominated groups with specific needs. Afghanistan, Chad, Liberia, and Uganda are amongst the countries that present large quantities of child soldiers. Women have been specifically targeted for example in Uganda. How to establish who is eligible for DDR benefits is a major challenge for programme design. The possession of a weapon, membership in an armed group (determined either through external evaluation or by lists submitted by the armed group), and personal or collective commitment to the peace process are some common criteria. Lax eligibility criteria may undermine the legitimacy of the whole process. Disarmament and demobilisation have never been completely fulfilled in a single case. Frequently, not all the arms are surrendered, nor are all those received ultimately destroyed. The number of arms handed in by the Free Aceh Movement for example was small (Beek 2007). Arms are often incorporated in the arsenal of the regular armed forces. Also, demobilised soldiers may be

partly integrated into the regular forces, such as occurred in the case of Tajikistan (Torjesen and MacFarlane 2007).

As a new approach to DDR, it is worth noting the initiative of the Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) in the African Great Lakes region. This project is financed and directed by a set of agencies led by the World Bank. It is a response to the changed conflict environment and its implications for transnational conflict resolution. The programme operates in Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

The Colombian context will be examined specifically and placed into a comparative perspective in the following chapter.

1.3. Critical issues in DDR literature

In parallel to the development of DDR as an integral part of peacebuilding, practitioners and academics alike have contributed to a growing number of publications about DDR. Existing literature predominantly focuses on policy design and implementation with a descriptive or prescriptive approach.

Early systematic analyses of 'Dembolisation and Reintegration Programmes' were conducted, for example, by the World Bank (Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer 1996) and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. The latter focused specifically on the management of arms in post-conflict environments (Zawels 1996). Over time the policy design has been refined, but there remain some challenges to programming DDR. A closer look at the critical issues and their appraisal within the mostly policy-oriented literature aids the reader in grasping the complexities of DDR.[9] I roughly follow the conceptualisation of Nilsson (2005), dividing the critical issues into three categories: contextual factors, substitutions for the benefits of war, and the wounds of victims and perpetrators. Furthermore, I make reference to the complex task of evaluating DDR. In the conclusion of this document, I return to some of the critical issues presented here.

Acknowledging the context

Recently, various contributors (Berdal and Ucko 2009; Colletta and Muggah 2009; Muggah 2009; Torjesen 2009) have called for an increased focus on context-related issues when implementing DDR policies. The CCDDR (2009) identifies the following contextual variables as shaping the environment of a DDR process: the nature of conflict and peace, the political will of the involved actors, institutional capacity and economic conditions.[10]

The 'war and peace context' may be the most important among the contextual factors that shape DDR. With few exceptions, DDR takes place in a post-conflict environment that is often characterised by persisting high levels of violence (Moser and McIlwaine 2001).

[9] Some conceptual writings that give account of critical issues and dilemmas are: Ball and van de Goor (2006), Berdal (1996), Berdal and Ucko (2009), Buxton (2008), Conoir and Verna (2006), de Watteville (2002), Fischer (2004), Gleichmann et al. (2004), Hagmann and Nielsen (2002), Humphreys and Weinstein (2005), Kingma (2001), Kingma and Muggah (2009), Knight and Özerdem (2004), Lamb (2008), Mason and Paes (2000), Michael (2006), Muggah (2006b; 2009), Nilsson (2005), Nussio (2009a), Özerdem and Podder (2008), Pouligny (2004), Spear (2006), Specker (2008), Springer (2005), and Torjesen (2006; 2009).

[10] Alternative contextual factors include the existence of armed groups, access to natural resources that are easy to loot, a high availability of weapons, and insufficient control by central governments over their own territory (Nilsson 2005); or the political environment, the economic opportunities and competition for natural resources, the availability of weapons, social and cultural norms and their psychological impact (Kingma 2002); or the political will, careful preparation based on rapid assessments of the opportunity structure and a profiling of the needs of ex-combatants and their families, and transparent institutional arrangements with a simple monitoring and feedback system to ensure flexible but accountable implementation (Colletta 1999).

Elements related to the economic 'feasibility' of armed violence (Berdal 2005; Collier and Sambanis 2002; Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2009) and other security-related topics might exacerbate the often-fragile peace. For example: Are there easily lootable resources (Lujala 2010; Ross 2004)? Do spoilers (Stedman 1997; 2003) threaten the peace process? Are there established war economies[11] (Cooper, Goodhand, and Pugh 2004; Heupel 2006; Nitzschke and Studdard 2005; Spear 2006)? Or what is the availability of weapons in the aftermath of demobilisation (Kingma 2002)? These factors determine the overall security situation and the potential success of a DDR process.

The political will of the parties to the conflict is crucial for the success of DDR (Berdal and Ucko 2009). A lack of political will, an absence of confidence, or an undermining attitude among former conflict parties may lead to renewed violence (Hartzell and Hoddie 2006). However, it is not just the will of the parties to the conflict that is important. The will of involved third states or external actors determines the evolution of the process as well (Ball and van de Goor 2006; Colletta 1999; Walter 1997; 2001).

Institutional capacity refers primarily to the degree of state capacity or fragility (Rotberg 2004; 2007; Schneckener 2007) and to its territorial presence. 'In cases where there is barely a state nor any external power to keep parties to their agreement, demobilisation has little chance of success' (Kingma 2002, 188). DDR must therefore be embedded in a series of other post-conflict measures such as interim stabilisation measures (ISM), security sector reform (SSR), justice reform, economic development efforts and general weapons reduction. The connection between DDR and SSR[12] has attracted a lot of attention in recent years (Bryden 2007; Brzoska 2005; Colletta and Muggah 2009; Greene and Rynn 2008; Lamb and Dye 2009; McFate 2010). The most obvious linkage between the two is whether ex-combatants shall be integrated into the regular military and police structures (Greene and Rynn 2008).

[11] War economies have the following features: 'a) They involve the destruction or circumvention of the formal economy and the growth of informal and black markets, effectively blurring the lines between the formal, informal and criminal sectors and activities. b) Pillage, predation, extortion, and deliberate violence against civilians is used by combatants to acquire control over lucrative assets, capture trade networks and diaspora remittances and exploit labor. c) War economies are highly decentralised and privatised, both in the means of coercion and in the means of production and exchange. d) Combatants increasingly rely on licit or illicit exploitation of/trade in lucrative natural resources. e) They thrive on cross-border trading networks, regional kin, and ethnic groups, arms traffickers and mercenaries, as well as legally operating commercial entities, each of which have a vested interest in the continuation of conflict and instability. f) War economies in weak states are regarded as opportunities by external organised crime groups, which seek to move in to exploit the lack of regulation. g) Most formal authority that exists is involved in predation and the capture of government ministries is exclusively for the economic opportunities that would result. The state is only regarded as a target for predation.' (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005, 2; Spear 2006, 170)

[12] The OECD Development Assistance Committee (2005) defines SSR as follows: ''Security system reform' is a term used to describe the transformation of the 'security system' – which includes all the actors, their roles, responsibilities and actions – working together to manage and operate the system in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance, and thus contributes to a well-functioning security framework.'

Concerning economic conditions, it is important to bear in mind the macro-economic environment of DDR countries. Özerdem and Podder (2008; see also Verwimp and Verpoorten 2004) claim that this correlate is often overlooked in DDR planning. In most cases, the economies of post-war states are largely destroyed (Specker 2008) and cannot possibly absorb 'the 'flood' of ex-combatants' (Buxton 2008, 31).

The CCDDR concludes from its analysis of contextual factors that 'each post-conflict context is unique, and its characteristics need to be analysed and understood as a precondition for designing DDR programmes' (CCDDR 2009, 19).

Substituting the 'benefits of war'

Peacetime should provide substitutes for the benefits accrued during wartime in order to prevent ex-combatants from reengaging in illegal activities. Such activities can appear as an attractive alternative to DDR processes, especially in a context with persisting war economies and the presence of spoilers.[13] As described in the previous section, 'weak state institutions and porous borders allow for the formation of illicit economies, including the trafficking of high value commodities such as diamonds and narcotics, weapons, and human beings (new recruits, sex workers, illegal migrants, etc.), which may provide former combatants and spoilers with the means to reignite conflict or survive through predation' (CCDDR 2009, 9). In this context, ex-combatants and their families need 'peacetime substitutes'. They must be convinced that the benefits of peace outweigh those of war. Nilsson (2005; see also Nilsson 2008) divides the concept of peacetime substitutes into the subfields of physical security, economic security, political influence and societal prestige.

Physical security is critical in the aftermath of demobilisations. Post-conflict situations are usually fragile in terms of security or paradoxically, may even lead to increasing levels of insecurity (Moser and McIlwaine 2001). Demobilised persons are often exposed to threats by former enemies or attracted by proposals from previous comrades to rejoin armed groups or criminal organisations. They need a trustworthy guarantor of their security (Roe 1999; Walter 1997; 2001), otherwise they may opt for reengagement (Berdal 1996; Kingma 2002; Nussio 2009a). The role of the guarantor should be played by the state, as such efforts can improve institutional capacity and related policies mentioned above.

Similarly, a lack of economic security can entice ex-combatants away from the path of reintegration, since the economic attraction of illicit activities often persists (Özerdem 2002;

[13] Reengagement in illegal activities has been explored in various writings: Bjørgo and Horgan (2009), Bøås and Hatløy (2008), Hill et al. (2008), Nilsson (2008), Munévar and Nussio (2009), Nussio (2009a), Rausch (2006), Ribetti (2009), and Steenkamp (2005).

Spear 2006; Torjesen 2006). As pointed out in the 'greed-theories' of civil war (Berdal and Malone 2000; Berdal 2005; Collier and Hoeffler 1998; 2004; Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2009), economic incentives are an important factor that attract people into joining a party to the conflict or remaining within it. In addition to the macro-economic challenges, the ex-combatants suffer from a range of capital deficits in the economic realm: 'low access to capital; loss of social networks; insufficient human capital, including education and marketable skills' (CCDDR 2009, 61). Evidently, cash payments alone do not adress the problem of integrating ex-combatants into society (Berdal 1996). In the disarmament phase, cash programmes such as 'weapons for cash' can even be counterproductive, but in the reinsertion phase, a financial safety net is crucial (Willibald 2006). Generally, the efforts made in the field of economic reintegration are concentrated on financial assistance, education, vocational training, skills development and microbusinesses (United Nations 2006a). As such, a significant challenge is to adequately assess the needs of ex-combatants and economy.

The political participation of ex-combatants or the conversion of armed actors into political parties is often an important topic due to the political agendas of many demobilised groups. The possibility of becoming a part of the political arena empowers former combatants (Guáqueta 2007) and may keep them attached to civil life. Therefore, combatants should not be politically marginalised after their demobilisation (Buxton 2008; Gomes Porto, Parsons, and Alden 2007; Nilsson 2005; Zartman 1995).

According to Nilsson (2005), the last element of peacetime substitutes is societal prestige. By carrying arms, using violence, or taking part in an important conflict, combatants gain a certain status, often as a consequence of an inflated masculinity (Myrttinen 2003; Theidon 2009). A loss of this status may create an incentive to rejoin illegal groups. The rank of ex-combatants within their former troops can exacerbate the difficulty in regaining societal prestige in the aftermath of conflict. Gomes et al. (Gomes Porto, Parsons, and Alden 2007, 104) observe that it is medium ranked ex-combatants in particular, who have trouble with reintegration due to their large comparative descent in terms of social status (Nilsson 2008; Stockholm Initiative 2006). Ex-combatants need new roles that create the possibility for a similar level of societal prestige. Joining the armed forces or the police is a common way to address this topic. The largest challenge in this respect is the possible contradiction between measures to enhance societal prestige of former combatants, and those that focus on reconciliation with the community.

'Healing the wounds' of victims and perpetrators

An important element of reintegration processes highlighted by Nilsson (2005) is the wounds left by the conflict (see also Annan and Cutter 2009). These include both the wounds present in the psyche of the perpetrators of violence, as well as those of the victims and their communities. DDR programmes have often created a tense environment since the receiving communities perceive the benefits provided to former perpetrators as unfair. 'There is a persistent danger that DDR [...] will continue to be viewed exclusively as an 'entitlement' for former soldiers instead of as a mechanism to improve the security of, and the level of development in, traumatised communities' (Muggah 2006b, 201). As a consequence, community members often look at former combatants with feelings of envy, fear or resentment as they often do not receive any state assistance, and may have been exposed to their violence (Hagmann and Nielsen 2002; Mark Knight and Özerdem 2004). This societal perspective may convert ex-combatants into stigmatised persons who find it difficult to socially reintegrate. Insufficient social reintegration may lead ex-combatants to feel separate from other civilians and as a result, stick to their old comrades and commanders (Nilsson 2008). Some authors consider these bonds of loyalty to be opportunities for ex-combatants to obtain a job or launch their own businesses (Kingma and Muggah 2009), while others emphasise the possible dangers of rearmament and criminality (Nilsson 2008; Spear 2006). There exists no agreement in the literature on whether it is necessary to break the command and control structure of former armed groups (CCDDR 2009).

Many scholars and policy makers call for a community-based approach to reintegration in order to facilitate reconciliation and the social assimilation of former fighters (see for example Buxton 2008; CCDDR 2009; Colletta 1999; Gleichmann et al. 2004; Kingma and Muggah 2009; Stockholm Initiative 2006; United Nations 2006a). With respect to the objective of these activities, Rigby (CCDDR 2009, 18) states that 'reconciliation may be an overly ambitious goal in the immediate aftermath of conflict. It may in fact be counterproductive to press for reconciliation when emotional and psychological wounds are still raw. In such cases, several more modest goals may be more appropriate: working towards peaceful coexistence in the near term, and helping victims come to terms with their loss and grief' (see also Lederach 1998; Rigby 2001).

In addition to local approaches, transitional justice measures may help to overcome fundamental challenges on a national scale. Transitional justice 'refers to a field of activity and enquiry focused on how societies address legacies of past human right abuses, mass atrocity, or other forms of severe social trauma, including genocide or civil war, in order to

build a more democratic, just, or peaceful future' (Bickford 2004; see also Elster 2004; Freeman 2009; McEvoy and McGregor 2008; Teitel 2002). Transitional justice measures have the potential to legitimise DDR and thus lower resentment among victims towards former perpetrators of violence (Annan and Cutter 2009; Sriram and Herman 2009). This in turn facilitates social reintegration for ex-combatants.

Apart from the wounds within the society, the wounds of former perpetrators of violence – their psychological trauma – have to be dealt with as well. These post-war traumas can lead to alcohol or drug addiction and disturb public life. It is difficult to quantify the impact of the scars left by war activities, but they can ultimately affect broader national peacebuilding (Kingma 2002).

In summary, DDR processes may always contain a trace of unfairness. This is due to the fact that ex-combatants are potential spoilers and thus, focused sustainable support becomes necessary (United Nations 2006a, chapter 4.30, 3). Other war-affected groups are less of a danger to immediate security needs, and therefore tend to be overlooked in the immediate aftermath of war.

Success or failure?

A further important issue in policy-driven literature is the evaluation of DDR programmes. How do we know when a DDR process is successful? In a study on DDR in Sierra Leone, Humphreys and Weinstein (2007) question the effectiveness of DDR by comparing DDR participants with non-participants: 'It is apparent from the data that non-participants in DDR did not fare any worse in reintegration than those who disarmed and participated in DDR training programs. Non-participants were no less likely to gain acceptance from family and neighbours; to return to their home communities; to reject their factions as major political actors in the post-war period; or to embrace non-violent means of affecting political change.' In this quote, Humphreys and Weinstein refer to some potential indicators of reintegration such as social acceptance, return to home communities, rejection of their factions as a major political actor, or use of non-violent means for political change (see also Humphreys and Weinstein 2005; Palou and Méndez 2010).

Although there are proposals for indicators of success, there is no general consensus. Generally speaking, this is due to varying expectations related to DDR: the 'minimalists' consider it to be a tool for improving the security situation, while the 'maximalists' ask for a

contribution to overall development (Kingma and Muggah 2009).[14] The latest effort at consolidating evaluation criteria, spearheaded by the CCDDR (2009, 24) failed: '[...] despite increasing attention to programme learning and efforts to expand and improve evaluation, there are still fundamental disagreements over when and how to assess the impacts of DDR programmes.'

While there is no progress in the development of success indicators, criteria of failure are implicitly recognised within the DDR community. During the Cartagena Congress, the topic of evaluation was discussed in one of the panels without producing substantive results. However, the present experts agreed that 'you know intuitively when a DDR process is a failure but not when it is a success' (Nussio 2009a). Based on this 'intuition', we could claim that on the individual level, the process of reintegration fails when the demobilised person in question reengages in illegal activities (see Nussio 2009a; Ribetti 2009). A DDR process as a whole would have failed if the level of security worsened after its termination (see Jorge Restrepo and Muggah 2009). Both minimalists and maximalists would agree on this negative criterion of failure.

The present study does not evaluate the Colombian DDR process. On an individual level however, I am interested in the conditions that lead ex-combatants to reengage in illegal activities.

[14] The debate between maximalists and minimalists resembles the differentiation between positive and negative peace by Johann Galtung (1964; see also Galtung 1996) and the minimalist and maximalist peacebuilders of Rettberg (2003).

1.4. Addressing the gap

'Sound empirical research begins with strong grounding in related literature, identifies a research gap, and proposes research questions that address the gap' (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007, 26). Thus, what are the gaps in existing literature on DDR? As argued throughout this chapter, DDR literature has been mostly concerned with policy. That is, the policy itself has functioned as the object of study. A short review of other contributors who have reflected on the growing body of literature confirms this impression.

Humphreys and Weinstein (2007, 562) call for a focus on the reintegration of individual ex-combatants as opposed to the common policy-oriented studies: '[...] In spite of nearly a decade of involvement in demobilizing warring factions, there is little evidence about the factors that explain whether individuals can successfully reintegrate after conflict and the precise causal impact of externally funded programmes to reintegrate combatants. Instead, the scant literature on demobilisation has focused attention on details of programme design and implementation.' Gomes et al. (2007, xvi) come to a similar conclusion, asking for a better understanding of the principal target group: 'Paradoxically, the content of substantive reintegration, from the point of the target group remains fundamentally unexamined.' Both Humphreys and Weinstein and Gomes et al. have contributed to an individual-oriented approach. However, they look at the individual ex-combatant through the lens of the DDR programme.

Recently, contributors to the field have criticised the predominantly policy-oriented literature from yet another angle. They emphasise the importance of contextual factors in three influential publications: 'Reintegrating Armed Groups After Conflict' by Berdal and Ucko (2009), 'Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction' by Muggah (2009) and an issue of the journal 'Conflict, Security and Development' introduced by Torjesen (2009) with an article on the 'New Avenues for Research in the Study of DDR'. These three volumes, containing a large number of case studies, agree on the importance of context. This point of view can be summarised by a quote from Muggah (2009, 20): 'The volume does not offer a blueprint for future DDR operations. After all, a fundamental message is that templates are to be avoided: context determines all.' Muggah asks for more evidence-based intervention as opposed to the prevalent prescriptive approaches (see also Colletta and Muggah 2009). Similarly, Berdal and Ucko (2009, 2) state that 'much of that [DDR] literature has been prescriptive and policy-oriented in character, focusing on those engaged in the delivery of DDR programmes and concerned with the identification of specific and transferable lessons.' Berdal and Ucko try to change this focus by emphasizing the particularities of each case,

including the political character of the armed groups participating in DDR processes. Their publication is hence 'less concerned with the 'supply side' challenges raised by the design and implementation of multi-donor and multi-agency DDR programmes than it is with the politics of DDR and the nature of the armed groups at the receiving end of DDR treatment.'

The present attempt to shed light on this phenonemon agrees with earlier contributors. DDR literature needs to be nourished by new approaches. Yet recent approaches, although including an individual perspective on DDR or contextual factors, still predominantly emanate from a policy orientation. Based on the assumption that *starting from a different point, you may come to a different conclusion*, the present study does not analyse or evaluate DDR efforts but tries to understand former combatants living in a DDR environment. Hence, it is not about DDR itself, but about ex-combatants and their lives – I am convinced that there is more to ex-combatants' lives than the DDR process they may be participating in. Broadening the focus and looking for what is important to ex-combatants, essential themes may be revealed that cannot be accessed with a strict focus on DDR.

In the following overview (see also Figure 2), I propose a typology for the three dominant branches in recent DDR literature, and introduce a fourth branch that corresponds to the present individual level appproach[15]:

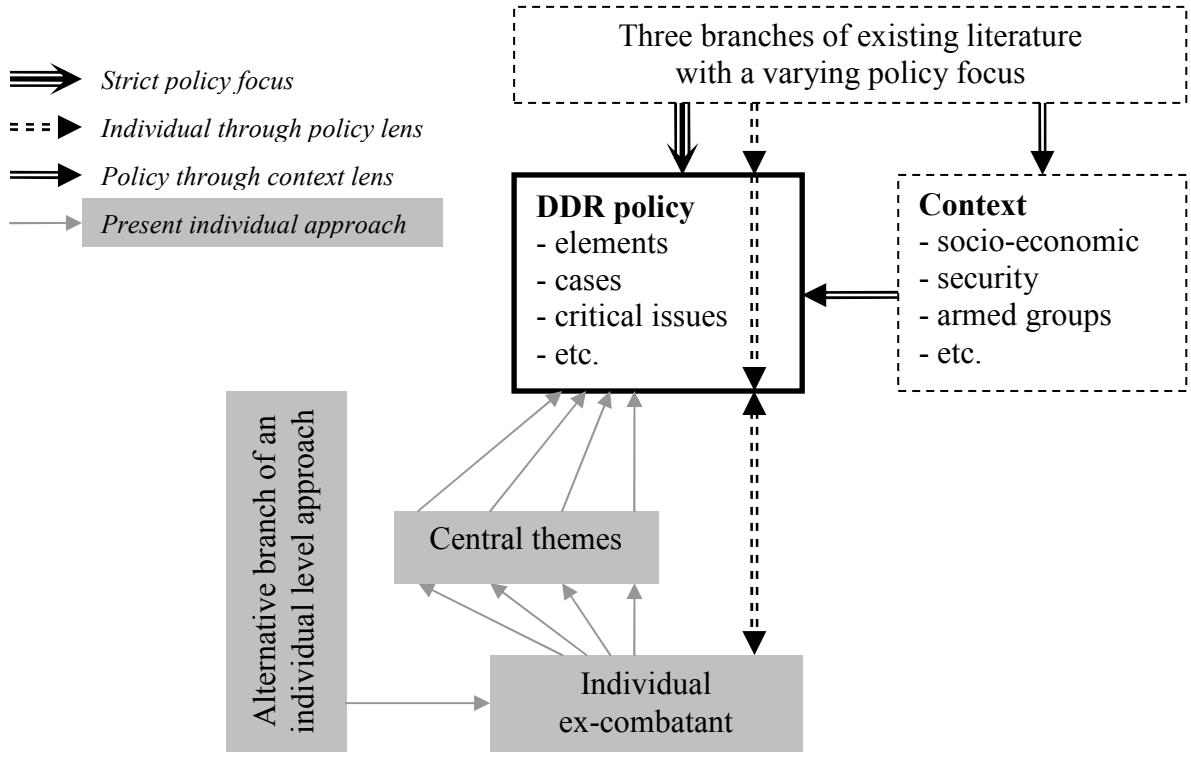
- *Strict policy focus:* Most of the DDR literature belongs to this first type. The object of study for these predominantly descriptive or prescriptive writings is the DDR policy itself, concrete cases, specific aspects (such as social, economic or political reintegration), involvement of international actors in the process, or DDR with respect to related peacebuilding policies such as security sector reform or transitional justice.
- *Individual through policy lens:* This body of literature describes the DDR process through the perspective of former combatants. The study 'What the Fighters Say' by Humphreys and Weinstein (2004; see also Humphreys and Weinstein 2007) is an influential work from this perspective. Other contributions include Pugel (2006), Gomes et al. (2007), Jennings (2007) and Uvin (2007).
- *Policy through context lens:* This is the type of literature Berdal and Ucko (2009), Muggah (2009) and Torjesen (2009) call for. It includes a large number of evidence-based case studies using different types of research methods highlighting social, economic and political contexts. This body of literature also uses case studies to

[15] Some exceptions that do not exactly match the proposed typology may include: Bøås and Hatløy (2008), Christensen and Utas (2008), Granjo (2007), Nilsson (2008), Ribetti (2009), Stovel (2008). I include some findings from the afore-mentioned studies in the more specific literature reviews in the respective findings chapters (see Part Two).

explore the impact of how different types of war or armed actors shape DDR processes. Furthermore, it examines the effects of DDR on other dimensions such as security and reconciliation.

- *Present individual approach* (grey in Figure 2): This is the approach chosen for the present study, and will be discussed in further detail below. Studies with similar approaches are rare, but some exceptions include: Annan et al. (2009) who describe the 'salient issues in daily life' for returning young rebels in Northern Uganda; Hill et al. (2008) who identify the 'key factors affecting their [the ex-combatants'] choice of whether to build a life as a civilian or explore taking up arms again' in Liberia; Schafer (2007), who examines the 'return of soldiers and guerrillas to civilian life in postwar Mozambican society' based on firsthand accounts; and Wessells (2007), who describes the 'transition to civilian life' drawing on participatory research and interviews with former child soldiers.

Figure 2: Present individual approach and its location within existing literature



Why is it necessary to shift the attention away from policy and towards the individual ex-combatant? On a very general level, I agree with Jon Elster (1989, 13) who says that 'the elementary unit of social life is the individual human action. To explain social institutions and social change is to show how they arise as the result of the actions and interaction of

individuals. This view, often referred to as methodological individualism, is in my view trivially true.' I am not proposing a methodological individualism and do not reject the importance of structures or organisations for explaining social phenomena. More specifically, the focus on the ex-combatant is due first, to a lack of investigation about the individual in the existing literature on DDR. Second, the individual is the crucial unit of reintegration. The former combatant is the primary receiver of DDR benefits and the primary source of failure in reintegration processes (see Critical Issues). *These two reasons make it necessary to improve our understanding of ex-combatants on an individual level in order to inform policy design*.

As a result of the gap in individual level analyses, I generally ask: What are the central themes in the lives of former combatants? Also, I intend to answer the following subquestions: What are the emotional legacies of war that ex-combatants face? What strategies do they apply to overcome challenging economic and security situations? How do they relate to different social entities such as family, community and the state? The dichotomous choice of living a civilian life or returning to illegality has been an important element in the analysis of this study. Therefore, I keep in the back of my mind a crucial underlying question: Why do some ex-combatants reengage in illegal activities and others not? In the findings (see Part Two), I present the answers to these questions and their preliminary policy implications.

After establishing the guiding research questions, I choose the case of the Colombian DDR process with the AUC as an appropriate context (see Describing the Colombian Context) and grounded theory as the guiding research methodology (see Using Grounded Theory). I include some of the findings from the aforementioned studies in the more specific literature reviews in the respective findings chapters.

'I have been able to personally confirm that the vast majority
of demobilised people have always wanted to be good people.
It is the responsibility of the state – and of society in general –
to provide opportunities to all citizens
so that that intention can become a reality.'
Frank Pearl, former High Counselour for Reintegration (El Tiempo 2008b)

2. Describing the Colombian Context

The goal of this chapter is to provide the reader with basic knowledge about the Colombian context. Since the present study is about former paramilitaries, it is necessary to describe the conflict context they lived in as *paramilitaries* and the DDR context they live in as *former paramilitaries*.

To begin, the general conflict context and paramilitarism in particular are introduced to the reader. Second and as an excursus, I outline earlier efforts of demobilizing armed groups in Colombia to show that the current process is not the first of its genre. Third, I describe the DDR process with the United Self-defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). How did the negotiations between the AUC and government evolve? What is the legal framework for DDR? Which institutions accompany the process? What are the benefits for the ex-combatants? And what are the open debates regarding its execution? Finally, I explain why the context of DDR with the AUC is appropriate for studying the research question outlined earlier. What are the main characteristics of Colombian DDR in comparison to other processes in the world.

2.1. Past context: conflict, paramilitarism and the AUC

Colombia has a long track record of protracted violence. Here, I shortly describe the causes and dynamics of the conflict in order to contextualise the emergence of paramilitarism – the past environment of former paramilitaries.

The ongoing conflict has developed primarily around three poles: leftist guerrilla groups, the Colombian armed forces and paramilitary groups. Various reasons for the explanation of conflict and ongoing violence in Colombia can be found in the literature: Political exclusion (Chernick 1999; Leal Buitrago 1984), state weakness (Kline 2003; McDougall 2009; Alfredo Rangel 2000; Rubio 1999; Ricardo Vargas 2004), presence of easily lootable resources (McDougall 2009; Thoumi 1995), economic inequality (Giugale, Lafourcade, and Luff 2003; Reyes Posada 2009; Sarmiento 1999; UNDP 2003) and a system or culture of violence (Richani 2002; Waldmann 2007) are some recurring explanations.

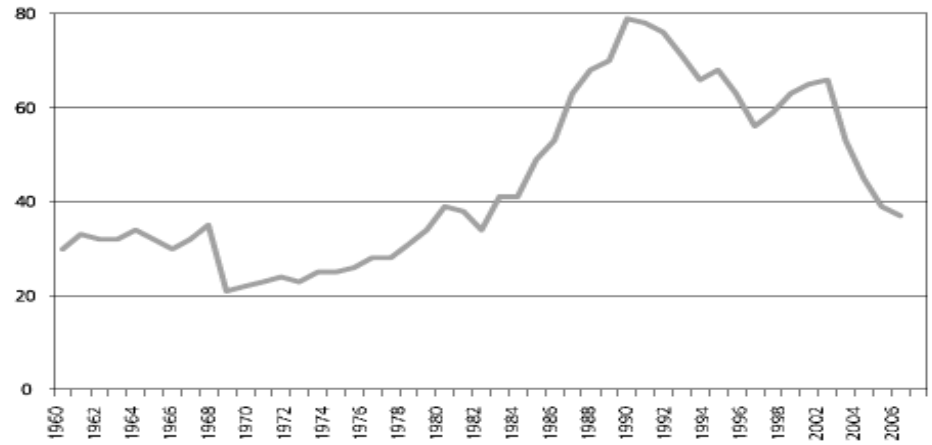
Some scholars trace the roots of the current conflict back to the killing of the liberal presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948 and the subsequent period of 'La Violencia' (Guzmán Campos, Fals Borda, and Umaña Luna 1963). 'La Violencia' was a civil war disputed between liberals and conservatives and their respective irregular armed groups. The National Front – the culmination of an agreement between the elites of these two traditional parties – was designed to bring an end to violence in 1958. Instead, it created an environment of political exclusion (Chernick 1999; UNDP 2003) and produced fertile soil for the emergence of leftist guerrilla groups in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution. In the first wave, the ELN (Medina Gallego 1996; Vargas Velásquez 2006), the FARC (Medina Gallego 2008a; Pizarro Leongómez 1991) and the EPL (Villarraga and Plazas 1994) were founded in the 1960s. Later, the M-19 (Villamizar Herrera 1997), the Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame (Peñaranda 1999) and some smaller rebel organisations completed the range of leftist armed opposition. As a response to the guerrilla, paramilitary groups emerged in various regions during the 1980s (see below). Today, the FARC and the ELN are still active, whereas the other leftist groups mostly demobilised in the 90s (see Excursus). According to the Armed Forces, the FARC and the ELN reached their peak level between 1998 and 2002 under the government of Andrés Pastrana.[16]

Levels of violence have remained high over the last 60 years (see Figure 3) and have increased dramatically since the 1980s with the rise of the illegal drug economy (Thoumi 1995), especially in the large cities of Colombia. The first peak of violence around 1989 can

[16] The government of Andrés Pastrana held peace negotiations with the FARC between 1998 and 2002 in a demilitarised zone of the Caguán region (Chernick 2009). These negotiations failed and critics argue that as a result, it gave the FARC the possibility to extend their territorial presence.

be attributed in large part to the disputes between different drug cartels and confrontations with the state. Hence, this violence is criminally rather than politically motivated, although its interrelatedness with conflict activities is evident. Safford and Palacios (2001) argue that only 10 per cent of the homicides committed between 1975 and 1995 are directly attributable to the conflict.

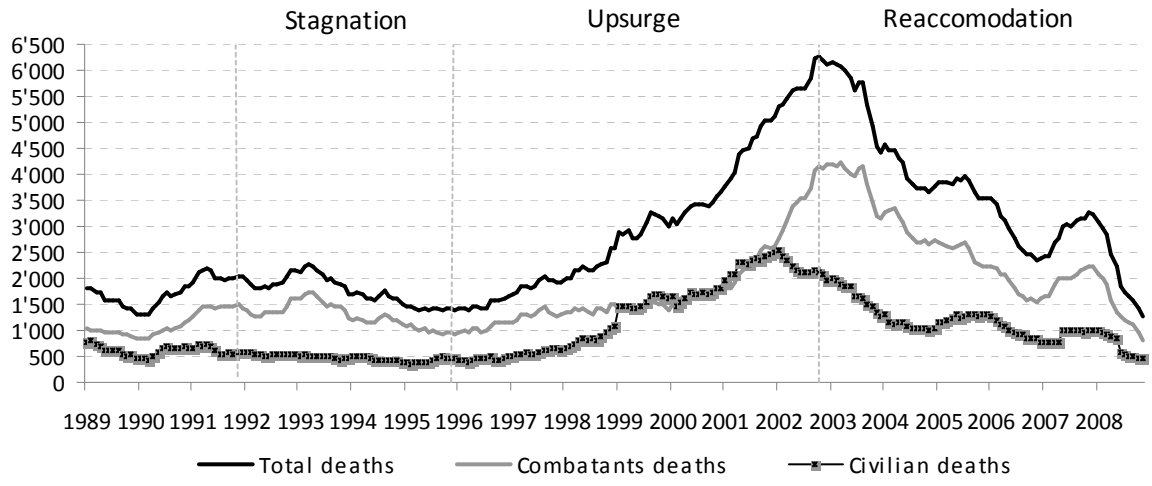
Figure 3: Development of homicides per 100'000 inhabitants, 1960-2006



(Bello Montes 2008, 77)

Direct conflict-related violence peaked in 2002, when the confrontation between government, paramilitaries and guerrillas reached its highest intensity (see Figure 4). It has decreased ever since.

Figure 4: Direct conflict deaths (total, combatants, civilians), 1988-2008



(Granada, Jorge Restrepo, and Andrés R. Vargas 2009, 39)

The general ongoing conflict can be described by Pizarro Leongómez (2004) as irregular, prolonged, low-intensity internal armed conflict with ideological roots, whose principal victims are civilians and whose main driver are illicit drugs. Gutiérrez Sanín (2006) sees the conflict as highly criminalised but still political in nature. Pécaut (2003) comes to the ultimate conclusion that it does not matter if we call it war or violence.

One of the main groups responsible for the high levels of violence in recent years is the paramilitary. Looking back at the history of paramilitarism reveals some features that are important for understanding interviews with former paramilitary combatants today (see Part Two). Ex-combatants often refer back to their time at war and with the AUC (see Emotional Legacies of War).

Prior to the description of Colombian paramilitarism, a general definition of the phenomenon is provided here: 'The paramilitaries are armed groups that are directly or indirectly linked to the state and its local agents, constituted or tolerated by the state, but that are outside of its formal structure' (Kalyvas and Arjona 2005, 29)[17]. Based on this broad definition and considering the two variables of 'size' and 'territorial dimension', Kalyvas and Arjona develop four ideal types of paramilitaries: vigilantes (small on local level), death squads (small on supralocal level), local guardians (big on local level) and militias or paramilitary armies (big on supralocal level). Colombia has seen all of these types during its history. Colombian paramilitaries have often called themselves self-defense forces. The term 'self-defense' alludes to spontaneous self-protection in the context of an absent state, while the term 'paramilitary' as indicated in the definition of Kalyvas and Arjona, implies some linkage to the authorities (UNDP 2003). In reality, it is difficult to distinguish the two phenomenona. For the present study, the term paramilitaries will be used as overarching term containing all the forms of paramilitarism described by Kalyvas and Arjona. I therefore call the 1997-created AUC a 'paramilitary group' and former members of the AUC 'ex-paramilitaries'.

In the literature about the evolution of Colombian paramilitarism, one predominant hypothesis can be identified: Whereas paramilitarism began as a strategy to fight insurgency, it was transformed with the emergence of drug-trafficking until the state completely lost control over it (Cruz Rodríguez 2007). However, there is disagreement on the degree to which paramilitary groups have used drug trade as an end or as means for their fight.

The genesis of Colombian paramilitarism is disputed (Garzón 2005). Some scholars name the so-called 'pájaros' (birds) in the era of 'La Violencia' in the 1950s as its first antecedent.

[17] Translated from Spanish by the author.

These conservative armed groups persecuted supporters of the liberal party. Another possible genesis can be found in Colombian legislative history. In 1965, decree 3398 (Decreto 3398 1965), which later turned into Law 48 in 1968 (Ley 48 1968), laid the legistlative foundation for the constitution of self-defense groups under the control of the military (García-Peña Jaramillo 2005). This legislation is an expression of the 'doctrine of national security' adopted by many Latin-American countries during the Cold War. Despite these early traces, rightist counterinsurgent paramilitarism began as a widespread phenomenon during the 1980s in different rural regions such as the Magdalena Medio (Medina Gallego 1990) and Córdoba (Negrete Barrera 2008).

An influential work by Romero (2003) locates the emergence of paramilitarism in the context of peace negotiations with leftist armed groups, the opening of political space, and decentralisation in the 1980s. Regional elites rejected these proposals and powerful drug dealers, who had become big land-owners, began to fight against guerrilla groups. In addition, the armed forces publicly showed their disagreement toward peace negotiations with the guerrillas, preferring instead counterinsurgent strategies. According to Romero, polarisation, competition and fragmentation are the result of such an environment: Polarisation between regional elites and the central state, competition between drug dealers and guerrilla groups and fragmentation between government and armed forces. In this context, Romero describes the emergence of such 'entrepreneurs of coercion'. Violent entrepreneurship is a set of organisational solutions and active strategies that convert organised force (or organised violence) into money or other valued assets (Volkov 2000). Although regional expressions of these 'entrepreneurs of coercion' are varied, the support by regional elites and the armed forces is a constant. Romero (2003, 79) calls the paramilitaries and self-defense groups 'extremist defenders of the status quo'.[18]

It took until 1997 for various heterogeneous paramilitary groups to merge under the umbrella of a national organisation. The constitution of the United Self-defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) (together with the creation of the Rural Self-defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU) in 1994), mark a qualitative leap in the development of paramilitarism.[19] According to Duncan (2006a), this is when the paramilitaries become genuine 'warlords' (see Giustozzi 2005). The degree of organisation, the social and political hegemony at the local level, and the capacity to negotiate with the government were brought to a new level at this

[18] See also Bolívar (2006) who describes the AUC as an 'elitist conformation oriented towards the defense'.
[19] The AUC did not assemble all the paramilitary factions existing in 1997 and was not the only paramilitary group to enter negotiations with the government in 2002 (see Today's Context). However, we focus on the AUC as it was the most influential paramilitary federation at this time.

time. 'In exchange for the expulsion of the guerrillas and the population control in the society's periphery, the state allows them the regulation of drug trade in their territories and the conversion into a hegemonical force in the dominated areas'[20] (Duncan 2006a, 315). The paramilitary groups achieved the construction of parallel states in some regions. These parallel states extracted resources in order to establish a monopoly of violence. According to Duncan, this is the fundamental difference between drug traders and paramilitaries of the 1980s and those that emerged under the AUC. The former groups had not created parallel states therefore cannot be called warlords. In summary, the Colombian warlords can be distinguished from other forms of violent entrepreneurs in that they exercised a political-military hegemony over a determined population, they conquered the local state and respected the national state, they were administrators of justice in the communities, they exploited the local economy and they determined the rights of citizenship (Duncan 2006a; Sergio Jaramillo and Duncan 2006).

This expansive paramilitary project found an institutional environment of collaboration, incapacity or tolerance on the regional as well as the national level (CNRR 2007; García-Peña Jaramillo 2005), and counted on the collaboration of the armed forces (Human Rights Watch 2001). The rise of the AUC coincides with the renewed initiative of peace negotiations with the FARC under the president Andrés Pastrana. For Romero (2003), this process reactivated polarisation, competition and fragmentation. After their major growth phase between 1998 and 2002, the Colombian paramilitaries became 'one of the best-stocked and largest non-state armed groups in the world' (Spagat 2007; see also Figure 7). Bearing in mind the creation of parallel states, paramilitarism developed into a widespread phenomenon that comprised not only a military but also social, economic and political dimensions (Medina Gallego 2005). The scandal of the 'para-politics' (Romero and Valencia 2007) illustrates the deep involvement of a considerable number of congressmen and local executive politicians with paramilitary leaders (see also Acemoglu, Robinson, and Santos 2009).[21]

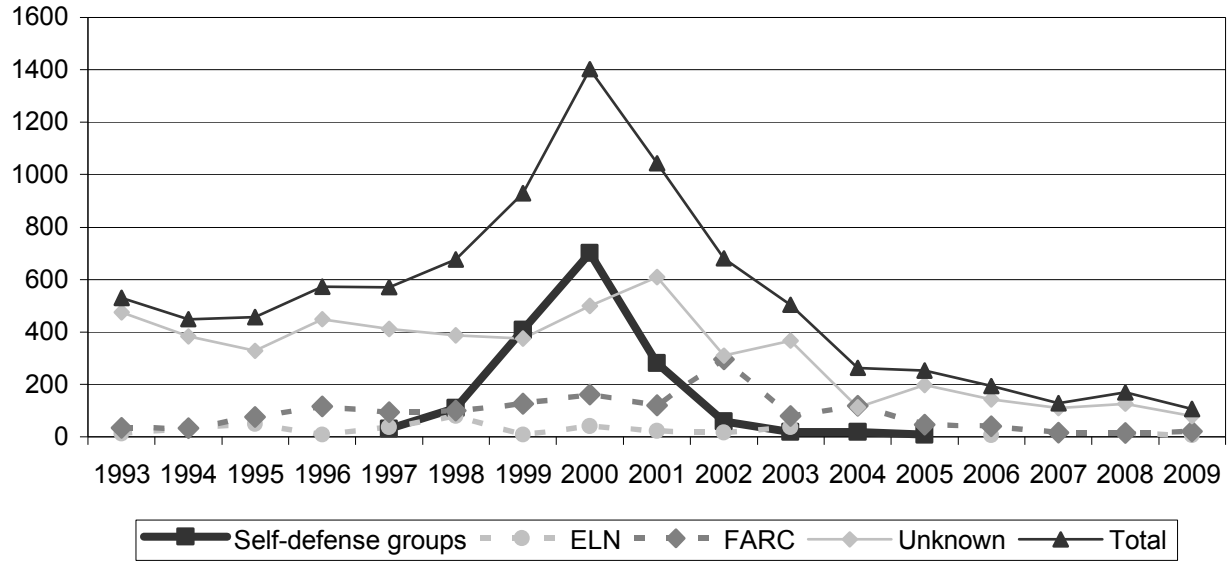
Carlos Castaño, one of the main leaders of the AUC at this time of expansion, portrayed his group as both a response to, and a victim of the FARC (Reyes Posada 2009). According to him, the FARC were the largest multinational criminal organisation, whose income was generated from extorsion, kidnapping and drug trade (Aranguren 2001).[22] Interviews on

[20] Translated from Spanish by the author.
[21] One of the interviewees for this study stated that many times, he was 'sent to Bogotá' to talk to politicians as a representative of an important paramilitary faction: *'I didn't corrupt them, they came and asked me for stuff'* (Bogotá). *'Yo no los corrumpí, ellos mismos venían y me pidieron cosas.'*
[22] For the government of Álvaro Uribe that ruled between 2002 and 2010, the left-wing guerrillas were 'narco-terrorists', that is, purely criminal organisations with no political legitimacy. The followers of this approach

national TV stations in the year 2000 helped Castaño promulgate his ideas and the Colombian audience looked favourably upon his message (Pardo Rueda 2007).

Nonetheless, the AUC and paramilitaries in general, were a particularly cruel illegal armed group who used the tactics of forced displacement and massacres to destroy the support networks of the guerrilla groups (Reyes Posada 2009; Pardo Rueda 2007) and to increment loyalty for their project (Duncan 2006a). As a consequence, the paramilitaries are the main group responsible for massacres (see Figure 5) occurring around the year 2000 (Sánchez Torres 2007). The violent character of the paramilitary groups makes it probable that most of the interviewees in this study have directly executed killings or assisted in other violent activities.

Figure 5: Massacres according to responsible illegal armed group, 1993-2009



(Policía Nacional/verdadabierta.com)

With respect to their financial organisation, the principal income source for paramilitary groups was the illegal drug industry (Cubides 2004; 2005). However, specific financing of the different factions evolved with their continuous strategic modernisation and depended on their location. In the 1980s, they generally received financial suppport for their counterinsurgent activities from large land-owners, business men and segments of the local society. These

argue that the guerrillas today are primarily interested in the drug economy. Scholars mostly disagree with this position and still attribute a political dimension to the remaining guerrillas (Gutiérrez Sanín 2006; Pizarro Leongómez 2004; Ugarriza 2009). However even in academic circles, it has been called into question if the profitable drug business is a means for their political fight or instead, has turned into an end (Guáqueta 2003; Alfredo Rangel 2000; Ricardo Vargas 2004). Sánchez Torres (2007) shows that the guerrilla groups tend to occupy areas that are later used for the cultivation of coca.

voluntary contributions, however, changed into forced extortions over the years and territorial expansion made more budgetary resources necessary (Medina Gallego 2005). As such, the drug business became increasingly important for most of the paramilitary groups, although with regional differences (Cubides 2001; 2005; Medina Gallego 2005; 2008b; Pizarro Leongómez 2004; Reyes Posada 2009). Coca drove the regional expansion of the AUC (Pardo Rueda 2007). Due to their involvement in drug trade, some factions and leaders are seen as purely 'narco'. In fact, a large group of leaders were colloquially called drug dealers ('traquetos') within the AUC (Anonymous 2007, 61). The foundation Seguridad y Democracia (2008a) claims that all the paramilitary leaders were drug-traffickers by definition. In May 2008, 14 top commanders of the AUC were extradited to the US to face trials for drug-trafficking.[23] Considering the penetration of drug trade within the AUC, it is probable that many of the interviewed former paramilitaries developed a certain know-how related to this illegal business.[24]

Recent evolutions in the Colombian conflict after the 2003-2006 demobilisation of the AUC have led some commentators to conclude that the end of the conflict is near, whereas others identify a transformation of the conflict (Granada, Jorge Restrepo, and Andrés R. Vargas 2009). However, during the government of Álvaro Uribe, most of the security indicators have improved considerably compared to the peaks of violence seen during the preceding government of Andrés Pastrana (DeShazo 2007). The guerrillas, especially the FARC, have retreated due to increased pressure of the armed forces. Yet the emergence of new illegal armed groups has brought the ghosts of paramilitarism back into the scenery. The demobilised people are both an interesting workforce for these new groups and among the primary victims of their violence (see Today's Context).[25]

[23] Since May 2008, 18 former commanders of the AUC have been extradited to the US for charges related to drug trade. The extradition may undermine the process of transitional justice that they should have undergone in Colombia (Fundación Ideas para la Paz 2009).

[24] With respect to drug trade, a recurring rationale among the interviewees of this study is: *'If one saw the drugs? Sure! To maintain 2700 men, the minimum wage was 450'000 [225 dollars] and the maximum one million [500 dollars], how would they have done it? Just the weaponry, uniforms, boots, food. There must be drug trade, that's what pays off most'* (Bogotá). *'¿Que se veía la droga? ¡Claro! Para mantener 2700 hombres, que el sueldo mínimo era 450'000 y el máximo un millón, ¿como hacían? Solamente armamento, uniformes, botas, la comida. Tiene que haber el narcotráfico, es el que más da.'*

[25] Further recommended reading on the Colombian conflict that has not been mentioned in this section includes: Bergquist et al. (2001), Bouvier (2009), Fernández (2002), Green (2005), Gutiérrez Sanín (2008), Gutiérrez Sanín and Jaramillo (2004), Gutiérrez Sanín and Ramírez Rueda (2004), Hartlyn (1995), Hoskin and Murillo-Castaño (2001), Kline (2003), Kurtenbach (1991; 2004), Lair (2000), Lair and Sánchez (2004), Orozco (1992), Romero and Valencia (2007), Palacios (2006), Sánchez (1987; 2003), Sánchez Torres (2007), Taylor (2009), Wills and Sánchez (2006), Zelik (2009) and www.verdadabierta.com.

2.2. Excursus: short history of demobilisations

The AUC is not the first illegal armed group to have demobilised in Colombia. Colombia has a long trajectory of demobilisations due to its conflictual history (Vargas Velásquez 2003; Villarraga 2005). Acknowledging the 'tradition' of demobilisations may enhance the understanding of current debates surrounding DDR in Colombia. However, this section is intended as an excursus for readers interested in earlier DDR efforts.

The tradition of demobilisation stretches back to the wars of the 19th century when the combatants of the losing side were partly incorporated into the winning armies and partly given amnesty (Sánchez 2003). During the civil war of 'La Violencia' in the 1950s, some 6500 liberal guerrilla members demobilised after the military coup of general Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. They received general amnesty under the decree 1823 of 1953 (Álape 1985). With this decree, the Office for Rehabilitation and Relief was created (Vargas Velásquez and Rubio Serrano 2004). In 1958, armed actors of the 'Violencia' were offered a general amnesty (Villarraga 2005).

Recent peace initiatives in Colombia started in the early 1980s with the government of Belisario Betancur and his National Rehabilitation Plan (Chernick 2008; see also Gerson Arias 2008). With Law 35 (Ley 35 1982), he provided the basis for amnesties and the reinsertion of guerrillas into civil life (Turriago and Bustamante 2003). For the government, the principal aim of this law was to construct peace agreements by recognizing the guerrilla groups as political actors. During Betancur's presidency from 1982 to 1986, some 700 guerrilla members participated individually in reinsertion programmes (Villarraga 2005).[26] The successor governments of Virgilio Barco and Cesar Gaviria continued negotiations with the guerrilla groups. In 1988, Barco presented his initiative for peace (Turriago and Bustamante 2003). With Law 77 (Ley 77 1989), he granted amnesty to members of the guerrilla who showed their will to reincorporate into civil life.

The Barco administration started negotiations with the 19th of April Movement (M-19). This guerrilla group emerged in the year 1974 after an alleged electoral fraud. It was formed by urban middle-class progressive activists, intellectuals, communist youths, disgruntled members from the National Popular Alliance (ANAPO) – the party that had lost the elections in 1970 – and former FARC and ELN members (Guáqueta 2007). The M-19 defined itself as a nationalist, democratic, revolutionary movement. Negotiations with the M-19 resulted in a

[26] I interviewed one of these early demobilised persons, a former member of the M-19. After his demobilisation during the presidency of Belisario Betancur, he was assigned a piece of land in Tierralta, a deeply violent region at this time. There, he was offered the opportunity to participate in another guerrilla group, the EPL. However, he did not agree to this proposal and had to flee from Tierralta, thus becoming an internally displaced person.

peace agreement that provided for the beginning of a reinsertion programme, legislative initiatives and the recognition of the M-19 as legal political party. Some 800 combatants of the M-19 demobilised in 1990 and formed the political party, 'Democratic Alliance M-19' (AD M-19).[27] Its former members received full amnesty for their political crimes. In order to coordinate and supervise the process of demobilisation, the National Council for Normalisation (CNN) was created in May 1990 for a duration of three years (some details of the institutional setting are presented in footnotes).[28] The culmination of the peace process was the constituent assembly that drafted the new constitution of 1991 (Bejarano 2001; Dugas 1993; Gutiérrez Sanín and Ramírez Rueda 2004; Juan Fernando Jaramillo 2006; Kugler and Rosenthal 2005). The AD M-19 obtained the second largest representation in this assembly.

This context of political change led to peace negotiations with various other guerrilla groups. The Armed Quintín Lame Movement (MAQL), the Popular Army of Liberation (EPL) and the Revolutionary Labour Party (PRT) demobilised in 1991.[29] While the EPL (Uribe 1994) and the PRT joined the AD M-19, the MAQL contributed to the Social Indigenous Alliance (ASI). Four hundred thirty-three members of the Socialist Renovation Current (CRS), a dissident group of the ELN, demobilised in 1994. Furthermore, smaller militias and armed groups reached a similar consensus. In total, 4817 members of leftist armed groups demobilised during this time (Palou and Méndez 2010). As a response to the demobilisations of the aforementioned guerrilla groups, some small, incomplete demobilisations of paramilitary groups in the Magdalena Medio and the Urabá region took place as well (Villarraga 2005).

The demobilised people had access to financial assistance, credit for micro-businesses or housing, land for peasants, vocational training, formal education, health care and psychosocial assistance. The National Office of the Inspector General (Procuraduría 2006) positively evaluates the collective demobilisation processes of the 90s in terms of political participation and access to health and education. However, socioeconomic reincorporation posed some structural difficulties. The Procuraduría states that there was a lack of specific attention to disabled persons, children and women who had been members of guerrilla groups. The largest problem with the DDR processes of the early 90s was the physical security of the ex-combatants (see also Villarraga and Plazas 1994). More than 1000 ex-combatants were killed, especially in rural regions (Procuraduría 2006). This is partially due to the fact that the peace

[27] In the same year, their leader and presidential candidate Carlos Pizarro was killed.
[28] The National Bureau of Reinsertion operated within the CNN. After the disappearance of the CNN, the Presidential Programme for Reinsertion took over its functions.
[29] The EPL demobilised 2100 combatants, the PRT 200 and the MAQL 157 (Villarraga 2005).

processes – including with the AUC – have always been incomplete and the main conflict line persists (Villarraga 2005). The percentage of demobilised people that reengaged in illegal activities in the 90s was however, small (Jaramillo Castillo 2000). As opposed to today's DDR efforts with the AUC, the Foundation Ideas for Peace (Palou and Méndez 2010) describes several positive aspects of the processes in the 90s. First, the society looked favourably upon this process. The large representation of the M-19 in the constituent assembly is one expression of that. In addition, financial funds were directed to communities in conflict regions as opposed to the mostly exclusive targeting of ex-combatants seen today. Third, NGO's were created that operated as interlocutors for the reinsertion programme. Last, there were a relatively small number of demobilised people that facilitated the DDR efforts.

With the FARC and the core part of the ELN, negotiations have not, as yet, reached a successful result. The FARC were involved in peace talks early on with the government of Belisario Betancur and even formed a political party called Unión Patriótica (UP) in 1985. This party participated in the elections of 1986. During this time, 300 members of the UP were killed (Turriago and Bustamante 2003). Later on, according to estimations, up to 3000 of its members, including their most important leaders, were killed (Villarraga 2005; see also Reiniciar 2005). These traumatic events have exacerbated fears and reluctance to engage in negotiations (Chernick 1999; 2008; Vanessa Joan Gray 2008).

Individual demobilisations have continued after the collective demobilisations of the early 90s. Decree 1385 from 1994 (Decreto 1385 1994)[30] delimited the conditions and benefits for the individual demobilisation process. More than 2500 guerrilla members, mainly from FARC and ELN, left their factions between 1998 and 2002 (Pinto, Vergara, and Lahuerta 2002).

With the government of Álvaro Uribe starting in 2002, the collective and individual demobilisations were brought to a new level.[31] Aside from the collective demobilisations of the AUC (see below), between August 2002 and March 2010, more than 21'000 combatants demobilised individually.[32] Most had been members of the FARC and ELN guerrilla groups.

[30] The Decree 1385 of 1994 (Decreto 1385 1994) also created the Committee for the Disposal of Arms (CODA), which certifies the status of ex-combatants and allows them to access juridical and socio-economic benefits. The CODA is still functioning today. From 1997 onward, Law 418 (Ley 418 1997) regulated the demobilisation of combatants. After the conclusion of the demobilisations of the early 90s, the National Bureau of Reinsertion continued its work. During the government of Andrés Pastrana, it was renamed the General Secretary for Reinsertion (DRG). In addition, the Programme of Humanitarian Attention to Demobilised People (PAHD) of the Ministry of Defense was established in 2001. However, the institutional response to the individual demobilisations produced serious problems (UNDP 2003).

[31] With respect to the institutional accompaniment, the DRG was abolished and the Programme for the Reincorporation into Civil Life (PRVC) of the Ministry of Interior and Justice was created. The PAHD was strengthened and the CODA continued its work (UNDP 2003).

[32] For updated figures see: www.mindefensa.gov.co.

Individual demobilisations continue to be an important strategy in the fight against insurgency and provide the armed forces with valuable information.[33]

[33] For literature on the recent individual demobilisations in Colombia see for example Anaya (2007), Cárdenas (2005), Moor (2007).

2.3. Today's context: DDR with the AUC

In this section, I examine the collective DDR process with the AUC.[34] The literature on this process deals predominantly with the programme itself, aspects of it in certain regional contexts,[35] and the security situation resulting from demobilisation[36]. An individual level approach such as proposed in this study, has been lacking in existing research on the Colombian case.[37] Here, I describe the process with respect to its negotiations, legal framework, institutional accompaniment and open debates. The interviewed persons have participated in this process and continuously refer to it. As such, the background about the DDR context presented in this section is indispensable for a complete understanding of the Findings (see Part Two).

Negotiations

Shortly after the election of Álvaro Uribe to the Colombian presidency in 2002, his government began peace negotiations[38] with the leaders of paramilitary factions, as a cornerstone of the 'Democratic Security Policy' (República de Colombia 2003). After a unilateral ceasefire of the AUC and other major paramilitary factions in December 2002 (AUC 2002; Autodefensas Campesinas de Colombia 2002; Verdadabierta.com 2010), the Exploratory Peace Commission (Resolución 185 2002) pursued conversations with different factions. The AUC, the Bloque Central Bolívar, the Alianza Oriente and the Autodefensas del Magdalena Medio were the major alliances that started separate conversations with the

[34] Other collective demobilisations during the government of Álvaro Uribe are left out due to their minor importance. In 2008, 36 rebels demobilised collectively from the Revolutionary Guevarist Army (ERG). In 2006, 70 FARC rebels from the Cacica la Gaitana Front demobilised collectively.

[35] Institutional contributions include: ACR (2008; 2010), CNRR (2007; 2010), Procuraduria (2006; 2008), Alcaldía de Medellín (2007a; 2007b), Vicepresidencia de la República (2009). General evaluations of the DDR process include: Agudelo (2009), Arias et al. (2007), Denissen (2010), Koth (2005), Morgenstein (2008), Palou and Méndez (2010), Porch and Rasmussen (2008), Seguridad y Democracia (2008b) and Theidon and Betancourt (2008); a specific regional focus on Medellín has been written about by Palou and Llorente (2009) and Rozema (2008); Méndez and Rivas Gamboa (2008; 2008) look at local initiatives and income generation; Barraza and Caicedo (2007), Caicedo (2005), Londoño Fernández and Ramírez Parra (2007), and Theidon (2009) focus on gender aspects; Varela (2007) examines the psychosocial support; Rubio Serrano (2009) develops possible future scenarios for DDR in Colombia. The DDR Observatory of the National University has advanced studies on different aspects of DDR such as education, ex-combatants' organisations, underage ex-combatants, violent actions of and against demobilised persons and regional DDR initiatives (see: www.observatorioddr.unal.edu.co). For general information about the reintegration programme see also the website of the ACR: www.reintegracion.gov.co. The website www.verdadabierta.com collects journalistic information about DDR-related issues.

[36] Security-related topics such as reengagment in illegal activities and the development of violence after demobilisation have been studied by Ávila and Martínez (2009), Bello Montes (2009), Granada et al. (2009), Munévar and Nussio (2009), Nussio (2009a), Restrepo and Muggah (2009), Restrepo (2009), and Ribetti (2009).

[37] Exceptions with somewhat similar approaches include Theidon and Betancourt (2008), Ugarriza and Mesías (2009).

[38] For Chernick (2008), the negotiations between the government and the AUC do not constitute a peace process since a peace process supposes negotiations with an opposing group. For a further description of the negotiations see Alto Comisionado para la Paz (2006), Arnson (2005), Cubides (2006), Pardo Rueda (2007) or Sriram (2008).

Commission at this time (Alto Comisionado para la Paz 2006). For reasons of simplicity, I subsume these factions under the name of the AUC despite their heterogeneous character and occasional divergent interests. The AUC was the frontrunner in the negotiations and the most important federation at that time. The remaining groups joined the AUC later in the process.

The conversations eventually led to the Agreement of Santa Fe de Ralito (municipality of Tierralta) with the AUC in July 2003 (Acuerdo de Santa Fe de Ralito 2003). The objective of this agreement was to begin negotiations in order to reach 'national peace' by 'strengthening the democratic governance' and 'restituting the monopoly of force in the hands of the state' (Acuerdo de Santa Fe de Ralito 2003, para. 1). The AUC agreed to demobilise all of its members by the end of 2005, while the government committed itself to helping the ex-combatants with their reincorporation into civil life. This process effectively started in 2003 with the demobilisation of the Bloque Cacique Nutibara from Medellín. The ceasefire was not respected entirely, however, and the paramilitary factions were bogged down by internal problems – AUC leader Carlos Castaño was killed during this period. Continued conversations gave rise to a second agreement of Santa Fe de Ralito in May 2004 (Acuerdo de Fátima 2004). This agreement defined the conditions for a zone of attendance and the responsibilities of the Support Mission to the Peace Process of the Organisation of American States (MAPP-OEA in its Spanish abbreviation)[39], which began monitoring the process in 2004. The purpose of the zone of attendance was to facilitate the consolidation of the peace process. As a result, the different factions integrated into the structure of the AUC and their high command.[40] These evolutions led to the massive collective demobilisations of 2005 and 2006 (see Table 3).

Legal framework

The legal framework for the AUC demobilisation basically exists in the legislative universe of Law 782 (Ley 782 2002)[41] and Law 975 (Ley 975 2005), better known as Justice and Peace Law.[42] Law 782 allowed the government to enter into negotiations with the AUC. While the predecessor laws limited the government to negotiate only with actors of a

[39] The United Nations, although required, did not want to participate in the negotiation process with the AUC (Arnson 2005; Pardo Rueda 2007).
[40] Except for the Bloque Elmer Cárdenas that negotiated independently and demobilised as the last faction. The Autodefensas del Casanare and the Frente Cacique Pipintá did not demobilise (Alto Comisionado para la Paz 2006).
[41] This law is a modification and extension of Law 418 of 1997 (Ley 418 1997) and was extended by Law 1106 of 2006 (Ley 1106 20006) which did not include any substantive changes.
[42] For the legislation surrounding the process of DDR in Colombia see Mininterior (2007). See also Alto Comisionado para la Paz (2007), Rincón (2010), Uprimny and Saffon (2006), Uprimny et al. (2006), the contributions to Revista Pensamiento Jurídico 2006, vol. 17, and the website www.verdadabierta.com.

'political character' (Ley 418 1997), this pre-requisite[43] was dropped under the new legislation (Alto Comisionado para la Paz 2007). Under Ley 782, illegal armed groups are no longer identified by their political motivations, but rather by their nature of being a party to the armed conflict. In accordance with international humanitarian law, such a party must have a recognizable command structure, a capacity to undertake sustained military operations, and significant territorial control. The AUC corresponds to these criteria and could hence enter into negotiations with the government.

Concerning the demobilisation itself, Decree 3360 (Decreto 3360 2003) determines who is eligible for the process. Every individual who appears on the lists written by the representatives of the armed group and provided to the High Commissioner for Peace may enter the DDR process. According to Law 782, members of the armed group who are willing to reincorporate themselves into civil life are pardoned for their acts of rebellion, except those who are responsible for ferocious and barbaric acts such as terrorism, kidnapping, genocide, or homicide outside of combat. Hence, most of the collectively demobilised people of the AUC – especially rank-and-file soldiers – accessed this pardon and the benefits of a 'socio-economic reinsertion programme' (see below).[44]

More complex is the situation of persons who are responsible for acts that cannot be pardoned. During negotiations with the government, the leaders of the AUC advocated for juridical benefits. The predecessor to Law 975, the Law of Penal Alternative (Ley de Alternatividad Penal) had little if any chance of being approved by Congress. This law would have prevented even the leaders of the AUC from imprisonment. Non-pardonable crimes were eventually handled by Law 975 and passed through Congress in 2005. This law reflects the controversy between supporters of an amnesic pardon and adherers to a punitive approach (Uprimny Yepes and Saffon 2006). The law entered into full-force in 2006 after the Constitutional Court made some adjustments to better balance the rights of victims with the needs of peace (sentence C-370 of 2006).

[43] Cubides (2001) claims that the paramilitaries developed their ideology 'a posteriori' to justify their actions. According to this perspective, they can be seen as a non-political actor.

[44] The juridical situation of a large part of demobilised persons was complicated with the Supreme Court rule 26945 of July 11, 2007 (Alto Comisionado para la Paz 2007). The Supreme Court decided that it was not possible to attribute political crimes ('delito político') to the demobilised members of the AUC. This rule put some 19'000 former members of the AUC into a juridical limbo (Palou and Méndez 2010) which was addressed by the Law of Opportunity (Ley 1112 2009). With this law, the General Attorney had the authority to suspend any prosecution if the only illegal activity of the demobilised person in question was his or her participation in a criminal organisation. However, the Constitutional Court expressed with rule C936/10 of November 23, 2010 that the principle of opportunity was not applicable to demobilised persons. This led the government to propose a new law (which is discussed in the congress while the present thesis is finished). For updated informations on the juridical situation of demobilised persons in Colombia, see www.verdadabierta.com.

'The Law 975 of 2005 has the objective to facilitate the processes of peace and the individual and collective reincorporation to civil life of the members of illegal organised armed groups, guaranteeing the rights of the victims to truth, justice and reparation' (Ley 975, article 1).[45] With its three components – truth, justice and reparation – Law 975 aims to balance the demands of different involved actors, especially the demobilised combatants and the victims of their activities. Non-pardonable acts are to be punished with a reduced penalty of five to eight years if the accused persons comply with their duties (justice). The paramilitaries are expected to give 'free versions' of their illegal activities in order to comply with the right to truth of the victims (truth).[46] Also, the paramilitaries must hand in the goods they unduely acquired (reparation).[47] According to the General Attorney's office, more than 4000 demobilised people have been called for the Law 975, mainly ex-members of the AUC.[48]

Law 975 has been a source of controversy in Colombia (see for example Pizarro Leongómez and Valencia 2009; Comisión Colombiana de Juristas 2008). Critics focus particularly on the benefits for ex-combatants. They claim that the government was too generous toward war criminals and neglected the interests of victims. Nonetheless, in comparison to transitional justice legislations in most post-conflict countries, Law 975 does not grant general amnesty but guarantees at least an alternative punishment (Morgenstein 2008). However, Gómez Isa (2008) states that it is especially the norms considering non-repetition of violence – one of the main goals of transitional justice – that are too weak and innocuous. Therein lies the fundamental paradox of this law: Non-repetition is one of the main goals, but the armed conflict continues, and the peace process is fragmented, at best. Uprimny et al. (2006) call it a process of 'transitional justice without transition'.[49]

Institutional accompaniment

As a result of the negotiations, between 2003 and 2006, 31'671 members of the AUC demobilised collectively (see Table 3). During the first phase, the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace organised the disarmament and demobilisation of the paramilitary groups in assembly areas. During demobilisation ceremonies, 18'051 arms were handed in. In

[45] Translated from Spanish by the author.
[46] The installation of a 'Historical Memory Group' of the National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR) is another effort to establish truth. It produces reports on emblematic cases of violence such as the massacre of Trujillo (2008) or the massacre of El Salado (2009). Other reports are currently in process.
[47] See Díaz Gómez (2010) for an overview of reparation policies in Colombia.
[48] For updated figures see: www.fiscalia.gov.co/justiciapaz/Index.htm
[49] For differing perceptions of transitional justice within victim communities see Rettberg (2008) or within broader society see Fundación Social (2006). For an application of international experiences on the Colombian case, see Castellanos Morales (2008).

addition to disarmament at the assembly areas, identity cards were issued and basic accomodation, nutrition and medical assistance were provided (Koth 2005). In the second phase, the Programme for the Reincorporation into Civil Life (PRVC) of the Ministry of Interior and Justice became responsible for the reinsertion (Decreto 200 2003). It provided the ex-combatants with psychosocial assistance, education, access to the national health system and monthly financial assistance. Initially, financial assistance – 537'000 pesos (270 dollars) – was distributed monthly as 'humanitarian aid' over a period of 18 months.

Table 3: Collective demobilisations of the AUC

Year	Name of block of Self-defense Forces	Date	Number of demobilised persons	Total
2003	Bloque Cacique Nutibara	25.11.	868	1035
	Autodefensas Campesinas de Ortega	7.12.	167	
2004	Bloque Bananero	25.11.	451	2645
	Autodefensas del Sur del Magdalena e Isla San Fernando	4.12.	48	
	Bloque Cundinamarca	9.12.	148	
	Bloque Catatumbo	10.12.	1434	
	Bloque Calima	18.12.	564	
2005	Bloque Córdoba	18.1.	925	10417
	Bloque Sur Oeste Antioqueño	30.1.	126	
	Bloque Mojana	2.2.	109	
	Bloque Héroes de Tolová	15.6.	464	
	Bloque Montes de María	14.7.	594	
	Bloque Libertodores del Sur	30.7.	689	
	Bloque Héroes de Granada	1.8.	2033	
	Autodefensas Campesinas de Meta y Vichada	6.8.	209	
	Bloque Pacífico	23.8.	358	
	Bloque Centauros	3.9.	1134	
	Bloque Noroccidente Antioqueño	11.9.	222	
	Frente Vichada del BCB	24.9.	325	
	Bloque Tolima	22.10.	207	
	Frentes Nordeste Antioqueño, Bajo Cauca y Magdalena Medio	12.12.	1822	
	Frente Mártires de Guática	15.12.	552	
	Bloque Vencedores de Arauca	23.12.	548	
2006	Bloque Mineros	20.1.	2789	17753
	Autodefensas Campesinas de Puerto Boyacá	28.1.	742	
	Bloque Central Bolívar – Santa Rosa del Sur	31.1.	2519	
	Frente Resistencia Tayrona	3.2.	1166	
	Autodefensas Campesinas del Magdalena Medio	7.2.	990	
	Frente Próceres del Caguán, Héroes de los Andaquies y Héroes de Florencia	15.2.	552	
	Frente Sur del Putumayo	1.3.	504	
	Frente Julio Peinado Becerra	4.3.	251	
	Bloque Norte (El Copey – Chimila)	8.3.	2215	
	Bloque Norte (La Mesa – Valledupar)	10.3.	2544	
	Frentes Héroes del Llano y Héroes del Guaviare	11.4.	1765	
	Frente Costanero	12.4.	309	
	Frentes Pavarandó y Dabeiba	30.4.	484	
	Frente Norte Medio Salaquí	16.8.	743	
	Total desmovilizados colectivos			31671

Adapted from Alto Comisionado para la Paz (2006, 99)

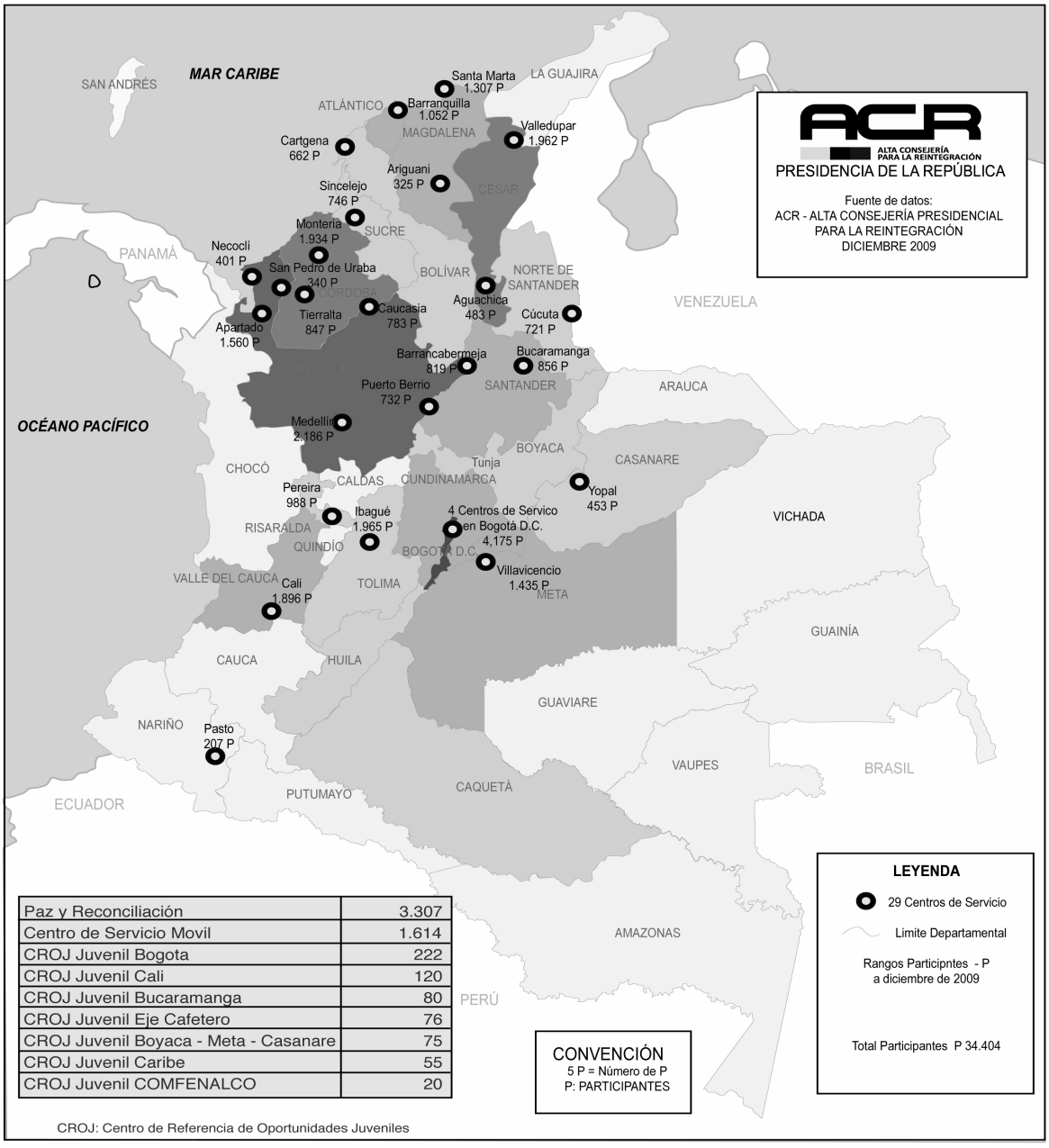
The PRVC was not designed to receive large numbers of demobilised persons and to assist communities where ex-combatants arrived (International Crisis Group 2006; Méndez and Rivas 2008). Due to the deficiencies of the PRVC, the Office of the High Counselor for Reintegration (Alta Consejería para la Reintegración – ACR) was founded through Decree 3043 in 2006 (Decreto 3043 2006). The ACR has since acted as the coordinator for the reintegration of collectively and individually demobilised persons across Colombia. The only exception is Medellín, where the Peace and Reconciliation Programme was founded in response to the demobilisation of the Bloque Cacique Nutibara in 2004 (Palou and Méndez 2010). The change from PRVC to ACR also carried with it a linguistic turn. While the PRVC was designed for short-term 'reinsertion', the ACR is charged with the long-term 'reintegration' of former combatants (Gerson Arias, Méndez, and Rivas 2007; see also what DDR should be).

The policy of the ACR aims to incorporate the demobilised person and his or her family into the social networks of the state and the receiving communities (Conpes 3554 2008; see also Denissen 2010; Morgenstein 2008). The ACR gives ex-combatants access to education, health, labour markets (through vocational training, entrepreneurship support and employment help) and differentiated psychosocial assistance according to each ex-combatant's personal 'reintegration route' (the reintegration policy is reflected in ACR 2009). A monetary incentive system induces the demobilised people to participate in the activities offered by the ACR. The demobilised persons receive more or less financial support depending on their participation in education, vocational training and psychosocial workshops. They can earn up to a Colombian minimum salary (around 250 dollars per month) if they participate in all activities. The entrepreneurship support consists of a one-time payment of about 1000 dollars for a business project, preferably in association with former companions (Méndez and Rivas 2008). The ACR also extends its program to families of demobilised people and establishes community projects in order to improve conditions for social reintegration. The services of the ACR are supplied by a national network of 29 service centres in different locations across the country (see Figure 6).

Some figures are presented to enhance the understanding of the scale of efforts made by the ACR programme. According to official information, 34'004 (out of a possible total of about 52'000) collectively and individually demobilised persons participated in the ACR Programme in December 2009 (ACR 2010). Some 25'000 attended education courses and nearly 11'000 participated in vocational training. More than 18'000 held a job (either formal or informal). Since 2007, approximately 2000 business plans were supported by the ACR and

more than 7000 demobilised persons engaged in social service activities. Between 2007 and 2009, some 68 community interventions were executed with the objective of enhancing reconciliation and building confidence within receiving communities.

Figure 6: Map of ACR service centres with number of active[50] participants by December 2009 (individually and collectively demobilised people)



(ACR 2010, 8)

[50] Demobilised persons who participated in at least one ACR activity in the preceding three months are considered 'active'.

By narrowing the focus to only collectively demobilised persons from the AUC (see also Annex I), 20'267 were actively participating in the reintegration process at the end of 2009. Of the 11'000 or so former AUC members who have not been actively involved with the ACR, as of February 2010, approximately 2000 have died, most of whom were killed (1365)[51]. Another 1303 have been arrested for some illegal activity after their demobilisation (for numbers on reengaging ex-combatants see also CNRR 2010; Observatorio de Procesos de DDR 2010). The remaining non-participants left the programme for unknown reasons. The former AUC members (usually higher-ranking) who were accused of non-pardonable crimes entered the process of transitional justice under the Justice and Peace Law.

Open debates

The DDR process with the AUC has faced harsh criticisms in Colombia. The prevailing view within society is that the process did not produce positive results. A predominant opinion is that not all the paramilitaries demobilised and paramilitarism is still intact. Also, most people assume that the numbers of demobilised people were inflated because extra people were included in the registry who were never actually combatants. In the following section, I will discuss some of the frequently expressed perceptions, highlighting those that are relevant for the findings presented later in this document (see Part Two).[52]

'That was no peace process': There is a common perception in Colombia that the process with the AUC was not a peace process, but rather a 'fake' negotiation between allies. For Chernick (2008), there is 'no peace process' as it presupposes negotiations between opposing groups, and the paramilitaries have never attacked government forces. Múnera (2006) describes the AUC as a 'pro-systemic actor'. What is this process really about? The special constellation of negotiating partners may have distanced civil society from the beginning and generated speculations about the 'real' intentions of the government and the paramilitary leaders. The involvement of local politicians in the paramilitary project on the one hand (Romero and Valencia 2007), and the inclusion of pure drug-traffickers within the AUC on the other (Cubides 2004), undermined the legitimacy of negotiations.

'Many demobilised persons were never paramilitaries': Critics claim that many of the demobilised people were not really members of the AUC. Before the demobilisation process

[51] This number does not include demobilised persons killed in police or military interventions.
[52] Some of the mentioned critical topics have been expected during the AUC demobilisation process (see for example UNDP 2005). Other criticisms such as insufficient reconciliation activities (Fundación Ideas para la Paz 2005), exclusive targeting of former combatants (Seguridad y Democracia 2008b), improvisation during the beginning of the DDR process (Morgenstein 2008), or the lack of involvement of local governments (Rivas and Méndez 2008) will not be analysed here.

began, AUC commanders spoke of about 15'000 people to demobilise (CNRR 2010). By the end, the number jumped to over 30'000. The example of one of the largest demobilisations – the Bloque Mineros that demobilised 2789 persons in 2006 – might clarify this contradiction. One former member of this paramilitary faction stated that 2000 combatants and 1700 (sic) civilians had demobilised. According to him, civilians entered the process because they wanted to take advantage of the promised benefits. Another member of the same block, who had lived in Tarazá, the main municipality of activity of the Bloque Mineros, does not believe that the numbers of demobilisation were inflated. He explains that these 'supposed' demobilised civilians worked as hidden informants or prostitutes in the service of the armed group. According to his information, they were in fact, members of the AUC. The international standards of the United Nations state that not only combatants but also associated members such as cooks, war wives or logistic personnel should be eligible for DDR benefits (United Nations 2006a). There is sufficient evidence that non-AUC members filled the ranks shortly before demobilisation (CNRR 2010; Human Rights Watch 2010), but it is unclear how large this number is. Lax eligibility criteria surely contributed to the low legitimacy of demobilisation and to speculations about large numbers of non-members accessing reintegration benefits.

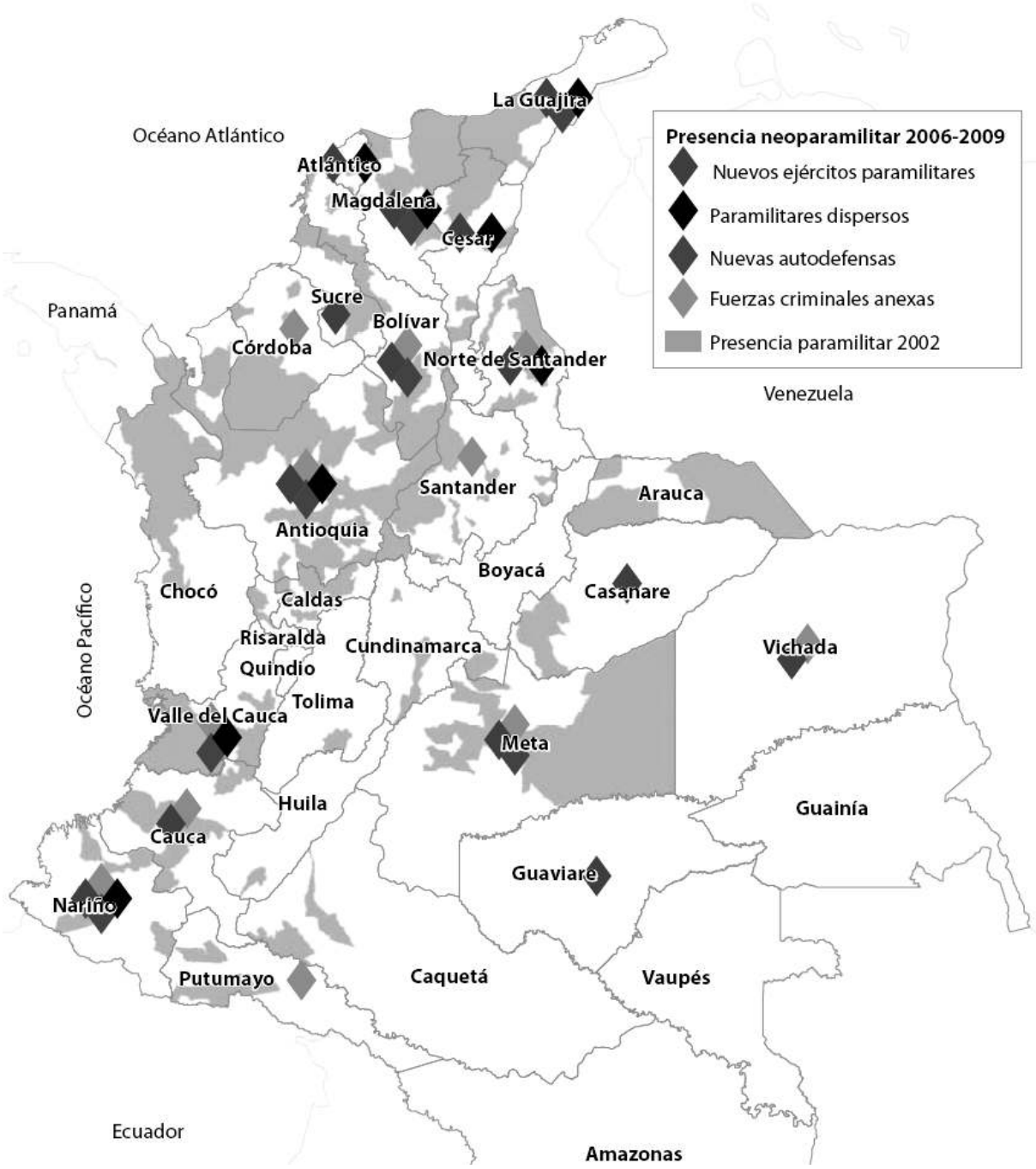
'Many paramilitaries never demobilised': As the Integrated DDR Standards state, it should not be assumed that combatants obey their commanders' orders to demobilise (United Nations 2006a). So was the case in Colombia. In addition to some dissident paramilitary *factions*, such as the Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare and the Frente Cacique Pipintá, individual dissident *persons* also have not entered the process (CNRR 2007). A former member of the Bloque Córdoba who demobilised in 2005, claimed in an interview that 45 of his companions 'remained' in the group. According to him, all of them were later 'killed by the army' (see also Anonymous 2007). Despite the evidence regarding cases of non-demobilised AUC members, overall estimates are mere speculations.

'They just handed in the old guns': Many observers claim that the different blocks of the AUC handed in weapons that did not work any longer and hid the rest of the armament for later use. The AUC handed in a total of 18'051 weapons in the collective demobilisations – creating a rate of 0.59 surrendered arms per demobilised person. Compared to other cases of DDR, this is a relatively high rate. According to Caramés and Sanz (2009), there is no single DDR process with total disarmament. The AUC is no exception. Considering the fragile trust relationship between negotiating parties, it is no surprise that armed groups retain some of their armament, and thus, some of their power.

'The paramilitaries are still active, they just changed their names': There is growing concern within Colombian society about newly armed groups and their relation to paramilitarism. The debate on this topic is highly controversial (Granada, Jorge Restrepo, and Tobón 2009). The naming of the phenomenon reflects underlying views. Granada et al. (2009) and Romero and Arias (2009) call these groups 'neoparamilitaries', referring to their close relationship to former paramilitary groups, evidenced by their geographical presence that coincides with the earlier presence of paramilitaries (see Figure 7). The Toledo Centre for Peace (Massé et al. 2010) calls them 'armed post-demobilisation structures' alluding to their emergence after the AUC demobilisation. Government institutions speak of 'criminal gangs' ('bandas criminales'), downplaying their relation to former paramilitary groups and emphasising their involvement in drugtrafficking. 'Urabeños', 'Paisas', 'Rastrojos', 'Black Eagles' and 'Popular Revolutionary Anti-subversive Army of Colombia' (ERPAC) are the names of some gangs or neoparamilitary groups. Recent estimates of the total membership in such groups range from 3900 to 10'200 (CNRR 2010).[53] ERPAC commanded by alias 'Cuchillo' ('Knife') in the Llanos-region alone has an estimated 1200 armed members (Massé et al. 2010). The local communities often call members of these newly armed groups 'paramilitaries', and see no difference in the new groups' *modus operandi*. In their perception, the members of these groups are mainly demobilised people. Of the 20 municipalities with the largest number of demobilised people, newly armed groups are present in 17 (Munévar and Nussio 2009). A demobilised person from the Bloque Bananero said in an interview that more than half of the former members of his block (451 persons demobilised from the Bloque Bananero) were involved in successor organisations ('Black Eagles') in the Urabá region, where the Bloque Bananero had been active. Another interviewee, a demobilised person from the Bloque Central Bolívar, said that he and 600 of his fellow ex-combatants had returned to the 'organisation' only a few days after demobilising. Their commanders had ordered them to take care of the 'drug routes'.

[53] Other estimates include: 2579 members in six criminal gangs (Policía Nacional 2009), 3500 to 5000 in 200 municipalities (CNRR 2007, 65), 6377 in 224 municipalities (Indepaz 2007, 6), 5000 to 10'000 (International Crisis Group 2009, 6) in 293 municipalities (Romero and Angélica Arias 2009; see also Denissen 2010; Human Rights Watch 2010; International Crisis Group 2007; MAPP-OEA 2007; Nussio 2009a; Ribetti 2009; Seguridad y Democracia 2009). On the topic of former paramilitaries who re-engage, see also the periodic monitoring reports of the National Police under: www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co, and the periodic monitoring reports of the MAPP-OEA under: www.mapp-oea.org.

Figure 7: Violent paramilitary presence in 2002 (by area) and violent departmental presence of 'neoparamilitary' groups (new paramilitary armies, dispersed paramilitaries, new self-defense groups, related criminal forces)



(Granada, Jorge Restrepo, and Tobón 2009, 493)

Some of the visible leaders of the new groups are former mid-level commanders of the AUC (CNRR 2007; Denissen 2010; Morgenstein 2008).[54] Even Frank Pearl, the former High Counselor for Reintegration, admits that the DDR process was not attractive enough for many

[54] For example, the two former mid-level commanders Daniel Rendón Herrera alias 'Don Mario' who led the Gaitanist Self-defense Forces before he was arrested, and Pedro Oliviero Guerrero Castillo alias 'Cuchillo' who is the leader of the Popular Revolutionary Anti-subversive Army of Colombia (ERPAC).

of them (Semana.com 2008). Although demobilised people may occupy important positions within the new structures, only 12 per cent of the members are demobilised combatants according to police estimates (Semana.com 2009). In addition, ex-combatants are among the main victims of their threats, especially when resisting incorporation into the new groups (MAPP-OEA 2009a; Munévar and Nussio 2009).

'The demobilised people live half in legality, half in illegality': There is evidence that some of the demobilised people who actively participate in the reintegration programme of the ACR are simultaneously involved in illegal activities (Munévar and Nussio 2009; Palou and Llorente 2009). The MAPP-OEA (2009b) claims that more than half of the arrested demobilised persons were actively participating in the programme at the moment of arrest. Most of the interviewed ex-combatants claimed to know other demobilised people who were living a 'double life'. The National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR 2010) calculated that 15.5 per cent of the total demobilised population (including individually demobilised former guerrilla members) have been involved in some illegal activity – ranging from petty crime to engagement in armed groups – after their demobilisation. A resulting common criticism within society is that demobilised people are not genuinely committed to the process.

'DDR has led to insecurity in the cities': A generalised perception within the urban population is that insecurity has moved from rural regions to urban areas following AUC demobilisation (Massé et al. 2011). According to the Foundation Ideas for Peace, the demobilised population has become urbanised in comparison to their place of residence before recruitment into the illegal armed groups (Palou and Méndez 2010). Major cities in the country (for example Medellín: Juan Diego Restrepo 2009; and Bogotá: Ávila and Núñez 2009) have been exposed to violence related to newly armed groups that are often identified with former members of the AUC. Various cities experience increasing crime rates in the years subsequent to demobilisation. However, rising levels of insecurity may be due to a structural transformation rather than to the actual presence of demobilised combatants. The formerly active paramilitary groups had monopolised the violence in many, especially marginal, neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods and their persistent potential for illicit activities are disputed today by a variety of criminal actors. Also, the costs of petty crime may have decreased since the formerly existing parallel authority – one that exercised harsh and arbitrary social control – is no longer functioning. It has been substituted by often overstrained and 'soft' state institutions, especially in comparison to the previous parallel authority.

Alongside the criticisms related to transitional justice mentioned earlier, negative assessments are mostly focused on security issues. When criticising the efforts of involved institutions, it should be taken into account that the process of reintegration not only depends on the activities of state institutions but also on a variety of exogenous factors. Usually, DDR begins at the end of an internal conflict and is embedded in a broader peacebuilding context. In Colombia, the main conflict between government forces and guerrilla groups persists. Also, Colombia continues to be the most important cocaine production hub in the world (UNODC 2010). The opportunity for participation or return to the conflict or other illegal activities remains open for ex-combatants (Nussio 2009a). Considering this panorama, radical critics might reject the idea of a DDR process with the AUC entirely, and instead ask: Why even do DDR in the midst of conflict?

2.4. Comparative characteristics of Colombian DDR

After reviewing the general literature on DDR (see Introducing DDR) and the process with the AUC, I characterise the context chosen for this study in a comparative way. Thus, in this section I explore two main questions: What are the features of the Colombian DDR context in a global perspective? And how can we characterise the AUC process with regard to the general critical issues of DDR?

The Colombian context (Nussio 2009b) includes crucial particularities as compared to other DDR processes. First and foremost, the Colombian DDR process with the AUC is the result of a partial peace process while the main conflict line between insurgency (FARC and ELN) and government persists. This characteristic also holds true for earlier demobilisation efforts in Colombia. Most of the other DDR processes worldwide take place in a post-conflict environment. The few other DDR processes that take place in an active war context include Afghanistan, Iraq and the Philippines (CCDDR 2009). Second, Colombia is a middle-income country. The 2009 country list by the International Monetary Fund ranks Colombia 83rd in the world, with a GDP per capita of 8936 dollars. The majority of other DDR processes occur in highly underdeveloped African or Asian states (Caramés and Sanz 2008). Third, large numbers of individual demobilisations are taking place in parallel to the collective DDR of the AUC, a process that reflects the ongoing conflict. The result is a constant stream of newly demobilised people who are accessing reintegration benefits. Fourth, the DDR process in Colombia is executed solely by Colombian institutions. International organisations such as the MAPP-OEA, the IOM or the UNDP are involved merely in monitoring and evaluation and other select projects. In fact, Colombia finances the programme with comparatively little help from the international community. No other DDR process reaches this level of national ownership (Denissen 2010). Fifth, the AUC is a 'pro-systemic actor' (Múnera Ruiz 2006). DDR processes exclusively for paramilitary groups are rare. Mostly, they involve the demobilisation of insurgent groups or the armed forces at the same time (Caramés and Sanz 2009). Finally, DDR with the AUC has seen an unprecedented number of high-level and mid-ranked demobilised persons involved in trials under the Justice and Peace Law. Most other processes have been accompanied by limited juridical efforts, and most ex-combatants have received general amnesty (Caramés and Sanz 2009).

With respect to the aforementioned dimensions, DDR with the AUC is a deviant or atypical DDR process (Flyvbjerg 2006). However, considering the variety of contexts and dimensions, every case of DDR is somewhat 'unique' (CCDDR 2009, 19).

After listing the particularities of the DDR process with the AUC as compared to other processes around the world, a closer examination of the critical issues with respect to the Colombian context may further enhance our understanding. Loosely following the critical issues that shape DDR processes as described in the literature (see Nilsson 2005), I conclude that ex-members of the AUC must cope with adverse circumstances (Nussio 2009a). Concerning contextual factors, the persistence of insurgent groups, the attraction of the drug trade, and the emergence of newly armed groups have made the process with the AUC challenging. The ex-paramilitaries are exposed to offers from spoilers, especially to join the newly armed groups (MAPP-OEA 2009c). Involvement in the lucrative drug trade may be an alternative, particularly in times of economic hardship. With relation to institutional capacity, the state is still absent in some of the regions where the demobilised people reside. Renewed violence after an initial improvement in security levels demonstrates that the state has not been capable of filling the vacuum that the AUC has left behind (Jorge Restrepo and Muggah 2009). The institutional response to DDR is however comparatively well developed (Morgenstein 2008).

Regarding the economic 'peacetime substitutes', although Colombia has a macro-economic advantage with respect to other DDR countries, demobilised persons often live in poor neighbourhoods, have low education skills, and mostly do not hold a formal job (Conpes 3554 2008). Concerning physical security, demobilised persons are often victims to violence despite the overall improved security situation after demobilisation (MAPP-OEA 2009a; Munévar and Nussio 2009).

The ongoing conflict between government and insurgency as well as the formation of newly armed groups pose a threat to former combatants. Ex-combatants have hardly if ever been included in political processes or the design of a DDR programme (Guáqueta 2007). This lack of political empowerment may have negative effects, especially within former mid- and higher-ranking AUC members (Palou and Llorente 2009). Regarding the wounds of war, most demobilised AUC members feel socially stigmatised. Members of society perceive the AUC as a criminal organisation responsible for cruel war activities (Guáqueta and Gerson Arias 2008), and blame demobilised persons for renewed violence. The social reintegration of former paramilitaries is difficult under these circumstances.

These mostly adverse conditions 'test' the willingness of ex-combatants to commit to a civilian life. Asking the 'crucial underlying question' – what makes ex-combatants stay within legal limits? – is thus opportune in this context. Regarding reengagement in illegal activities, I

can describe the Colombian context as a 'critical' context (Flyvbjerg 2006).[55] It is particularly valuable for policy makers to know what the central themes are for ex-paramilitaries in these circumstances.

Every DDR context may produce different emotions, strategies and interactions at the individual level. The findings from this study are hence, not blindly generalisable. They are however, applicable to former combatants in other contexts insofar as the conditions they are exposed to are comparable to the Colombian context. With respect to the generalisability of the findings, I agree with Flyvbjerg's (2006, 228) perspective: 'Formal generalisation is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas "the force of example" is underestimated.' There is much to learn from the example of some 62 ex-combatants in the context of Colombian DDR, even if the results are ultimately bound to this context.

[55] 'A *critical case* can be defined as having strategic importance in relation to the general problem' (Flyvbjerg 2006, 229). However, I do not preclude the possibility that other DDR contexts are even 'more critical'.

'I start with an interesting question, not a fancy hypothesis.
Hypotheses close me down; questions open me up.'
Henry Mintzberg (2005, 11)

3. Using Grounded Theory as Research Principle

This study draws on grounded theory as a research principle. The goal of this approach is to build a substantive theory that consists of well established, interrelated categories grounded in qualitatively collected data. As it is an inductive methodology, the research process did not start with a hypothesis, but with a question or a general research interest. An inductive approach is particularly pertinent in a field that lacks theoretical knowledge, such as the themes that are central to former combatants in a DDR environment. Studies about DDR tend to miss the first important step of tapping into the ex-combatants' perspective. To date, only Annan et al. (2009) have used grounded theory to study the field of DDR.

The holistic character of grounded theory, which is a circular process of data collection and analysis, induction and deduction, makes it challenging to reduce the process to simple steps of investigation. Nevertheless, in this chapter I try to convey in a structured manner, the central elements of grounded theory and how they were applied to the present study.

To begin with, I describe the core principles of grounded theory. What does 'theory' mean for grounded theory? Which assumptions do I lean on? Second, I explain the selection process for interviewing ex-combatants. What are the characteristics of the interviewee sample? What are the strengths and weaknesses of my selection procedure? Third, I describe the interview as a source of data. How was the actual interview situation? How did the questions evolve and what was the role of the interviewer? Fourth, I specify the techniques of data analysis used for this study. Which questions guide my analysis? How do I establish the central categories? Finally, I reflect on the specific biases and limitations of this interview-based study.

3.1. Basics of grounded theory

Due to a lack of systematic knowledge about the individual perspective of ex-combatants in a DDR environment (see Introducing DDR), an inductive approach was most promising for the present study. That is, an approach that starts with a question and not a clearly defined hypothesis (Carlile and Clayton M. Christensen 2004; Kelle 2007; Mintzberg 2005). In this context, the general risk of using a classical hypothetical-deductive methodology would be to miss important categories that lie beyond the scope of the defined hypothesis. By contrast, an inductive approach has the potential to reveal otherwise hidden categories. Grounded theory fitted my purposes in two ways: First, it is an inductive approach that generally starts with the discovery of an area unnoticed or underexplored by researchers (Mogghadam 2000). Second, it suited my intention to understand human action without imposing a rigid empirical notion of human action itself.

What is grounded theory? Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced this methodology in their joint work 'The Discovery of Grounded Theory'. Later on, the two scholars followed different paths.[56] In this study, I chose to follow the school of Strauss developed together with Corbin (Corbin and Strauss 1990; 1998; 2008), rather than Glaser's perspective (Glaser 1978; 2007).[57] There lies some ambiguity within the term grounded theory (Strübing 2008). On the one hand, it describes the theory itself that is the result of a certain activity, and on the other hand it describes the activity or method that aims at producing such a theory. In what follows, I briefly describe what theory means for the present study and then procede to the activities aimed at building theory. Also, I outline the epistemological baseline for grounded theory in general, and for this thesis in particular.

The main objective of a grounded theory approach and the present study is to inductively produce a *substantive theory*. 'Theory denotes a set of well-developed categories (e.g., themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains[58] some relevant social, psychological, educational, nursing, or other phenomenon' (Corbin and Strauss 1998, 22). The data is what a theory is 'grounded' on, because 'theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the 'reality' than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation' (Corbin and Strauss 1998, 12). I aimed at creating a *substantive* theory as opposed to one that is formal. Substantive theories deal with a particular, limited domain

[56] For a differentiation between Glaser's and Strauss' view of grounded theory, see Boychuk Duchnschner and Morgan (2004), Kelle (2007), Strübing (2007; 2008), Walker and Myrick (2007).
[57] Recent influential interpretations and re-interpretations of grounded theory include Charmaz (2006), Clarke (2005), Dey (1999) and Strübing (2008).
[58] Instead of 'explains' I prefer 'enhances the understanding'.

and are therefore close to real-world situations, whereas formal theories deal with a general domain in social sciences (Darkenwald 1980). The purpose of substantive theory is to enhance the understanding of some phenomenon of human interaction.

As the concept of theory is often explained by the activity of producing it, a description of these activities elucidates its meaning. Strübing (2008; see also Walker and Myrick 2007) portrays grounded theory as a set of procedures that have proved to be useful for the development of theory. Generally speaking, it is a cyclical research activity with built-in feedback mechanisms between induction and deduction, data collection and analysis, as well as between the researcher and its object of study. Central features are theoretical sampling, specific coding techniques and development of concepts.

It is challenging to describe the individual steps of investigation, as they are intimately interrelated. The research usually begins with a broad interest or question that provides an investigator with sufficient flexibility. The question is refined with continuous data collection and analysis, which are conducted simultaneously as a constant 'going back and forth'. Walker and Myrick (2007, 48) call this process a 'method of constant comparison' between coding and inspecting data. The result of the ongoing analysis is the development of provisional concepts, which in turn provide feedback for further data collection. For example, if a certain concept seems to be central to the studied phenomenon, additional cases may be selected that help deepen and broaden the concept in question. This process is called theoretical sampling (see Selection of Interviewees). It entails a gradual development of concepts by strengthening their internal variability and density, as well as their interrelatedness. The concepts are the main unit of analysis, and are verified both by the process of development and confirmation. They emerge from the coding procedures (see Procedures of Interview Analysis) and allow for the establishment of central categories and interrelated statements. The whole process stops when theoretical saturation is reached. That is, when further data does not significantly add to the development of categories and subordinate concepts. Corbin and Strauss repeatedly recommend using the grounded theory approach as a way of thinking and investigating, rather than as a strict tool for analysis that leaves no space for creativity. Hence, I understand grounded theory more as a research principle than as a clearly defined set of tools.

Generally speaking, the data is the sole basis for a grounded theory and the concepts should emerge out of this data. However, when speaking about the emergence of categories, some doubts emerge as well. Categories do not just 'emerge'; researchers always start with

some theoretical groundwork, explicitly or implicitly. Nor does the grounded theory research process start from a tabula rasa (Kelle 2007).

Which lens did I use to make data understandable? Without digging too deeply into the epistemological soil of grounded theory, it is important to mention the main assumptions I rely on for this study. The underlying principles of Straussian grounded theory stem from the philosophical traditions of pragmatism and interactionism. Based on these traditions, the work of Corbin and Strauss (1990, 419) generally draws on two principles (for a more elaborated list of assumptions see Corbin and Strauss 2008). First, process is an important principle of human action since phenomena are not static but are continually changing in response to prevailing conditions. Second, actors are seen as having the means to control their destinies as they respond to conditions. They are able to make choices. Thus, with grounded theory, my study 'seeks not only to uncover relevant conditions but also to determine how the actors under investigation actively respond to those conditions, and to the consequences of their actions' (Corbin and Strauss 1990, 419). As a result, I draw from a general theory of action inspired by the theoretical paradigm of Corbin and Strauss (2008, 89), using it as an empirical 'empty sack' (Simon 1985). The less that pre-existing empirical content beclouds our epistemological lens, the less we force data into a preconceived structure (Kelle 2007). The paradigm structures the analysis of human action into conditions, actions/interactions, emotions, and consequences and is compatible with a wide variety of empirically laden theories.

3.2. Selection of interviewees

The present study focuses on the individual perspective of ex-combatants. Hence, the level of analysis is the former combatants themselves. Through interviews, I try to understand the central themes in their lives. Before I explain the interview process and analysis, it is crucial to show how I selected the interview partners.

The basis for interview selection was a combination of my central research interest, a theoretical foundation in the context of DDR, and pragmatic constraints. As I wanted to understand ex-combatants through an inductive approach and I aimed to build theory, theoretical sampling was best suited for my purposes. However, the relative difficulty of accessing ex-combatants limited the possibility to apply theoretical sampling as conceived in grounded theory. Nonetheless, according to my view, the general goal of 'representativeness of concepts' (Corbin and Strauss 1990, 421) rather than a 'representativeness of persons' has been achieved by establishing a varied sample of cases and including feedback mechanisms into the interview design, as will be explained later in this chapter.

The analysis is based on two sets of data for a total of 62 interviews. The primary set of 54 interviews was organised with the help of the reintegration programme in Colombia (ACR). The collaboration with the ACR had some crucial advantages, as well as noteworthy disadvantages. The primary advantage of collaborating with the ACR was having guaranteed access to a large number of ex-combatants while at the same time, limiting the security risk for the researcher. Furthermore, the interviewees could be selected with the help of an information system, which facilitated the selection of a varied sample. On the flip side, collaborating with government institutions made the research less flexible, as the bureaucratic system with its numerous regulations interfered in the process. In fact, contrary to grounded theory procedures, the institution required information from the beginning about questionnaires, interview sites and desired interviewee profiles. In order to address this 'bureaucratic limitation', a secondary set of 8 interviews was organised independently, utilizing different channels of contact. These interviews did not follow any defined protocol, opened up the possibility for repeated meetings in different environments, and allowed access to people who did not participate in the programme of the ACR. In the following section, I describe the two datasets with respect to their construction and characteristics.

Primary set of interviewees

Fifty-four ex-combatants were selected from the ACR's information system, which contains personal information on every demobilised person. As mentioned above, these

interviews were arranged in advance, with the researcher indicating the desired profiles of the interviewees and the interview sites. This requirement undermined the process of theoretical sampling central to grounded theory. Theoretical sampling calls for a feedback mechanism between data collection and analysis. That is, the analysis of the conducted research should guide the subsequent selection of cases. The bureaucratic limitation to theoretical sampling was corrected for by selecting a large number of cases (a comparatively large number for an inductive approach), and by varying the characteristics of interviewees. The criteria for variation was not however, grounded in the data collection itself – as it should be according to theoretical sampling – but in the theoretical informedness of the researcher. This is likely the most significant discrepancy of the present study from pure Straussian grounded theory. Due to pragmatic constraints, I was required to sample on persons, rather than concepts as required by theoretical sampling. However, the insights gained from continuing analyses fed back into the design of the interview questions and as a result, allowed for limited theoretical sampling. Also, the secondary set of interviewees was developed on the basis of the ongoing analysis.

How does one select interviewees if the aim is to establish variance in the sample? Different selection criteria produce variability. The membership in one or another block, and the time spent within the armed group may provide for variability. In addition, rank within the group may have an impact on ex-combatant needs in the aftermath of demobilisation. Lower-ranking soldiers may have little to lose, while higher- and mid-ranking ex-combatants may fear loss of economic and social status. With regard to the situation today, having a family, being single, living on the countryside or in a city, returning to the place of origin or living in an anonymous context, having a job, being unemployed, or being able to develop educational skills may influence the lives of ex-combatants. The temporal distance from the period of demobilisation may affect the ex-combatants' view as well.

The intended qualitative sample was too small to select cases according to all of the above-mentioned criteria. Furthermore, the information system of the ACR was not detailed enough to record many of these facts. Therefore, I selected two manageable variables that would most likely produce a varied sample with respect to the aforementioned topics: age (three age groups) and current location (four municipalities). Drawing on previous experience with ex-combatants, interviews with experts and pragmatic constraints, I concluded that age would decisively influence the current views of ex-combatants. Younger ex-combatants are more often single and have usually spent less time in the armed group. Older ex-combatants have a set of different needs related to a often different education, job and family situation. I also assumed that the local context influences the living conditions of ex-combatants. Is it a secure

place? Is it a large city? Is it an area with a lot of returning ex-combatants or non-native people? Random selection within the groups on age and location excluded the possibility that ACR representatives would select interviewees according to their gusto. Together with random sampling, the two variables – age and location – allowed for the emergence of a wide variety of ex-combatants in terms of rank, education, vocational skills, gender, family and employment situation, paramilitary faction, presence of disability etc. Table 4 displays some of the aforementioned variables.

Sampling on the age variable resulted in 20 interviews with demobilised persons under the age of 26, 19 interviews with people between 26 and 40 and 15 interviews with ex-combatants older than 40. Apart from the age group selections, four locations were chosen that assumed variation in contextual conditions for individual ex-combatants. Accordingly, 10 interviews were conducted in both Bogotá and Medellín, 15 in Barrancabermeja and 19 in Tierralta (for a description of the local contexts see below).

Due to random sampling, a whole set of other varying characteristics emerged. Nine women were interviewed. While some women had been directly involved in combat, most had been active as logistical personnel, political workers or nurses. In addition, the demobilised people in the sample belonged to 15 different blocks. The largest group belonged to the Bloque Central Bolívar – Sur de Bolívar with 16 participants (mostly in Barrancabermeja). There were 7 from the Bloque Héroes de Granada (mostly in Medellín), 6 from the Bloque Córdoba (all from Tierralta), and 5 from the Bloque Mineros (all from Tierralta). Most of the interviewees demobilised in 2005 and 2006, which corresponds to the two years with the highest number of demobilisations (see Describing the Colombian Context). In the sample, there were interviewees who had demobilised up to six years before the interview. Those who had demobilised most recently did so more than two years ago. Twenty-nine of the interviewees returned to their place of origin (mostly from Tierralta and Barrancabermeja), 14 remained in the same place where they were active as combatants (mostly former urban paramilitaries in Medellín and to a lesser degree Barrancabermeja) and 11 lived in some other place (this is the case for the majority of the interviewees in Bogotá). With respect to their former rank within the AUC, there was little official information available. Nonetheless, according to their own reports and some information from the ACR, 10 mid-ranking[59] ex-combatants were amongst the 54 interviewees organised by the ACR (no mid-ranked ex-combatants were identified among the interviewees from Tierralta).

[59] I define an ex-combatant as mid-ranking when he or she had some form of command over a group of fellow combatants.

Table 4: Aggregated characteristics of the primary set of interviews[60]

Variable	Values	Number	Source
Location	Bogotá Medellín Barrancabermeja Tierralta	10 10 15 19	ACR
Age	Younger than 26 years Between 26 and 40 Older than 40	20 19 15	ACR
Gender	Male Female	45 9	ACR
Former blocks	Number of different blocks	15	ACR
Year of demobilisation	2003 2004 2005 2006	1 4 19 30	ACR
Former rank	Mid-ranked ex-combatants Rank-and-file ex-combatants	10 44	Self-reported[61] and ACR
Place of reintegration	Where originally lived Where active as paramilitary Other place	29 14 11	Self-reported
Partner relationship	Stable partner Single	26 27	Self-reported
Children	No children 1 child 2 children 3 children 4 or more children	14 13 18 6 3	Self-reported
Job situation	Stable job Informal job No job	8 22 23	Self-reported
Feeling reintegrated	Yes No No answer	43 3 8	Self-reported

ACR, Interviews

With regard to their family situation, 26 interviewees claimed to be in a stable relationship, while 27 identified as single. However, 39 of the interviewees reported having children. Concerning their employment situation, 8 demobilised persons claimed to have a stable job at the time of interview while 22 had some type of informal job. Twenty-three said they had no job at all. Forty-three explicitly stated that they felt reintegrated into civil society according to

[60] A list of the interviewed ex-combatants and their characteristics can be found in Annex II. Table 4 is not based on a representative sample of the population of former AUC members. Hence, the numbers do not say anything about the population in general but only about the sample used for this study.
[61] The self-reported indicators are sometimes incomplete. For example, some did not wish to disclose their former ranks.

their own understanding of reintegration. In February 2010, approximately one year after the majority of the interviews were conducted, the ACR information system reported that all of the 54 interviewees continued as active participants in the reintegration programme. In other words, they participated in at least one reintegration activity in the preceding three months.[62]

The four municipalities selected for this study correspond to independent contexts with different dynamics due to their size, conflict history, characteristics of demobilised people, their economic situation, current security situation etc.[63] The importance of these four interview sites lies mainly in providing variance for the sample. I regard the contexts as such to be of limited importance so will introduce them only briefly here. However, more detail will be provided in the Findings Section where necessary. For an overview of general characteristics and DDR related statistics see Annex I.

Bogotá[64] is the capital of and the largest city in Colombia. It has a comparatively low level of insecurity and no direct conflict activity. In Bogotá, most of the demobilised persons are former guerrilleros. Of the approximate 5400 demobilised persons living in Bogotá, about 1200 are former paramilitaries. The majority of demobilised people are not originally from Bogotá. The interviewees selected for this study reflect these realities. Compared to the other contexts, few collectively demobilised persons (32) have been arrested for some illegal activity after their demobilisation.

Medellín[65] is the second largest city in Colombia. The capital of the department Antioquia has seen high levels of criminal and conflict-related violence in the last few decades with the presence of urban, armed guerrilla and paramilitary groups. A significant drop in homicide rates in the early years after the AUC demobilisation has been followed by increasing levels of insecurity in recent years. Medellín hosts a large population of predominantly collectively demobilised persons (3555 of 4467 demobilised people). Many of them were active on the

[62] According to media sources, one of the interviewees was arrested in early 2010 for participating in a massacre during his active time in the AUC and is currently imprisoned.

[63] For general information on the local dimensions of demobilisation-related topics, see the periodic reports of the MAPP-OEA (www.mapp-oea.org), regional studies of the Observatory of the Presidential Programme for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (www.derechoshumanos.gov.co), the reports on risk of the Early Alert System (Sistema de Alerta Temprana – SAT) of the Ombudsman's Office (www.defensoria.org.co), the periodic control and monitoring reports of the Police published on the website of the High Commissioner for Peace (www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co), the reports of the Foundation Ideas for Peace (www.ideaspaz.org), or the reports about single demobilisations of the foundation Security and Democracy (www.seguridadydemocracia.org).

[64] For further DDR-related information on the case of Bogotá, see Acosta et al. (2007), Ávila Martínez and Nuñez Gantiva (2009), Duncan (2006b), Gómez Méndez et al. (2009), and Pérez (2007).

[65] The violence and the reintegration process in Medellín has received a lot of attention, for example: Alcaldía de Medellín (2007a; 2007b), Alonso et al. (2007), Angarito et al. (2008), Baird (2009), Dalton and Martínez (2004), Giraldo (2007), Guáqueta and Arias (2008), Gutiérrez Sanín and Jaramillo (2004), Palou and Llorente (2009), Personería de Medellín (2008), and Rozema (2008).

streets of Medellín and are now reintegrating into the same areas. The numbers of killed (274) and arrested (679) collectively demobilised persons are extraordinarily high.

The mid-sized city Barrancabermeja[66] was the site of fierce urban confrontations between the guerrilla group ELN and paramilitary groups especially in the late 1990s. Today, there are nearly 1000 demobilised persons located there, predominantly former paramilitaries. Most are originally from Barrancabermeja and fought in the city itself or surrounding areas. Barrancabermeja has the highest homicide rate of the four locations selected for this study, with 51 homicides per 100'000 inhabitants.

Tierralta[67] was a stronghold of the AUC and its leaders Carlos Castaño and Salvatore Mancuso. Negotiations between the government and the AUC as well as the zone of attendance were located in Santa Fe de Ralito, which is part of this extensive rural municipality. More than half of its population lives in rural areas. Today, approximately 800 demobilised people reside in Tierralta, and almost all are former AUC members. Most are originally from Tierralta but did not fight in the same region. In a report that was published at about the time that this study was taking place in Tierralta, the municipality was seen by the MAPP-OEA (2009c, 10) as the 'epicentre of recruitment of demobilised persons from the former self-defense forces'.

According to the MAPP-OEA (2009b), Barrancabermeja and Tierralta are located in two of the most critical regions in terms of threats to the reintegration process. Interviews with the 54 ex-combatants took place between January and April 2009.

Secondary set of interviewees

Due to the weaknesses inherent in the initial sample, which was created together with the ACR, a second, smaller number of interview contacts were generated through other channels. This process was done in parallel and meant to complement the main sample.

These complementary interviews usually arose from informal talks with friends of demobilised persons known through the ACR-organised interviews, or through contacts of persons otherwise related to the demobilised community. The contact persons were usually asked: 'Do you know an ex-combatant who corresponds to this or that characteristic?' With this snowball-like sampling technique, eight additional interviews were conducted with male ex-combatants. Four were former mid-ranking combatants. Three demobilised individually, in

[66] For the case of Barrancabermeja see for example Barreto Henriques (2009), Guáqueta and Arias (2008), International Peace Observatory (2008), and Vargas (2009).
[67] The case of Tierralta has been explored by Caicedo and Delgado (2005), Munévar and Nussio (2009), Negrete Barrera (2008) and Nussio (2009c).

other words, they deserted their troops shortly before or after the ceremony of collective demobilisation.[68] Of the five who demobilised collectively, two were not participating in the reintegration programme at the time of interview (and have not entered the process eversince). All of these interviews were conducted in Bogotá. Three interviewees were met several times in order to establish confidence and facilitate a different type of conversation and relationship than with the interviewees met just once. For an overview of the characteristics of these interviewees, see Annex II.

The eight interviews of this secondary set were conducted between January 2009 and April 2010.

Implications of the selection

In this section, I discuss some of the possible concerns or questions raised related to my sampling procedure. By explicitly addressing the implications of the sample, I aim to clarify some of the decisions made regarding data collection.

A question that often came up during the research process was why I was not investigating *individually demobilised former guerrilla members* as well. The term 'individually demobilised person' refers to deserters of illegal armed groups (mostly from the FARC and the ELN). It is true that including former guerrilla members could have broadened the variation in the sample and provided a further tool for comparison.[69] However, blurring the boundaries of this study was a concern that ultimately led me to decide to exclude individually demobilised guerrilla members. Why? An important argument against the inclusion of former 'guerrilleros' lies at the contextual level. Although I was examining former combatants, my ultimate goal was to give feedback on the design of DDR processes. Individual demobilisations cannot be considered DDR processes in a strict sense. According to the definitions of the Integrated DDR Standards (United Nations 2006a, chapter 2.10), they lack some essential elements like the 'signing of a negotiated peace agreement' or 'the willingness of the parties to the conflict to engage in DDR'. Also, no formal disarmament and collective disposal of arms takes place. De facto, the demobilisation of guerrilla fighters can

[68] One of the individually demobilised AUC members was involved in a 'secret' mission during the time of demobilisation. He handed himself over to the authorities a few days after the demobilisation of his block in compliance with the order of his commander.

[69] Contrary to the common assumption that former paramilitaries and guerrilla members might respond differently to questions on their demobilisation, Arjona and Kalyvas (2006, 4) have found evidence that although differences existed, similarities outweighed them: 'This would suggest that the bias from interviewing deserters may not be as significant as previously thought'. And this would also suggest that including them in the sample may not have fundamentally changed the conclusions of this study.

be seen as a common war strategy of giving incentives to deserters of the enemy.[70] Individually demobilised persons are distinguished from the 'collectives' in that they made a personal decision to desert. The deserters usually demobilise because of discontentment (Ribetti 2009). For those who leave, civilian life is a preferable alternative. The deserters break radically with their former life, renouncing their secretive life, the ideals of the group, or their collective way of living. According to the organisation they belonged to, they become 'traitors' (Castro and Díaz 1997, 25). On the other hand, the collectively demobilised persons generally respond to an order, albeit willingly or unwillingly. Considering the aforementioned features, I could rename DDR for individually demobilised persons as *decision, desertion and reintegration*, since the only element of DDR that they have in common with collectively demobilised persons is the reintegration process. As a result of the high cost of desertion, former guerrilla members are often more committed to the reintegration process than collectively demobilised persons (El Tiempo 2009; Palou and Méndez 2010; Ribetti 2009). Reengagement in illegal activities is hence not as large a problem for deserters. Nonetheless, out of 'curiousity' I conducted six interviews with former guerrilla members (three FARC, two ELN, one M-19 – see Annex II), contacted mostly through the ACR. These interviews did not directly influence the analysis, since this study focuses exclusively on demobilised paramilitaries. However, a preliminary impression of these interviews suggests that most of the concepts encountered are expandable to former guerrilla members as well.

Why did I not access *illegally active ex-paramilitaries* even though one of the crucial underlying research questions asks for explanations about post-demobilisation reengagment in illegal activities? Security concerns and institutional constraints limited my access to persons with these characteristics. Yet in the context of another study conducted for the Toledo International Centre for Peace (Munévar and Nussio 2009), we gained brief access to five former AUC members arrested and imprisoned for criminal actions after demobilisation. They engaged in illegal activities mostly for economic reasons or to seek protection within an armed group. All had left the reintegration programme. Furthermore, among the interviewed ex-combatants for this study were various persons that had been illegally active after their demobilisation but not at the moment of interview. From an ethical standpoint, interviewing ex-combatants may expose not only the interviewer but also the interviewee to insecurity. Whereas the interviewer usually leaves the scenario after conducting the interview, the interviewed person must live with the suspicions of his neighbours who might have seen a

[70] The demobilised members of guerrilla groups are provided with incentives to hand over information for military operations against their former companions. The Procuraduría (2006) criticises this policy because it contradicts the ex-combatants' primary desire to leave war.

curious foreigner asking questions. This is an additional reason to be particularly cautious with illegally active ex-combatants, although their inclusion into the study may produce better results.

Why did I not interview any *former high-level combatants*? They were excluded from the present study for two reasons. The primary interest of this study was to focus on the majority of former combatants, rather than the specific needs of the few former commanders. I assumed that former commanders have specific needs due to their former role, income and power as well as their current juridical position (see Describing the Colombian context). Former higher-ranking AUC members who were responsible for non-pardonable crimes usually entered the Justice and Peace Process, which implies a special form of reintegration, different from rank-and-file and mid-level ex-combatants. Second, they were difficult to access. Some were extradited to the US for drug charges and others are imprisoned.

Why did I not use a purely *respondent-driven sampling method*, one that may have facilitated the process of theoretical sampling and overcome bureaucratic limitations? Respondent-driven sampling is a type of chain referral sampling and is related to the snowball principle. The strength of such a method is to identify potentially hidden populations. While this is the case for part of the demobilised population in Colombia, the majority of former AUC members are locatable through the ACR information system. Hence, it was preferable to have a sampling procedure based primarily on the institutional channel.

How was it possible to make a predefined number of interviews compatible with the *requirements of theoretical saturation*? A pure 'grounded theorist' could criticise this study by highlighting that the end of data collection was not determined by saturation, but rather, was pre-determined. This potential criticism can be rejected in two ways. First, the main sample of 54 interviews was intended to be large enough to eventually reach a point of saturation. Second, the secondary sample functioned as a type of insurance, allowing me to conduct more interviews when necessary. In practice, the point of saturation was reached when the interviewer recognised continuous and repeating patterns during the simultaneous analysis of interview data. It is however evident that not all the concepts were saturated at the same time.

Why did I not use *numbers* for the presentation of my findings? Although I presented some quantitative characteristics of the selected interviewees, the main findings of this explorative study are nearly presented without numbers. Significant concepts and their interrelations, and not their frequency were the main focus of this study. In addition, numbers may produce a wrong impression since the sample was not representative of the population it stands for. A

random sampling procedure would not have matched my purpose of creating a varied sample, considering the limited number of interviews I was able to make. Frequencies are not regularly reported because the interview questions evolved over time due to grounded theory's feedback mechanism between data collection and analysis. In other words, not all interviewees were given the same interview schedule and as such, answers to questions are not directly comparable.

Although my analysis drew exclusively on interviews with former combatants, I was not blindly accepting their assertions. Countless formal and informal meetings with observers and practitioners of the DDR process during my long-term stay in Colombia helped to balance and understand the view of ex-combatants with the idiosyncrasies of local mentalities. Conversations with officials of national institutions, psychosocial tutors of former combatants, functionaries of international organisations, academics and university students completed the picture of the reintegration process.[71]

[71] I met with representatives of the ACR, CNRR, General Attorney's office, departmental authorities, police, armed forces, mayor's offices, programme of peace and reconciliation in Medellín; the MAPP-OEA, IOM, UNDP; academics of the Universidad Nacional, Universidad de los Andes, Universidad del Externado, Universidad Javeriana, University of Utrecht; members of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, Fundación Ideas para la Paz, International Crisis Group, Bonn International Centre for Conversion, CERAC, CITPAX, Observatorio de DDR de la Universidad Nacional, Fundación Social; civil society members and victims of violence, and other independent researchers. I organised periodical meetings with a group of PhD students (Kimberly Howe, Juan Esteban Ugarriza and Rocío Rubio Serrano) working on DDR-related topics in Colombia. Furthermore, I taught a seminar for two semesters on 'Processes of DDR in the World' at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá with totally 70 students and 20 invitees from different institutions.

3.3. The interview as source of data

For a grounded theorist, everything can be a source: interviews, observations, government documents, videos, newspapers, letters etc. (Corbin and Strauss 1990; 2008). The findings of the present study are mainly based on the 62 interviews[72] conducted between January 2009 and April 2010. By interviewing former combatants, I could access the central themes solicited by the research question. The interview fits the needs of a grounded theorist particularly well since in a dialogical context, the researcher is able to guide the data collection in the direction which previous analysis predicts (Charmaz 2001). Interviewing thus provides flexibility and control.

However, there are many limitations in using interviews as the only source, especially when it is used in a 'self-report' manner (Cornelius 1995). Are interviewees conscious of their emotions, strategies and interactions? Do they tell the truth about these topics? Do they remember things correctly? And are they even willing to talk about it? (see Specific Biases and Limitations). Bearing in mind the limitations of awareness, communication ability and willingness to talk, the strength of this self-report method is to provide insight into otherwise unknown areas.

In what follows, I describe the actual interview situation, the role of the interviewer and the interview questions in order to make the data collection process transparent.

Actual interview situation

The actual interview situation differed between the 54 ACR-organised interviews and the secondary set of 8 interviews organised through other channels. In fact, having different interview settings helped to overcome some of the respective weaknesses as will be explained below.

What did the organisation and actual interview situation of the primary set of interviews look like? At each interview site (Bogotá, Medellín, Barrancabermeja, Tierralta), ACR tutors were asked to contact potential interviewees according to a randomised list of ex-combatants. The list purposely included more potential interviewees than needed, as I expected that some would not want to participate. At each interview site, the first 15 who agreed 'to talk with a Swiss academic' were referred to their respective service centre. It was usually necessary to call about 20 demobilised persons – about five did generally not agree to be interviewed for unspecified reasons. By service centre, I refer to the ACR centre where ex-combatants receive

[72] For an overview of interviewing techniques for qualitative research see for example Arthur and Nazroo (2003), Atkinson (1998), Charmaz (1994), Foddy (1994), Gubrium and Holstein (2001), Kvale (1996; 2006), Roulston et al. (2003), Rubin and Rubin (1995), Sudman and Bradburn (1982), Tanggaard (2009).

psychosocial tutorials and manage administrative issues. While choosing the service centre as the place of interview may bias the findings, the advantages outweighed the drawbacks. For example, meeting in a familiar place created confidence between interviewees and interviewer. This was particularly important because this group of ex-combatants were only interviewed once. The demobilised people did not have any problem with being critical of the services of the reintegration programme, indicating that they felt free to express themselves even within an ACR centre.

The interview as such, was a one-to-one talk between the interviewee and me[73] and usually took place in a discrete office environment, separated from the rest of the service centre. The average duration of the interview was 30 minutes to two hours. Interviewees were offered a coffee, and the interview often began with a relaxed discussion about unrelated issues with the purpose 'to get the participant talking' (Arthur and Nazroo 2003, 112). After this informal chat and a short introduction of the research project, the demobilised persons and I signed a mutual agreement of confidentiality (see John Lofland and Lyn H. Lofland 1994). In this confidentiality paper (see Annex III), the terms of total anonymity were outlined, and uniquely academic use of interviews was described.[74] All the 54 interviews organised with the help of the ACR were tape-recorded. The interviewees were informed about the recording and the tape-recorder was placed in a discrete spot.

The second set of interviews not only helped to overcome possible data collection biases as described in the previous section, but also balanced some weaknesses in using the ACR centre for interviews. The 8 interviewees were contacted independently through different channels (friends of ex-combatants, ex-combatants known to other researchers or people working with demobilised community etc.). The interview setting for the second set was more informal, mostly without tape-recording or the confidentiality paper, and often held in restaurants during the lunch hour or at a university. Some interviews were conducted with demobilised persons in groups of two or three. Such characteristics enabled a different interview situation.

[73] Two research assistants participated in 5 interviews in Bogotá. ACR-assisted interviews were always conducted one-on-one.

[74] Due to this confidentiality document, all names and indicators that may lead to the identification of the participants are made invisible in this study. Also, we do not relate the quotations to the interview numbers since a combination of the information may lead to identifying the person in question. Interested fellow researchers may access the database of this study with prior consent of the author. Only one demobilised woman from Tierralta did not want to sign the agreement but orally expressed consent for the researcher to use her interview for analysis.

Role of the interviewer

A crucial factor in the interview setting is the role of the interviewer (see Specific Biases and Limitations). 'What research role you take and how that role is seen by the interviewee affects the quality of the conversation' (Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin 1995, 114). I was usually introduced as an 'independent Swiss academic' explicitly unrelated to the Colombian or Swiss government, media or other organisations. One important feature in this respect is that I am a foreigner with mother tongue different from the interviewees. Yet, thanks to advanced Spanish skills, the linguistic barrier was negligible. In many respects, being a foreigner might have even been an advantage (see also Rozema 2008). Some interviewees felt empowered that a foreign person was interested in their destiny. But most importantly, Colombians in general and ex-combatants in particular are very cautious in providing information to unknown persons. They are especially distrustful of other Colombians since they may be related to the government or some political organisation that may misuse their information. A foreigner is less exposed to this suspicion. In fact, one of the interviewees explicitly stated that he would not have attended the interview if I had been Colombian.

The biggest challenge of the interview setting was to establish an environment of confidence, especially with ex-combatants who were being interviewed just once. The emotional openness of most interviewees – some even cried during the interview or disclosed things they might not even tell their family members – shows that some sort of empathy could be established quickly. In all likelihood, an interview with a total stranger, unrelated to Colombian institutions and Colombia in general, allowed them to express things they would not normally express in the presence of a known person. However, there were also difficult interviews with introverted persons who did not open up in the course of the meeting. However, the large number of interviews allowed for some to be less informative than others.

Generally speaking, I drew on a large number of skills obtained from previous interviewing experiences when I worked as a journalist or engaged in interview trainings. This know-how facilitated my handling critical situations such as extended periods of silence or tight-lipped answers. I tried to communicate a respectful and affirmative attitude so the interviewees would feel as free as possible. When they asked me for my opinion, I tried to avoid controversial statements and instead let them know that I was sympathetic with their position. This helped to reduce the possibility of my guiding their answers. Interviewees often asked about my opinion of the reintegration programme, usually at the end of the interviews. I took a neutral stance on this topic, generally saying that there were both positive and negative aspects of the programme.

Interview questions

Interviews designed for grounded theory cannot be easily characterised since by nature, they change over time. They are not exactly unstructured or semi-structured but instead, develop from loosely structured to more structured. The evolution of the interview questions is part of theoretical sampling. It allows for narrowing the range of topics (Charmaz 2001) over time as a result of the constant interview analysis explained below. This feedback mechanism is crucial as it provides a tool for the continuous testing and re-testing of provisional concepts.

The present research basically began with open-ended questions stemming from the general research interest of 'getting to know the ex-combatants' perspective about their lives':

- What has been important to you after you demobilised?
- What has been positive after your demobilisation?
- What has been negative in your life after demobilisation?
- Additionally, I asked at the end of each interview for what they understood by the term reintegration.

In the beginning of the process, it was essential to leave the questions open-ended to prevent the interviewer from leading or 'boxing in' the interviewees. It was important to let them have as much freedom as possible to develop their own concepts. The interview design was flexible enough to adapt the questions to the dynamic of each interview, allowing me to elaborate on topics presented by the interviewee. Thus, I often insisted on asking: What do you mean by ...? Why is ... important to you? How do you react to ...? What do you do in such a circumstance? And so on.

Little by little, and as the provisional concepts became more defined, open questions transformed into rather closed questions. Through this process, subsequent interviewees served as test material for the hitherto found concepts. With respect to the primary set of 54 interviews, for logistical reasons, I travelled to each research site (Bogotá, Medellín, Barrancabermeja, Tierralta) and conducted each set of interviews there within one week. As such, the feedback process was not immediate but rather after each set of interviews. The last set of interviews still began with open questions but quite quickly turned to closed questions, which allowed for checking earlier found concepts. The eight independently organised interviews were conducted on single occasions mostly after finishing the primary 54 interviews.

In order to demonstrate the evolution of the interview question, I present an example here. During the analysis, the *stigma within the community* became one of the central categories. To

further explore, deepen and test this category, I asked some of the following precise questions in the last few interviews:

- Do you live in the same place you lived before engaging in the armed group or during your active time? How important is your community to you? How is your relationship to the community?
- Do people in your community know that you are a demobilised person? Why? Do you tell them that you are a demobilised person? Why? Do people treat you any differently when they know that you are a demobilised person? How do they treat you?
- Do you feel stigmatised by the community? ('Stigma' was a concept often introduced by the interviewees themselves.) What does this – stigma – mean to you? Why do you think they stigmatise you? How do you handle stigmatisation?
- What do you do to improve your relationship with other community members? Do you actively participate in community life? How do you participate?
- Are your friends predominantly demobilised people? If not, do you avoid them? If yes, do other people avoid you? Were your current demobilised friends comrades in your block or do they participate in the reintegration programme with you?

This list represents the type of closed questions used in the final stages of the present research. They correspond to an advanced phase of the analysis.

It happened on occasion that there was simply no use of asking more questions, as the interviewee was reluctant to answer them. Others were unstoppable in their statements, implicitly saying that 'finally somebody asks me about this'. My guiding principle was a high level of tolerance and respect for everything the ex-combatants said or omitted. On the one hand, this principle limited me in insisting for more information when they spoke about some likely important topics. My research ethos did not permit pushing too deeply into painful memories (see also Schafer 2007). On the other hand, this attitude created confidence and allowed me to address even delicate questions to the ex-combatants such as: Why don't you go back to illegality? This question can be highly offensive or even dangerous, but most of the interviewees gave a substantive answer.

The ex-combatants who were interviewed usually had a poor educational background. Therefore, the formulation of the interview questions had to be very simple. 'Brevity, grammatical simplicity, specificity and concreteness' (Foddy 1994, 50) are the most important principles in the formulation of intelligible questions. As the formulation of the questions may have a decisive influence on the findings (Sudman and Bradburn 1982), a single question was often re-formulated to overcome a potential semantic bias. For example, besides asking what

was positive after demobilisation, I also said: What helped you? What favoured you? What motivated you? What facilitated your life? And so on. Different wording often provoked different answers, even though the question was essentially the same. More often than not, I used some of the ex-combatants' slang to make the questions more easily understandable.

3.4. Procedures of interview analysis

What is happening in the data? (Glaser 1978). This is the central question for grounded theory data analysis. More specifically, I drew on my theoretical informedness about the topic of ex-combatants and applied the questions used in the 'theoretical paradigm' (Corbin and Strauss 2008): What conditions? What strategies or actions, interactions and emotions? With what consequences? These were the questions that initiated my analysis and eventually guided me through to 'well-developed categories' (Corbin and Strauss 1998).

The foundation of analysis was the transcribed interviews (all 54 interviews organised with the ACR and some of the second set of 8 interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed) and interview notes (for the remaining interviews of the secondary set). The interviews were transcribed into Spanish (for transcriptions see Oliver, Serovich, and Tina L. Mason 2005). Only the quotations used in this study were translated. The transcription was challenging as the former paramilitaries generally have low education skills, which resulted in an accumulation of fragmented, contradictory and badly articulated statements with a lot of slang. The help of two Colombian research assistants facilitated the transcribing. Memos about specific concepts and its occurrence in interviews provided a further basis for the development of categories (Corbin and Strauss 1990). Memoing accompanied the whole process of analysis and thus divided a huge amount of interview data in smaller, digestible pieces. As the analysis progressed, the memos became the main source. Sketches of different categories, spontaneous categorisation exercises as well as conversations with my research assistants and others close to my research complemented the analysis procedures.

According to Straussian grounded theory, the analysis itself is divided into three coding steps: open coding, axial coding and selective coding.[75] Open coding allows for a first pass at the data by identifying the relevant text segments. By open coding, Corbin and Strauss (2008, 195) mean 'breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data'. For this study, the blocks that stand for raw data were conceptually labelled (coded) and broken down into their properties and dimensions. The two research assistants participated in the process of open coding, which helped to 'see' more concepts (Berg and Milmeister 2007). The questions that guided the reading of the interview texts reflected the general research questions and the original open interview questions: What is positive in the lives of ex-combatants? What is negative? and so on. Open coding as an initial step of analysis began directly after the first set of interviews was completed in Bogotá in January 2009. Systematic

[75] In addition to the literature by Corbin and Strauss, see for example Berg and Milmeister (2007), Charmaz (2001), Kelle (2007), LaRossa (2005), Mogghaddam (2000), Muckel (2007), Walker and Myrick (2007) for examples on coding for grounded theory.

comparisons with subsequent data helped with locating the concepts in the right place and preparing the ground for axial coding, which goes hand in hand with open coding.

With axial coding, I related concepts to each other by making use of the above-mentioned theoretical paradigm questions and reaching out to general categories. I formed similar concepts around these overarching categories allowing for density and variance, and then related the general categories to each other. The general categories or central themes found from this study are the emotional legacies of war, security threats, economic difficulties, the pact with the state, stigma within the community, and the disrupted family life. The Wittgensteinean term 'Familienähnlichkeit' or family resemblance (Wittgenstein 2003, for example para. 71) describes what 'the similarity of different concepts within one category' means (Muckel 2007). A category assembles 'familienähnliche' concepts. The category itself is not delimited from other categories by clearly defined boundaries, but rather is a term with a vague range. Therefore, the categories and subcategories defined in the following findings part (see Part Two) are somewhat 'fuzzy' terms, often referring to certain phrases or expressions used by the demobilised persons. For example, in the section on the relation to the community I say: 'By community, they [the ex-combatants] usually mean the *people physically surrounding the ex-combatants in their daily life, in their 'barrios' – their neighbourhoods*.'

The last step in coding according to Straussian grounded theory, is selective coding. It is 'the process by which all categories are unified around a central "core" category' (Corbin and Strauss 1990, 424). It somehow unifies the main analytic idea of the whole theory. However, selective coding was not applied to the present study. The ex-combatant as a central unit of analysis is the main trunk of the theory, and all the other categories relate to it as branches to a tree.

In summary, analysis reduces data to concepts and categories. Coding is understood as an iterative, inductive, reductive process (Walker and Myrick 2007). The process of constant comparison could go on infinitely, since the concepts are always provisional and could be solidified by further data analysis. The degree of complexity reduction and the end of analysis is ultimately up to the researcher (Berg and Milmeister 2007). The aim of the present study was to find a middle way between pure description and excessive reduction, and thus to build a substantive theory.

3.5. Specific biases and limitations

One of the capabilities of a grounded theorist must be 'to recognise the tendency toward bias' (Corbin and Strauss 1998, 7). This section discusses specific biases and limitations related to the present study. Some general limitations have been mentioned earlier and are not repeated here (such as the bureaucratic limitation, the semantic bias or the limitations of self-reporting inherent in the interview method). The following list is not exhaustive but tries to address some pressing topics.

The false interviewee: The lax eligibility criteria for the DDR process may have affected the selection of interviewees (see Describing the Colombian Context). It is known that not all collectively demobilised persons were bona-fide members of the AUC. Since I selected the 54 interviewees from my primary dataset at random and based on the information system of the ACR, it is possible that some 'non-members' have slipped into the sample and distorted the analysis. However, I had the impression that all interviewees had a credible AUC story. According to their statements, there were some interviewees who had been only loosely related to the AUC. Women especially participated in associated functions. One of the demobilised women from Tierralta reported having been a nurse for the paramilitaries. She demobilised 'because the commander asked for it'. Another woman joined the AUC as a cleaning lady in order to stay close to her son who went blind after an accident. She never participated in fighting, but nonetheless demobilised together with her son. These are the two most distant cases from 'real' ex-combatants.[76] In the present study, they represented variance since they marked the far ends of the larger sample's activities.

The absent interviewee: Ex-combatants who were selected for interviews were obviously not forced to participate in this research. They were invited without providing any specific incentives. Some refused to 'talk with a Swiss academic' at the outset (about five in each location). Others agreed to participate but nevertheless did not show for the appointment.[77] It is possible that those who did not arrive at the interview shared some commonality that distinguished them from those who attended. Perhaps some had been interviewed before and were bored of being 'analysed'. It is possible that employed people could not attend since they did not receive permission from their employers. Demobilised people who wanted to do a favour for their psychosocial tutors (who had asked for the meetings) may have attended the

[76] According to the Integrated DDR Standards of the UN (United Nations 2006a, chapter 2.10, 4.5), these women had the right to receive DDR benefits: 'Those working in non-combat roles (including women) [should be taken into consideration in DDR programmes]'.

[77] This was especially the case for demobilised persons in Medellín and Bogotá where respectively, five cited ex-combatants did not show up. This may be due to the large distances and complicated traffic situations in these big cities. In Barrancabermeja, three ex-combatants did not attend the interview while in Tierralta all attended.

interviews more frequently. It is impossible to know if there is an essential difference between those interviewed and those not interviewed for this study. Willingness to talk however was not the most important criterion for participation, since some interviewees who attended the interviews were quite reluctant to answer the questions.

The lying interviewee: How is it possible to know if an interviewee tells the truth? Especially in environments with high levels of violence or involvement in illegal actions, not telling the truth may be a vital coping strategy (Fujii 2010). Considering the number of interviewees, it is likely that some were dedicated to illegal activities, even while participating in the reintegration programme (MAPP-OEA 2009b; Munévar and Nussio 2009). In general, the interviewees did not feel comfortable talking about this topic. Most simply denied having been involved in any criminal activity. However, some openly referred to illegal vigilante activities without being conscious of its illegality. Others gave hints about theft, contact with armed groups, or continued participation in the illegal successor organisations of the AUC. For the present research, I used different complementary information to triangulate their statements. Approximately one year after most of the interviews were conducted, I checked the ACR database for new information. I continuously searched for information in the press about the interviewed demobilised persons.[78] I asked their individual psychosocial tutors about any significant developments or changes. On some occasions, I casually asked demobilised persons about their fellow ex-combatants, either from the same former block or region, in order to verify their statements. Some ex-combatants were interviewed various times to enhance mutual confidence. Furthermore, the long-term stay in Colombia and the growing experience with former combatants helped in identifying obvious lies and detecting inconsistencies.

The story-telling interviewee: More important to this study than the deliberately lying ex-combatant is the interviewee who unconsciously bends, perceives selectively, idealises or exaggerates reality. As mentioned earlier, I am interested in the subjective realities of former combatants – the narrative construction of the speaker's mind (Fireman, McVay, and Flanagan 2003; Riessman 1993; Sarbin 1986). A personal narrative is an 'act of imagination that is a patterned integration of our remembered past, perceived present and anticipated future' (McAdams 1993, 12). According to this view, I can only access a subjective,

[78] If demobilised people are involved in criminal activities, they are often mentioned with their complete names in the media. According to press information, one of the interviewees of Barrancabermeja was involved in the formation of a new armed group in the region of the Magdalena Medio shortly after his demobilisation. According to another source, an interviewee was participating in a meeting with a high-ranking politician which confirmed that this ex-combatant had some level of command as was reported in the interview. The same holds for a further interviewee who was named as a former mid-ranked combatant in press releases.

narratively constructed reality. This motivates me to report on the *perspectives and perceptions* of former combatants.

The instrumentalised interviewer: The interviewer is not a distant observer of some laboratory experiment, but a participant in his own research. Therefore, what the interviewee sees in the interviewer affects the interview itself. Sometimes the demobilised persons explicitly expressed their expectations and interests. Some felt empowered by a foreign person interested in their destiny[79], some expected concrete results[80], others just wanted their story to be told. There might also have been hidden agendas in the assertions of the interviewees that are still unknown to me.

The most obvious limitation of the present method is the data itself. With this inductive method, we cannot see more than what the data tells us. This may undermine the analytical coherence of the findings in some instances because data is not always coherent. In addition, the individualist approach limits the understanding when it comes to group dynamics or to structural conditions, as I see things only through the eyes of the individual ex-combatants.

[79] *'This makes you feel proud, that someone who is not from here is interested in us'* (Barrancabermeja). *'Eso lo enorgullece a uno, que alguién que no sea de acá, se interese por nosotros.'*
[80] *'Hopefully, this [the interview] helpst the state pays a little more attention to us'* (Tierralta). *'Ojalá esto [la entrevista] nos sirviera para que el estado nos preste un poco más de atención.'*

Part Two: Grounding the Empirical Findings

'The commanders have given the order, so we have to demobilise.
I said: 'I have a question, sir. What about us?'
I was afraid that they would kill us all.'[81]
Demobilised person from Medellín, February 2009

4. Introducing the Substantive Theory

The 62 former members of the AUC interviewed for this study are different in many respects. After conducting the first interviews, I was surprised by the enormous variety of personalities. Nevertheless, there is a general story or theory to their lives as ex-combatants that emerged through the grounded theory approach.

The results of the data analysis are presented in different levels of abstraction following Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007, 29): 'The best way to address this challenge of "better stories vs. better theories" is to develop a theory in sections or by distinct propositions in such a way that each is supported by empirical evidence. Thus, the overarching organizing frame of the paper [or thesis in the present case] is the theory, and each part of the theory is demonstrated by evidence from at least some of the cases.'

I apply this piece of advice and divide my presentation of findings into three levels of abstraction. On the most general level, I distinguish between the central themes of emotional legacies of war, security threats, economic difficulties, a pact with the state, stigma within the community and a disrupted family life. In this introductory chapter, I remain on the highest level of abstration, and describe the central themes in the lives of former paramilitaries. These central themes are the building blocks of the substantive theory. On the middle level of abstraction, I identify the inner life of each central theme, which consists of subcategories such as perceptions and strategies. The respective findings chapters are structured according to these subcategories. On the lowest level of abstraction, I introduce the empirical groundwork of my analysis in the form of direct quotations throughout the detailed findings sections.

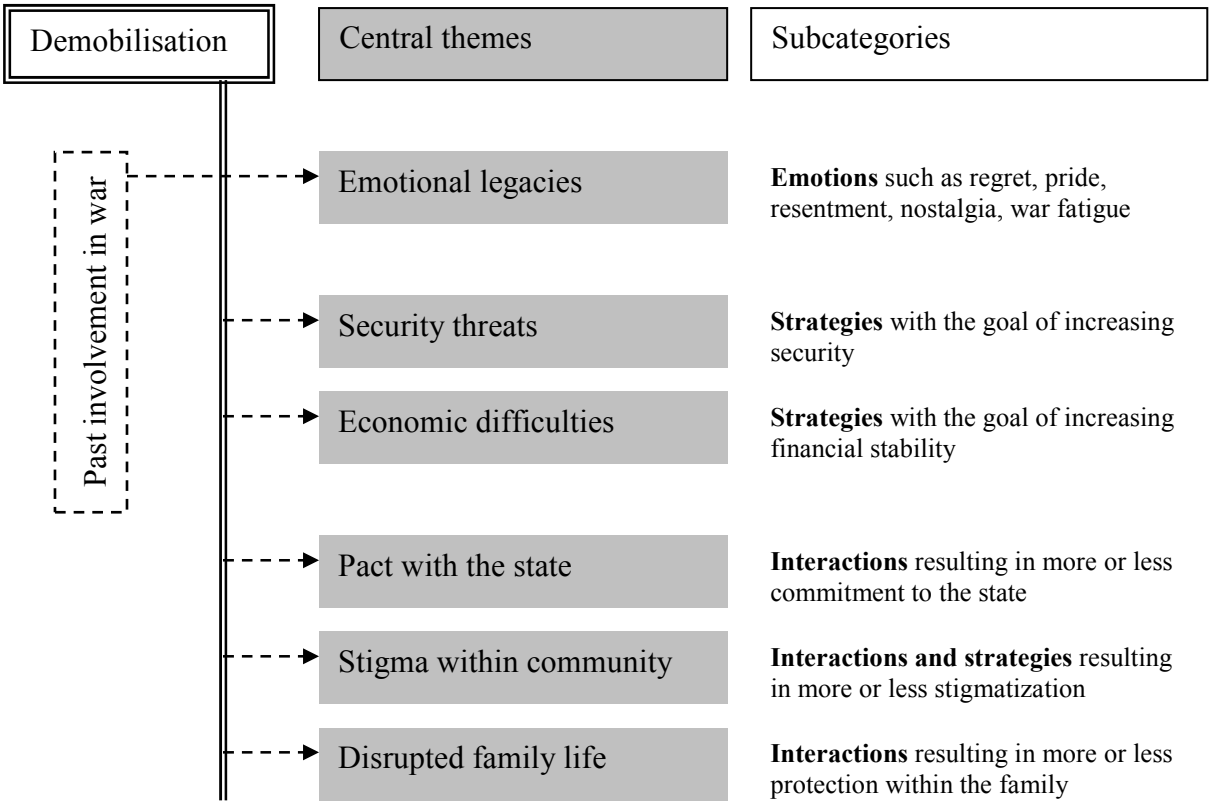
Each of the following findings chapters corresponds to one central theme and is divided into three parts: an introduction to the related literature, a presentation of the detailed findings and some preliminary policy implications.

[81] *'Los señores nos mandaron una orden y entonces nos vamos a desmovilizar. Y entonces dije: 'Señor, una preguntica: ¿y qué vamos a hacer nosotros?'. Tenía miedo que nos van a matar a todos.'*

Central themes

What are the central themes in the lives of former paramilitaries in Colombia? This is the main question of the present study. The following Figure 8 assembles the elements of a general answer to this question:

Figure 8: Overview of the central themes in the lives of former paramilitaries



After analyzing the interviews with former paramilitaries, I came to the conclusion that *the ex-combatants' lives take place in an environment of perceiving their involvement in war in certain emotional ways, strategically overcoming economic and security challenges and socially relating to state, community and family*.

The aforementioned central themes may be seen as important to human beings in general (my past, my security, my job, my state, my neighbourhood, my family). Nevertheless, the ex-combatants have specific, often disturbed or disrupted relationships to emotional, practical and social issues, which are different from other civilians. The emotional legacies connected to the perception of their active participation in war determine their self-understanding. They might generally say: 'I was a combatant' or see themselves as 'security experts' and potential victims of threats since they participated in war. More than 1300 former paramilitaries have been killed after demobilisation ('I feel unsafe'). For many of them, being a paramilitary was

having a job. Demobilizing also meant renouncing a stable income ('I lost my job'). Their relationships to social entities such as the state, community and family were somehow disrupted or disturbed during their active time. As paramilitaries, they were acting outside of the legal realm, questioning the state's monopoly of violence. The demobilisation implies a return to legality under a pact with the state ('the state is obliged to help me'). The community and friends have been abandoned or even exposed to their violence. Coming back to the same community or living in a new community may be a painful experience accompanied by stigma ('I feel excluded'). Similarly, most of the ex-combatants stayed far from their families during their active time. Disruption is a constant in their family lives ('I refound my family'). In conclusion, every central theme encountered in the interviews is important to ex-combatants because it differentiates them from other civilians. These central themes are both of vital importance, but also present challenges in their daily lives.

In the presentation of the findings, I do not focus particularly on a specific group such as mid-ranked, female, disabled or rural ex-combatants. However, where identified, I refer to commonalities among specific groups. The same holds for contextual factors. When I identify direct reactions to specific circumstances, I will describe them in the text, but I do not search for them systematically. Context generally enters the analysis through the eyes of ex-combatants.

The different central themes are interrelated. For example, relocation is a strategy used to confront security challenges (security threats), a lack of employment opportunities (economic difficulties), or stigmatisation (Stigma within the Community). Emotional legacies influence the relationship to the state: nostalgic ex-combatants tend to be less committed to the reintegration process since they were often not interested in demobilizing, whereas the war fatigued demobilised persons welcome the new opportunity. The interrelatedness between the central themes and their subcategories is expressed by the many cross-references in the findings chapters. The cross-references serve as a metaphor for the holistic approach I try to convey. The central themes form a system that produces an environment that favours one outcome rather than another. That is, I do not propose causality but conditions that favour certain behaviours.

One element that is important to bear in mind is the time dimension for each central theme. The former paramilitaries are in a process of reorganizing their lives, which may imply changing perceptions and behaviours. I try to capture some of the character of this process within the subcategories of the central themes. For example: Using a strategy with a certain goal implies a time dimension since the underlying goal of action is change.

'There were people that demobilised,
they have taken the weapons from their hands
but not from their heads.
And this is very difficult,
this compels the person to go back again
to the same life as before. '[82]
Demobilised person from Barrancabermeja, March 2009

5. Living with Emotional Legacies of War

The one thing that ex-combatants have in common is their past participation in conflict. However, former involvement in war is not just a structural baseline that is uniform for all ex-combatants, but is rather an experience that is interpreted in different ways. As such, it has varying effects on how they perceive and experience life after demobilisation. Every demobilised person has a specific way of remembering, justifying or rejecting his or her personal involvement in the war.

This chapter is about the emotional legacies of war. Ex-combatants perceive their active time in certain ways, and their related perceptions carry an emotional dimension – I call this the emotional legacy of war. Time and again, the ex-combatants indicate that emotional legacies of war, whether through motivations or experiences, are defining categories for their lives today.

[82] *'Hubo personas que se entregaron, les quitaron el fusil de las manos, pero no se lo han quitado de la cabeza todavía. Y eso es muy difícil, eso lleva a que la persona vuelva otra vez a lo mismo de antes.'*

5.1. Related literature

The concept of the emotional legacy was borne directly from this study. As such, there is little that resembles this idea in the existing literature. This may be due to the predominant institutional focus on DDR (see Introducing DDR). Generally speaking, the DDR literature is more concerned with psychological disorders than with emotional legacies. One exception may be Coulter (2006) who sketches the concept of 'shame for conflict activities' that hinders former bush wives in Sierra Leone to enlist in DDR activities. The past involvement in war has been addressed in some writings. Schafer (2007, 14) for example states that 'prewar backgrounds, war experiences and postwar sociopolitical contexts must all be examined if we are to develop a full and plausible account of veterans' postwar identities and activities'. According to Schafer, many veterans characterise their war experience as the defining moment of their lives and see the return from war as a rupture.

In this section, I present the literature with respect to the subcategories (see below) of past involvement in war – war motivations and war experiences – they are the basis for the development of the emotional legacies of war. A large number of publications deal with individual[83] war motivations. Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) group the motivations for participation in armed violence into three types: individual grievances, selective incentives and social sanctions.[84]

Individual grievances consist of economic deprivation, and political or ethnic marginalisation. Class discontent, grief or anger as a motivating force, may be included in this category as well (Goodwin 2001; Henriksen and Vinci 2008; Petersen 2001; Richards 1996). By selective incentives, Humphreys and Weinstein mean that the private benefits of joining an armed group outweigh the benefits of not joining. These benefits may be economic (Azam 2006; Grossman 2002; Justino 2009; Keen 1998; Keen 2000) or related to security (Goodwin 2001; Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). Kalyvas and Kocher claim that some persons feel safer inside an armed group than outside of it. Social sanctions are based on communities with strong social structures and community movements. In this context, peer pressure and community norms may impel participation in armed groups (Petersen 2001; Michael Taylor 1988).

[83] An increased focus on the individual or at least organisational level has been recently called for in Special Issues of the 'Journal of Peace Research' (see Verwimp, Justino, and Bruck 2009) and the 'Journal of Conflict Resolution' (see Cederman and Gleditsch 2009).

[84] The last two types are derived from the work of Mancur Olson (1965) on collective action. Henriksen and Vinci (2008) propose a different typology of individual combatant motivations in non-state armed groups distinguishing between economic, communitarian and existential motivations.

Motivations that are related to emotions such as enjoyment, adventure or pleasure comprise a fourth block not outlined by Humphreys and Weinstein. This type of motivation has been encountered in the case of El Salvador (Elisabeth Jean Wood 2003) and Colombia (Villegas de Posada 2009). Most of the aforementioned motivations presume a certain agency of the enrolled persons (Henriksen and Vinci 2008). However, forced recruitment is clearly not based on a potential combatant's agency, but describes the experience of a considerable number of internal conflict participants (Blattman 2006; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008).

For the Colombian conflict in general and paramilitaries in particular, the whole set of war motivations can be encountered. Villegas de Posada (2009) highlights the motivations that include seeking fun and adventure, economic safety, retaliation, and promises. Ribetti (2007) argues that socio-psychological motivations such as protection, arms and vengeance are the most significant reasons for joining, and more important than grievance-based, ideological and even economic motivations. Further literature on individual motivations also highlight forced recruitment (Gutiérrez Sanín 2008), attraction of economic promises (Arjona and Kalyvas 2006) or living in a zone of dominance of an armed group (Theidon and Betancourt 2008). In the subsequent findings sections, I do not use these classifications but try to group the interviewed ex-combatants according to their own statements. I do acknowledge that there is some overlap between the classifications within existing literature. These classifications aided me in coding and conceptualizing the large amount of interview data.

Literature on how ex-combatants perceive their own motivations and what the emotional legacies of these perceptions are, have rarely been found in the Colombian or general literature on this topic. As an exception, Schafer (2007) argues that Mozambican former soldiers portrayed their entry into war as forcible and involuntary. Consequently, they place blame for the war on the shoulders of leaders, and show signs of resentment. Annan et al. (2009) report a similar view of the past from abducted youth in Uganda who claim not to be responsible for their past actions.

Turning to the other subconcept – war experiences – there are some elements within the DDR literature that look at their effects on the reintegration process. The literature reports that there are even traces of nostalgia – one of the emotional legacies of war experiences found in the present study. Once reunited with their families, ex-combatants may long back to their armed groups, groups who may have played the role of family and support network (Douglas et al. 2004; Gleichmann et al. 2004). A certain dependence on the armed group may therefore persist. In the case of Liberia, 22 per cent of the programme completers sustain routine ties to their former commanders (Pugel 2006). The effect of continuing contacts and networks are an

object of dispute. Some researchers view them as a threat to security (Nilsson 2008; Spear 2006), others highlight the positive potential of these networks as facilitators for the integration of former combatants into the labour market (Kingma and Muggah 2009).

The former rank of ex-combatants is seen as a decisive characteristic for reintegration in various studies, in particular for former mid-level commanders (Gomes Porto, Parsons, and Alden 2007; Mark Knight and Özerdem 2004; Nilsson 2008). Their losses in terms of economic and social prestige are especially large, which may lead them to perceive their active time in war as comparatively positive. Without tailor-made attention, they may be particularly prone to returning to a similar life and playing the role of spoilers in the peace process (Stockholm Initiative 2006).

Often, former combatants continue to see themselves as being outside of society. This exacerbates their problems with social and psychological reintegration (Hagmann and Nielsen 2002). Participation in abusive military factions makes their social reintegration especially difficult, as Humphreys and Weinstein (2007, 533) uncovered in the case of Sierra Leone. This may be due to the receiving communities' difficulty in accepting cruel war actors or to the psychosocial impact of war among the perpetrators of violence. Due to likelihood that some ex-combatants are traumatised, the Integrated DDR Standards (United Nations 2006a, chapter 8.3.2. and 8.3.3) call for specific treatment of traumatised ex-combatants. Surprisingly, Annan et al. (2006; see also Blattman 2006) have shown that for the case of abducted youth in Uganda, the psychosocial impact of war was moderate. A common strategy used by former abductees is to try to 'forget their memories' and 'break with the past' (Annan, Brier, and Aryemo 2009, 659).

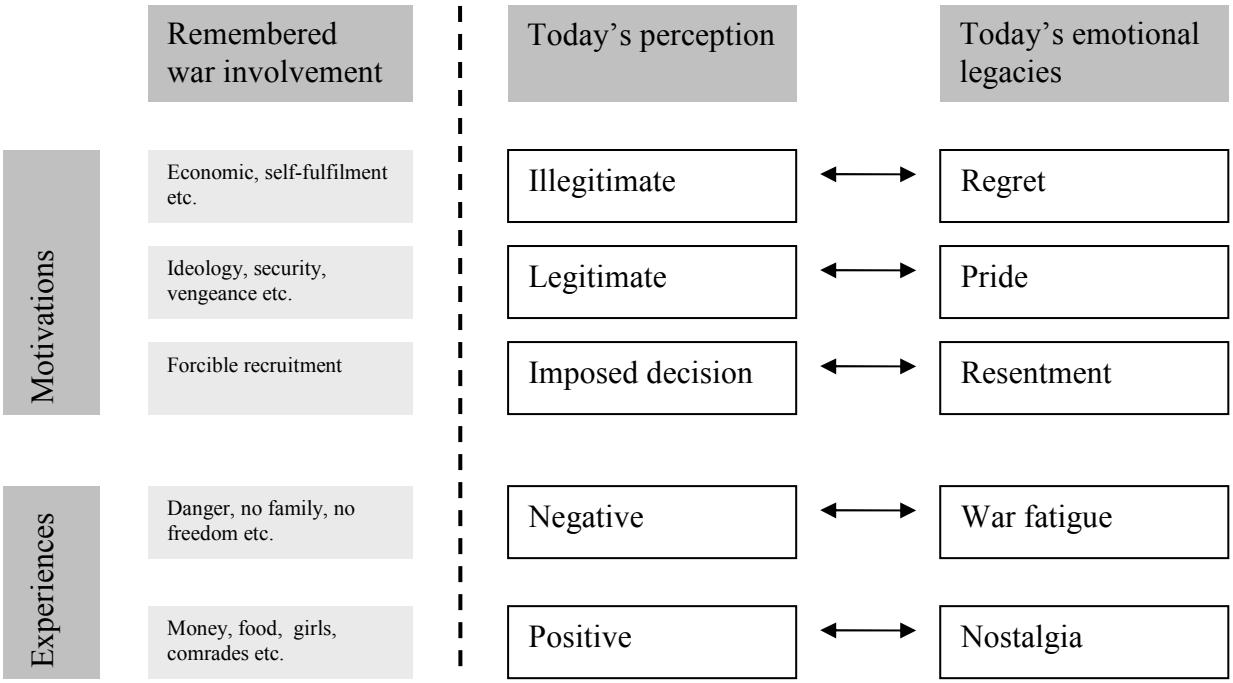
For the Colombian context, there is no existing literature that addresses these elements of emotional legacies for war experiences. There are, however, various first-hand narrations of former paramilitaries (Anonymous 2007; Fundación para la Reconciliación 2008; Vargas Sachik 2007) about their war experiences that may give some hints about how they perceive their activities.

5.2. Overview

The central theme of emotional legacies of war was present in almost all interviews. Nearly all interviewees – and some have been back in civil society for more than five years – referred to this theme by emphasizing the importance of their past involvement in war for understanding their current situation. Without this piece, their reintegration story seemed to be incomplete. One could even go back further and claim that the childhood and the education imparted by the parents determine their lives today as well (see Schafer 2007). This is certainly true. However, without denying the importance of the person's entire biography, their involvement in war may be the first defining moment for an ex-*combatant*. In fact, it was at this point that the interviewees themselves start to make sense of their current situation as demobilised individuals. Only a few went further back in time.

How does the past involvement in war show itself in the statements of the ex-combatants? And how do they make sense of their personal involvement today? Figure 9 illustrates the overall logic of this chapter:

Figure 9: Emotional legacies of war



In general, the interviewed ex-combatants looked back at their past involvement (left side of Figure 9) *dividing it between war motivations – the remembered needs, desires or wants that led them to enter the AUC – and the war experiences – the experiences they made during their membership in the AUC perceived as of today*. I call them 'remembered' or 'perceived'

motivations and experiences because the 'objective' or 'real' war past is seen through the interpretive lens of today. It was impossible to access the objective past motivations and experiences with the method applied for this study. In the tradition of narrative psychology (Sarbin 1986; Polkinghorne 1988), I assumed that the past event, the perception of it and its consequences are all part of the same 'dynamic self-defining story' (McAdams 1993). The interviewees may have tended to make their past motivations and experiences look better than they actually were (Kalyvas 2006), may have reinterpreted them unconsciously or simply not remembered them correctly. This is not a fundamental problem for the present chapter as I am interested in the current lives of ex-combatants.

Today, ex-combatants perceive their motivations and experiences in certain ways. If they claim to have entered the war for economic reasons, they usually judge their decision of entry as illegitimate. If they entered for ideological reasons or for security, it is seen as a legitimate decision. And if they see themselves as having been coerced to do so, they perceive it as an imposed decision. Similarly, those who remember having had enough money, good comrades and girls available to them, see their war experience as something positive. In contrast, those who perceive their active time as dangerous, without freedom or access to their families, judge their active time negatively.

According to the interviews, certain emotional dimensions come follow these perceptions (Corbin and Strauss 2008, 7). I call them emotional legacies since they refer to the past, or perhaps more accurately today's perceptions of the past. The term 'legacy' is meant to express this connection between past and present. It is difficult to separate the emotional legacies from the perception itself since the two seem to be closely related. Hence, I define emotional legacies of war as the *emotional dimension of today's perception of the past involvement in war*. If the ex-combatants perceive their earlier motivations as illegitimate, the perception of their motivations is usually mixed with regret. If they perceive it as legitimate, they frequently feel proud about the decision or at a minimum, do not feel regret. If it was not their own decision, that is, if they claim to have been forced to enter the armed group, they are resentful. A similar connection can be made with war experiences. Those who perceive their war experiences as good, feel nostalgic. Others perceive their active time as negative, and often express a fatigue[85] about their war experience.

I do not define the nature of the relationship between perceptions and emotional legacies, but simply observe a frequent coexistence between certain perceptions and emotional

[85] 'War fatigue' as it is used here is not to be confused with 'battle fatigue' or 'combat stress reaction', which are military terms used to describe a range of behaviours resulting from combat stress. Rather, it is a long-term emotional legacy that comes along a negative perception of the past war experiences.

legacies.[86] As the perceptions and emotional legacies are somehow bound to each other, it is possible that a re-interpretation of past events could lead to different emotional legacies. The perspective of former combatants about past involvement in war is under constant scrutiny in their new lives as *former* combatants. Thus, asking them today may result in other outcomes than asking them tomorrow. Retrospection is not static but dynamic.

The subsequent findings sections are structured following the subcategories of motivations and experiences and their respective emotional legacies. That is, I first explore the past war motivations, the related perceptions today, and the accompanying emotional legacies. In the second part, I develop the concept of emotional legacies of war experiences.

The reader should take note that this chapter is not about Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)[87], a psychological disturbance common among former combatants. However, symptoms of PTSD can be identified in some quotations about war fatigue. It is likely that traumatic memories are one reason for them to look back at their past involvement in war with negative feelings.

[86] The relationship between perception and emotional legacy resembles the relationship between appraisal and emotion in the cognitive theory of emotions (see Arnold 1960; Lazarus 1991; Solomon 1993).

[87] For a definition of PTSD see Spitzer (1980, 247): 'The essential feature of this disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of unusual human experience (i. e., outside the range of such common experience as simple bereavement, chronic illness, business losses, and marital conflict). The stressor producing this syndrome would be markedly stressing to almost anyone, and is usually experienced with intense fear, terror and helplessness. The characteristic symptoms involve reexperiencing the traumatic event, avoidance of stimuli associated with the event or numbing of general responsiveness, and increased arousal. The diagnosis is not made in the disturbance lasts less than one month.'

5.3. War motivations and their emotional legacies

From today's perspective, the ex-combatants name economic, communitarian, security, revenge, or self-fulfilment as motivations for joining the AUC.[88] Coercion is a further reason for entry that is sometimes mentioned, but does not correspond to the concept of motivation. For some ex-combatants, there are simultaneous, multiple and related reasons for entry. Usually, demobilised persons see economic reasons and self-fulfilment as motivations that are illegitimate, bad, or unjustifiable. This perception is often combined with regret. Communitarian, security and revenge motivations are generally seen as legitimate, good or justifiable. Hence, this type of ex-combatant feels pride rather than regret. Coerced soldiers feel that they have been treated unfairly, and the judgements of 'justifiable' or 'unjustifiable' simply do not apply to their case. The perception of their mode of entry is mixed with resentment.

The perception of motivation depends on a whole set of personal criteria that an individual uses to judge some past event. At the same time, there is an intuitiveness that exists about the linkages presented here. In fact, regretting a legitimate decision seems odd. Also, being proud of an illegitimate decision is inconsistent. Legitimacy and pride as well as illegitimacy and regret can thus be interpreted as two sides of the same coin as a former combatant makes sense of his or her past. Put simply, an excombatant's current interpretation determines the trajectory of the emotional legacy.

Illegitimate motivations and regret

Many interviewed ex-combatants mentioned economic motivations as the reason for their entry.[89] They often claimed that they joined the group because they lacked job opportunities. This is especially true for the case of Tierralta where nearly all interviewees mentioned economic reasons as their main motivation. Some of them were aware of having acted out of envy towards others who joined the paramilitaries earlier and came back 'rich'. *'I was lacking*

[88] I call some seeming motivations *favourable conditional factors* as they are not direct motivations. A previous criminal record can have the effect of lowering the moral threshold for entry as illustrated in some of the interviews. Many ex-combatants indicated that they joined the paramilitaries after having been released from the military. They had a military education that facilitated the entry in multiple ways: this knowledge was required by armed groups; they knew how warfare worked; some were thrown out of the military dishonourably, which reduced their loyalty both to the state and legality. A perceived absence of the state can be seen as a further conditional factor (see Pact with the State). Many interviewees see the state as stronger now, meaning that their contribution to security is less needed and the potential costs of illegal activities are higher. These favourable conditional factors are not considered here.

[89] This corresponds to the findings of Arjona and Kalyvas (2006) and Theidon and Betancourt (2008).

many essential things, walked around barefoot and in shorts. When I saw those young men nicely dressed, I said to myself 'if it's like this, I'll go there as well'' (Tierralta)[90].

Joining the AUC for 'fun', adventure, or self-fulfilment can be identified in various interviews as a reason for entry. *'That's why you join the groups. Because you liked the weapons, the motorbikes'* (Barrancabermeja)[91]. Or: *'Imagine how it feels like having an AK-47 in your hands as a 14-year old. You feel powerful and everybody respects you'* (Bogotá)[92]. This reason for entry is often mixed with a lack of economic opportunities. The ones that named this set of motivations usually perceive it as illegitimate.

Along with the perception of an illegitimate past action, the demobilised persons often develop a feeling of regret. Regret may be understood as an emotional dislike for personal actions in the past. 'Guilt or regret is produced when individuals evaluate their behaviour as failure' (Michael Lewis and Haviland 2004, 629).

Some examples revealed the connections between illegitimate motivations and regret. *'It was totally an error. At that time you don't know what happens to you, you don't think about it. It was maybe the easiest way out, for working, [...] it was the way to get an income'* (Tierralta)[93]. The regret in this example points to the original decision to enter and the motivations connected with this decision. The interviewee categorises his motivation as illegitimate saying that it was an 'easy way out' – today's perception about his past motivation. The resulting emotional legacy is regret: 'It was an error'.

Another person that joined for economic reasons said: *'I regret having been there – lost time. If I caused any damage, I regret all this as well'* (Tierralta)[94]. He regrets his decision to join the paramilitaries and the consequences: having lost time and caused damage. One could argue that he does not regret his motivations but rather his activities during war. It is difficult to separate these two concepts (motivations versus activities) with respect to regret. However, if he interpreted his motivations for joining as legitimate, he would probably accept the consequences of his decision.

There are also demobilised persons who justified their past activities but also feel exposed to social rejection today (see Stigma within the Community). This makes the decision to join 'just for money' or 'just for experimenting' a poor one. To answer the question of why he regretted having been a member of the AUC, this ex-combatant replied: *'Because in any case*

[90] *'Aguantaba muchas necesidades, andaba descalzo y en pantalonetica, yo veía que esos pelados llegaban bien pintosos, con ropa y salían con su ropa, y decía: 'no, si eso es así, yo me voy también'.'*
[91] *'Por eso se mete uno a los grupos así, porque le gustaban las armas, la moto.'*
[92] *'¿Se imagina coger un AK-47 con los 14 años?, pues uno se siente grande y todo el mundo lo respeta.'*
[93] '*Era un error totalmente, en ese entonces no sabe uno que le pasó, no lo pensó, que era la salida más fácil de pronto, por el trabajo, [...] en ese tiempo era como una salida a una renta de plata.'*
[94] '*Me arrepiento de haber estado allá, tiempo perdido, si ocasioné también daño me arrepiento de todo eso.'*

you're stigmatised, as if you were the worst. That's how most people see you' (Tierralta)[95]. He regrets the post-demobilisation consequences of his decision, which was based on an illegitimate motivation. In these three examples, regretting the original decision is caused by the decision itself, the subsequent activities or the consequences for today's life. However, regret is rooted in the perception of the past event – the decision of entry. The evaluation of this decision may change in light of new circumstances.

Some ex-combatants, and particularly women who participated in the AUC expressed shame as their predominant emotional legacy. This is largely related to a sense of neglecting important obligations to family or boyfriends (see Michael Lewis and Haviland 2004, 628). *'For me, this doesn't mean pride. This means shame'* (Barrancabermeja)[96].

Legitimate motivations and pride or absence of regret

Ideological reasons, fighting for the people or being loyal to a particular group are typical expressions of communitarian motivations. Only a few demobilised individuals – especially former mid-ranking ex-combatants – explicitly mentioned communitarian reasons as their primary motivation for joining: *'For me, when I entered, the AUC were like part of me. I said that this was necessary for the conflict we're living here in Colombia'* (Medellín)[97]. Most demobilised individuals stated that they agreed with the paramilitary ideology and that they wanted to fight against guerrilla influence for the sake of the country. Communitarian reasons seem in most cases, not to be a direct motivation for joining. Rather, they act as a favourable conditional factor. However, the communitarian aspect surely lowers the threshold for joining. Many of the ex-combatants, according to their own statements, would not have joined if they had not agreed with the 'counterinsurgent ideology'.

Security is another individual motivation for joining an armed group, and is seen as legitimate by the interviewees. One example is a demobilised person from a Caribbean region living in Bogotá today. He entered the paramilitaries looking for protection from the opposing groups: *'I got into war automatically because the guerrilla wanted to recruit by force, so I went somewhere else and didn't get involved with the guerrilla. That's why I went to the AUC, and I lasted ten years there'* (Bogotá)[98].

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[95] '*Porque de todas maneras ya uno queda señalado, como si uno fuera lo peor, [...] como lo ve mucha gente a uno.'*
[96] *'Para mí eso no es un orgullo, para mi eso es vergüenza.'*
[97] '*Para mí, las AUC al principio cuando yo entré, eran como parte mía. Dije que eso es necesario para el conflicto que nosotros estamos viviendo aquí internamente en Colombia.'*
[98] '*Me metí a la guerra automáticamente porque la guerrilla me quería llevar a la fuerza, me vine para otro lado y no me metí a la guerrilla. Por eso me fui para las AUC y duré diez años*.'

Revenge was repeatedly mentioned in the interviews as a motivation for joining the fight. *'I went there because they killed a brother of mine. [...] This was always my motive, the death of my brother, it brought me this far'* (Medellín)[99]. The object of revenge is the opposing group, in this case the FARC. Revenge is always seen as a good and legitimate motivation.

The justifiable motivations (ideology, security or revenge) are often associated with pride, or at least the absence of regret. Lazarus (1991, 271) defines pride as 'enhancement of one's ego-identity by taking credit for a valued object or achievement, either our own or that of someone or group with whom we identify'. This is the case of this former mid-level soldier: *'I'm proud that I participated in the AUC. [...] I'm a 'paraco' [paramilitary] since before I was born. And I would go back again'* (Bogotá)[100]. Another demobilised person from Medellín entered the paramilitaries out of a mixture of vengeance and ideological reasons. He is proud about what he did: *'I would go back. And now more enthusiastically. To the self-defense groups'* (Medellín)[101]. As an effect of their pride, they would do the same again because it was good.

Why have these two ex-combatants not gone back to a new armed group? There are two recurring answers to this question among ex-combatants with communitarian motivations. On the one hand, they say that paramilitaries are no longer necessary now that the state has everything under control. On the other hand, they would not join these new groups because they have lost the counterinsurgent component of the AUC. *'They're only thinking about drugs, have no other ideals, just power'* (Medellín)[102].

Economic motivations are generally perceived as illegitimate by demobilised persons. However, if it is related to economic survival, such motivations are seen as legitimate. For example, having joined the paramilitaries because they were starving and 'the AUC were the only employer in the region' is seen as legitimate. While various ex-combatants from Tierralta ascribe to this point of view, the perception that economic motivations are an illegitimate reason for entry prevails.

[99] '*Yo estando allá, o me fui por allá, porque a mí me mataron un hermano [...] El ideal mío siempre fue eso, la muerte de mi hermano me llevó hasta allá.'*
[100] *'Estoy orgulloso de haber hecho parte de las AUC. Soy paraco desde antes de que nací e iría otra vez.'*
[101] '*Yo volvería y en este momento, con más ganas, a las autodefensas.'*
[102] *'No piensan sino en la droga, no tienen otros ideales, el poder.'*

Imposed decisions and resentment

Coercion[103] is a mode of entry that does not correspond to the agency-based motivations presented before. This reason for entry was either alluded to vaguely or appeared in combination with other reasons in various interviews. As a primary motivation, it was only found clearly in one interview: *'I wasn't part of the armed group because I wanted to but because they took me with them'* (Bogotá)[104]. Coerced former combatants feel differently about their past than the 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' joiners. They cannot regret the decision of entry nor feel proud about it because it was not their decision.

Instead, the coerced feel resentment as a result of a real or imagined wrong done to them. According to Solomon (1993), resentment is directed towards higher-status individuals. In the armed group context, most resentment is probably directed towards the abductors or the state institutions that did not provide them with protection. The latter is the case of this ex-combatant: *'I should sue the state since in the constitution it says that they have to protect me as a citizen and when I needed them, they weren't there. I'm a victim'* (Bogotá)[105]. During this interview, remarks about the importance of state responsibility were frequent (see Pact with the State). The fact that he resents the way he was left alone and his sense of victimisation surely contributes to this behaviour of blaming the state institutions.

In order to saturate this subcategory of resentment, more cases of forcibly recruited ex-combatants would be necessary.

[103] It is not clear how large the number of forcefully recruited former members of the AUC is: Arjona and Kalyvsas (2006, 32) report 0.5% for the collectively demobilised paramilitaries, Theidon and Betancourt (2008, 101) report 14% for ex-combatants of the AUC.

[104] *'Yo no estuve en el grupo armado porque yo quise sino porque me han llevado.'*

[105] *'Debería demandar el estado porque en la constitución dice que tienen que cuidar de mí como ciudadano y cuando no estaban allí, cuando yo los necesitaba, yo soy un afectado.'*

5.4. War experiences and their emotional legacies

When asking ex-combatants about their war experiences, few admitted to having killed somebody, and most did not want to talk about violent events. Some openly declared having killed innocent people, and one even admitted to having given orders for social cleansing[106]. Press releases indicate that one interviewee, who says that he was a 'bandit', was involved in a massacre during his active time.

Here, I do not base the analysis on objective activities but on the perceptions of these activities. Are the remembered experiences considered good or bad, justifiable or not? Mostly, ex-combatants looked back with mixed feelings. For example: *'Now it's better because you're out of it. Worse because there, you had your money. Here outside, it's harder'* (Tierralta)[107]. Besides those who differentiated between good and bad memories, some denied that there was anything positive about being in an armed group, and a small group stated that life in the armed group was better than now. Data indicate that the interviewees have a differentiated view of their active time, seeing the past as a series of individual events, not something that should be judged as a whole.

The prevailing legacies attached to war experiences in their extreme forms are nostalgia and fatigue. The ex-combatants who long back to their war experiences are nostalgic. Those who look back with negative feelings are usually war fatigued. These two emotional legacies play out in two types of behaviour: one that points to continuity, and another at rupture. That is, nostalgic ex-combatants who see their past activities as good, try to conserve some of their earlier 'lifestyle'. Fatigued ex-combatants want to radically break with their former life as combatants. Hence, this section will use a different type of indicator and process to analyse results than in the section on war motivations. While the emotional legacies attached to motivations could be singled out by direct statements from ex-combatants about their feelings, emotional legacies of the experiences can be identified in self-descriptions of their actual behaviour (rupture versus continuity).

Experiences may also be related to regret or pride. Connections between ex-soldiers feeling proud and longing for the 'good old days' are common. On the other hand, the feeling of regret is often associated with fatigue from war.

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[106] By social cleansing, the AUC eliminated 'undesirable social elements' such as street children, homeless people, prostitutes, criminals etc. (see for example Wilson and Greider-Durango 1998).

[107] *'Ahora es mejor porque uno está afuera. Peor porque cuando uno estaba allá tenía su plata, aquí afuera es más duro para uno.'*

Positive experiences and nostalgia

As positive elements of war experiences, the demobilised people mentioned economic benefits, constant access to money and the possibility to spend it on parties, women and alcohol. They often stated they had more money than they do now and had a stable financial life without worries. Some see the comradeship as a benefit of armed life. Companions sometime acted as replacements for family as the bonds during war grew very strong. *'What family was for me? The people with whom I lived, in the group. [...] You save my life, I save yours'* (Medellín)[108]. Even demobilised individuals who generally have a negative view of their war experiences often confirm that they learned a lot within the paramilitary group. For example, they report having learned to be responsible, to treat people with respect, to comply with orders, to protect the family (see Disrupted Family Life) or to win the support of local people (see Stigma within the Community). Ex-combatants who were involved in social activities or in the political branch of the organisation, remembered their active time with positive feelings because they were able to help people. *'The good thing about the organisation was the political part and the social work we were doing [...] which thank God I belonged to'* (Barrancabermeja)[109]. Furthermore, some demobilised combatants felt empowered by the fact that they were fighting a 'bad' enemy for a 'good and respectable' organisation. This view may be interlaced with pride as they fought in the name of the people.

The elements of continuity are strong, especially, but not only, among the demobilised people who see their war experiences as something positive. There is some connection between nostalgia and pride. Those who feel proud about their decision to join the paramilitaries and of their experiences in war are keen on preserving something from this source of pride and long back to past days. They try to continue on with similar activities.

For example, nostalgic ex-combatants report keeping in touch with commanders and companions. They remain linked to their old networks that guarantee some kind of social safety and physical security. The exposure to illegality is surely higher in persons who preserve their old networks, because offers to reengage persist, information about 'others' who went back is continuous, and bonds of loyalty may make them unintended accomplices of illegal acts. These persisting networks may also operate as a type of exit strategy for the demobilised individuals who are frustrated. Ex-combatants who feel nostalgia for their active

[108] *'¿La familia para mí era qué?, la gente con que yo andaba, en el grupo. [...] Tu me salvas la vida, yo te salvo la tuya.'*
[109] *'Lo bueno de la organización era eso, la parte política y las labores sociales que hacíamos [...] y de la que gracias a Dios me tocó a mí.'*

time and who can not engage in related fields after demobilisation may feel frustrated and fall back into purely illegal activities.

As a further element of continuity, ex-combatants stick to security as a field of employment (Higate 2001; see also Economic Difficulties). In combination with persisting networks, this may result in providing vigilante services to the neighbourhood. 'Helping' the community by organizing the security is a source of empowerment (see Security Threats and Stigma within the Community). Various examples of these activities have been found in Medellín (see also Rozema 2008; Theidon and Betancourt 2008). One ex-combatant described how vigilantism works for him: *'The community feels safe, they can sleep with open doors and know they won't lose anything. Drug users have their zone of tolerance. [If we catch] a thief, we take his clothes away, leave him in underwear, put a sign on his back, give him a broom and make him clean a very long street, and the sign says "I'm sweeping because I'm a thief"'* (Medellín)[110].

Negative experiences and war fatigue

The negative elements of war experiences commonly referred to a lack of freedom – the fact that permission was needed to do everything. Past involvement in war is seen as dangerous, and some consider themselves lucky to have survived it. *'Being in an armed group you're never at ease, always at the edge of a canyon, receiving orders, how annoying, 'Bring me this!' No, this is no life'* (Medellín)[111]. The perception of the organisation itself is somewhat controversial among those interviewed: most of the demobilised people excused the use of violence with the argument that these were the legitimate means during a time of war. Nonetheless, some acknowledged the damage caused to civilians (see Stigma within the Community) or the maltreatment toward someone within the group. *'I had to shoot a comrade of mine who was from the same neighbourhood. If not, they would have killed me. We studied together, we did military service together, sometimes he even ate at my place. I had to because it was him or me'* (Tierralta)[112].

Some expressed frustration about the fact that their participation in the paramilitary groups was of no use for ending the conflict. Some of the demobilised people show signs of Post-

[110] *'La comunidad sí se siente segura, puede dormir con la puerta abierta y sabe que no va a perder nada. A los viciosos, tienen su zona de tolerancia. Al ladrón, le quitamos la ropa, lo dejamos en interiores, le ponemos un cartel atrás, le ponemos una escoba y le ponemos a barrer la calla, larguísima, y en el cartel dice: 'estoy barriendo por ladrón'.'*

[111] *'Usted estar en un grupo armado no es estar tranquilo, siempre al borde del cañón, quien lo manda, que pereza: 'tráigame esto'. No, esto no es vida.'*

[112] *'Un compañero que era del mismo barrio me tocó ajusticiarlo, si no, me hubieran matado a mí. Estudiábamos juntos, fuimos al servicio juntos. A veces comió en la casa. Me tocó porque era el o yo.'*

traumatic Stress Disorder caused by their experiences in war, which creates problems for their daily lives. *'Sometimes, I wake up and hear a helicopter or an airplane and I get psychotic. I mean, it really startles me because when I was with the group and heard a helicopter or an airplane, I would have to hide'* (Bogotá)[113].

Being fatigued from war – of receiving orders or living in danger – may become manifest in the way ex-combatants think or rethink the way they live. Breaking with the earlier role is one strategy of leaving behind or never re-living the 'horrendous experience' of war. The emotional legacy of war fatigue can therefore be observed in behaviours that lead to a rupture with the role. The resulting behaviour may be observed in the following examples, which relate to the other central themes discussed later in Part Two.

With respect to security threats, elements of rupture may be found in the avoidant behaviour of some ex-combatants. They avoid other demobilised people 'to stay out of trouble' or to distance themselves from the possible inducement into renewed engagement. Avoiding other demobilised people is not only seen as a useful security strategy, but also a strategy to combat the stigma prevalent in society and facilitate processes of social acceptance. Some cut their old bonds even though they might live in the same neighbourhood as old comrades or other ex-combatants. Regarding economic difficulties, many ex-combatants take the opportunity to study or participate in vocational training offered by the state to try and learn something new. They understand that they have to prepare themselves for the civil labour market. The few that have work try to comply with the obligations of professional life in order to achieve financial stability in a field unrelated to conflict. With respect to the state, those ex-combatants who are fatigued are often particularly committed to the 'demobilisation pact'. They are grateful for the opportunity to demobilise, an act that allowed them to finally leave the AUC. Distance from the family is generally seen as a negative element of the involvement in war. As a result, some of the demobilised persons appreciate their family life and subordinate everything under this newly found or refound social reference point.

In its extreme form, the rupture with one's previous role may lead to initiatives against the recruitment strategies of armed groups, as is the case of this young ex-combatant: *'I've talked to more than one young guy who's asked 'How is it there with the AUC?' Because more than one has been recruited under false pretences. They think they'll get a motorbike, a pistol ... like they were a big shot. But it's all a lie because they send you to the jungle, like cannon*

[113] *'Yo, hay veces que me despierto y oigo un helicóptero o un avión y me psicoseo, o sea como que me timbraba porque yo en el monte, pues yo escuchaba un helicóptero o un avión y lo que hacía era esconderme.'*

fodder' (Bogotá)[114]. Various ex-combatants showing fatigue try to convince young men to stay away from weapons by describing their own 'bad' experiences.

Views and perceptions of war experiences and the associated emotional legacies may change over time. Wishing oneself back in time may be due to the limited perspectives shortly after demobilisation. Learning to appreciate the advantages of civilian life may lead to a re-interpretation of the earlier activities and result in a rupture with the past, as is the case of this long-term former paramilitary: *'I had my doubts in the beginning and I thought about going back again. But only in the beginning, when it's a big life change. Those thirteen years were great [...] but then again ... I drank every day, lots of drinking. My life was neither fish nor fowl, I had no objectives'* (Medellín)[115]. The contrary case of growing frustration with reintegration has also been observed in some interviews, especially in combination with negative experiences with the state (see Pact with the State).

[114] *'Yo [...] he hablado a más de un joven que ahorita me ha preguntando: '¿cómo es por allá en las autodefensas?'. Porque a más de uno lo llevaban engañado. Piensan que es que allá le van a dar una moto, una pistola. Uf, como si fuera el duro y eso es una mentira porque lo mandan a uno es pa'l monte, como carne de cañón…'*

[115] *'Al principio me ponía a pensar y tenía ganas de ir otra vez. Pero al principio, porque uno está haciendo un cambio de vida. Los trece años fueron una bacanería [...] pero si vamos a ver también... yo bebía todos los días, mucho trago. La vida mía no tenía ni cabeza ni cola, no tenía objetivo.'*

5.5. Policy implications

The perceptions of past involvement in war – reduced to motivations and experiences in this context – and their emotional legacies are defining elements in the lives of former combatants. It seems intuitive that ex-combatants who regret their decision to join the armed group may behave differently than former paramilitaries who are proud of this decision. Also, feeling nostalgic or war fatigued may surely have different implications. In this sense, the acknowledgement of emotional legacies of war may contribute to an enhanced understanding of an ex-combatant's current behaviour. What policy implications do the emotional legacies have?

First of all, the importance of emotional legacies lies primarily in its interrelatedness to other themes. For most of the other central themes, the emotional legacies are an intervening variable that may lead ex-combatants to prefer one action over another. Regret, pride and resentment are particularly connected to relationships with the community. Nostalgia and war fatigue are more closely related to the state and security threats.

But let us take a look one by one. The behavioural manifestations of regret are vague. However, former AUC members who experience regret seem to be more open to interactions with the receiving community, more often ask for pardon, and integrate themselves into local activities. This may be due to the fact that they have a sense of humility because they believe they have committed errors, allowing them to be more open to others. The opposite may be the case for proud ex-combatants. Fighting stigma or social exclusion may be particularly difficult as they do not perceive their earlier activities as erroneous. It is rather the contrary. According to them, they should be seen as 'heroes'. This view surely prevents sincere participation in reconciliation activities. The case of a resentful ex-combatant is different because this type of ex-combatant sees himself as a victim, who principally suffered an act of violence against his own will. Such a person does not understand why he or she should ask anyone for pardon. Being conscious of the needs of different types of ex-combatants with respect to their emotional legacies may provide for more efficient reintegration interventions.

The terms nostalgia and war fatigue point to either continuity or rupture. This interpretation may help understand the phenomenon of reengagement in illegal activities. Under comparable conditions, ex-combatants who feel nostalgia for their past experiences are likely more vulnerable to recidivism than their former comrades who show war fatigue. Another indication of this relationship is the proud ex-soldiers who would join the AUC again today if given the opportunity. Identifying emotional legacies may effectively guide assistance to former combatants. From a budgetary perspective, it is necessary to concentrate

on ‘high-risk’ nostalgic ex-combatants and less on ‘low-risk’ former demobilised persons showing war fatigue.

The consideration of emotional legacies enhances the understanding of reengagement in yet another form as well. Why should an ex-combatant, who lives under the same conditions as when he entered the group, not make the same decision today? *Because he is not the same person anymore.* His own, eminently personal emotional legacy is one of the elements that differentiates him from his earlier self. For example, being war fatigued is a newer life condition, and may influence the decision to reengage. The memory of bad war experiences may operate as a protective shield against engagement in renewed violence.

The perception of war experience and the willingness to break with one’s previous role (referred to as rupture) are dynamic. This fact opens a window of opportunity for strategies to counterbalance undesired effects of the past involvement in war. The growing temporal distance to one’s own involvement facilitates a changing perception. What was considered good during war may later be seen as bad. Today, the ex-combatants are not directly involved in war, and they often consume it in the same way as other civilians – through TV or radio. Furthermore, those participating in the ACR programme are constantly working on their own reintegration with the help of psychologists, a type of professional whom they most probably would not have known otherwise. This new context may affect their self-perception.

In fact, there are examples of ex-combatants interviewed for this study who went through a process of inner change that facilitated later reintegration activities, such as interaction with the community. The inner change referred to here is a changed perception from the earlier life, with a corresponding change on the emotional legacy. For example, moving from pride towards regret. Theoretically, knowledge about emotional legacies could be used by reintegration workers to guide ex-combatants towards regret by means of persuasive techniques.

'You feel insecure because you're an ex-combatant.
Almost always when they kill somebody,
it's a demobilised guy.'[116]
Demobilised person from Barrancabermeja, March 2009

6. Confronting Security Threats

Former illegal combatants are experts in the field of insecurity since they usually engaged in violent activities. Furthermore, in the aftermath of demobilisation, ex-paramilitaries are often overly exposed to insecurity. These two characteristics distinguish them from other civilians and identify them as a particular kind of 'security player'. While security is one of the main objectives of DDR, the challenging security situation that often exists for demobilised ex-combatants has been widely neglected in existing literature. What specific situations of insecurity are ex-combatants confronted with? And how do they react to it? These are the main questions addressed in this chapter. The interviews indicate the importance of these concerns to former combatants.

For this chapter, I draw on a broader background of knowledge related to a case study that I co-conducted with Juan Munévar on the municipality of Tierralta. The study was sponsored by the Toledo Centre for Peace and is entitled 'Demobilised People: Victims of and Threats to Insecurity' (Munévar and Nussio 2009). I make reference to this work at various points in the following pages.

[116] *'Uno se siente inseguro del hecho de que uno es desmovilizado, como casi siempre los que han matado aquí son desmovilizados.'*

6.1. Related literature

Establishing security[117] is one of the main challenges in the aftermath of conflict and particularly in the environment where DDR processes are taking place. Various studies about DDR look at security issues focused on related policies such as interim stabilisation measures or security sector reform (Colletta and Muggah 2009; Lamb and Dye 2009). Few studies have dealt with the perspectives of former combatants and their own security situation. In this section, I try to gather some ideas about the security situation the demobilised people are generally exposed to and the possible security strategies they may utilize.

The security environment in the aftermath of demobilisation is often characterised by high levels of armed violence (United Nations 2006a, chapter 2.20, 3.4; Moser and McIlwaine 2001). Spoilers are seen as the main challenge in this context (Berdal 1996; Kingma 2002; Lamb and Dye 2009; Stedman 1997). The threat of spoilers increases with the presence of lucrative 'spoils' – easily extractable and tradeable resources such as diamonds or coca. These products are the foundation of war economies (Salomons 2005; Spear 2006). 'Where such income streams from the export of illicit narcotics, gemstones or other highvalue commodities cannot be pinched off, peace is unsustainable' (United Nations 2000, paragraph 22).

In unstable post-conflict environments, demobilised individuals are particularly exposed to threats by former enemies or attracted by old companions to rejoin residues of their troops (Kingma 2002; Berdal 1996). The remobilisation of former groups, the formation of new criminal groups, and the involvement of demobilised individuals in common delinquency or cross-border mercenary activities is common for many cases where DDR has taken place (Lamb and Dye 2009, 16; Nilsson 2005, 18). With respect to remobilisation, former mid-level soldiers play a key role. They can mediate between the entrepreneurs of violence and former rank-and-file soldiers and eventually organise remobilisation (Nilsson 2008; Maya M. Christensen and Utas 2008). Not taking into account their key role and their over-represented losses in terms of social and economic prestige, may convert them into spoilers (Stockholm

[117] In this study, a concept of security referred to in the subsequent overview section is used: *absence of perceived threats to an individual's physical integrity*. Recently, the term security has been the object of debate. The traditional security understanding of the Cold War focused on the state as security actor and was understood primarily in military terms (Buzan 1997), the newer human security concept often referred to among policy makers embraces far more. The human security concept deepened the understanding of security, emphasizing the individual as primary actor of security. It also widened the security term to other dimensions such as economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. Other definitions make reference to human security as including 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' (United Nations 2003). Academics especially opt for a more narrow focus on 'freedom from fear' arguing that too broad a concept of human security is of no use for actual policy (see for example Krause 2005). On the practical level, this narrow approach reflects the security dimension of post-conflict peacebuilding (Hänggi 2005). For further analysis of the term 'human security' see for example Brzoska (2004), Buzan et al. (1998), Debiel and Werthes (2005), Glasius (2008), Krause (2005), Liotta (2002), Ogata (2004), Ryerson (2010), Schnabel (2004), Sheehan (2005), UNDP (1994) and the edition of Security Dialogue 2004, Volume 35, No. 3.

Initiative 2006). The debate on security issues during the time of reintegration has been centred on the aforementioned challenges arising from spoilers or persisting conflict. So far, there has been no accurate description of the more specific security challenges faced by demobilised persons.

With respect to personal strategies to confront insecurity, self-help, displacement and anonymity are present in different writings, although they are mostly unconcerned with DDR in the strict sense. Self-help is the most common strategy found in literature to confront problems in challenging security environments. The individual security dilemma (Kalyvas 2006; Roe 1999; Walter 1997) in the absence of a trustworthy guarantor of security is the underlying motivation for people to apply self-help in order to improve security. Kalyvas and Kocher (2007, 183; see also Kalyvas 2006; Keen 2000) state that 'individuals may participate in rebellion not in spite of risk but in order to better manage it'. In line with this assertion, Bøås and Hatløy (2008, 34) discover that for the case of Liberia, security issues were the main reason for joining an armed group. With a deteriorating security situation, 'people may yet again feel compelled to get involved in order to take care of their own security, as well as to cater for the security concerns of family members and local communities' (Bøås and Hatløy 2008, 52; see also Uvin 2007). Self-help may not only be favoured by risk-calculation but also by general acceptance of this strategy within a determined community. In the context of protracted violence, vigilantism may become an accepted form of self-help to ensure community safety (Steenkamp 2005; see also Heald 2007).

Another strategy to confront insecurity is displacement, particularly when violence is indiscriminate (Kalyvas 2006). After researching internally displaced people in Colombia, Steele (2009) claims that displacement is often combined with seeking anonymity in cities.

For the Colombian case, the ongoing conflict between insurgency and government as well as newly emerged armed groups related to drug-trafficking create a complicated security environment, especially for ex-combatants (see Describing the Colombian Context). The Support Mission to the Peace Process (MAPP-OEA 2010) describes the security situation for ex-combatants: 'Regarding the reintegration of demobilised fighters, the Mission notes that the continued violence found in several areas hinders efforts to provide former combatants with services. The recruitment phenomenon affects them directly, and stigmatisation is still found within official agencies and communities. The Mission has seen that demobilised combatants still face harassment, threats, displacement, and killings at the hands of the newly emergent structures and, in other cases, on account of personal grievances and reprisals'. The numbers of demobilised people who have been killed is alarming. According to the ACR, as

of February 2010, approximately 2000 have died after their demobilisation, most of whom were killed (1365)[118]. Another 1303 have been arrested for some illegal activity after their demobilization (see also CNRR 2010; Observatorio de Procesos de DDR 2010).

The MAPP-OEA (2009c) also points to 'certain irregularities on the part of some members of law enforcement agencies with demobilised individuals'. This may undermine the ex-combatants' willingness to look for protection with the authorities in case of security threats (Munévar and Nussio 2009). However, according to the High Counselour for Reintegration, Frank Pearl, 1400 demobilised persons (aggregating former paramilitaries and former guerrilla fighters) have asked state institutions for protection since 2003 and 382 have been relocated due to threats (Semana.com 2010). In the service centres of the ACR, flyers about 'Prevention and Attention of Risks' inform the demobilised people about the state's offer to attend to security concerns. Despite these institutional efforts, self-protection may be an attractive strategy for former combatants due to its social acceptance. Theidon (2009) describes one possible mechanism in this respect: 'Young women are drawn to the *gran hombres*, who have the power of acquisition as well as the capacity to provide security in a violent public context.' They hide guns at home 'just in case'. In this sense, self-protection is seen as a legitimate strategy for protecting one's family (see Disrupted Family Life). Traditions of self-protection, whether collective or individual, may explain part of the violent Colombian reality (Waldmann 2007).

In summary, although some concepts have been described previously in general terms (especially self-protection and displacement), no systematic overview of the demobilised persons' specific security situation or their security strategies could be found in the literature.

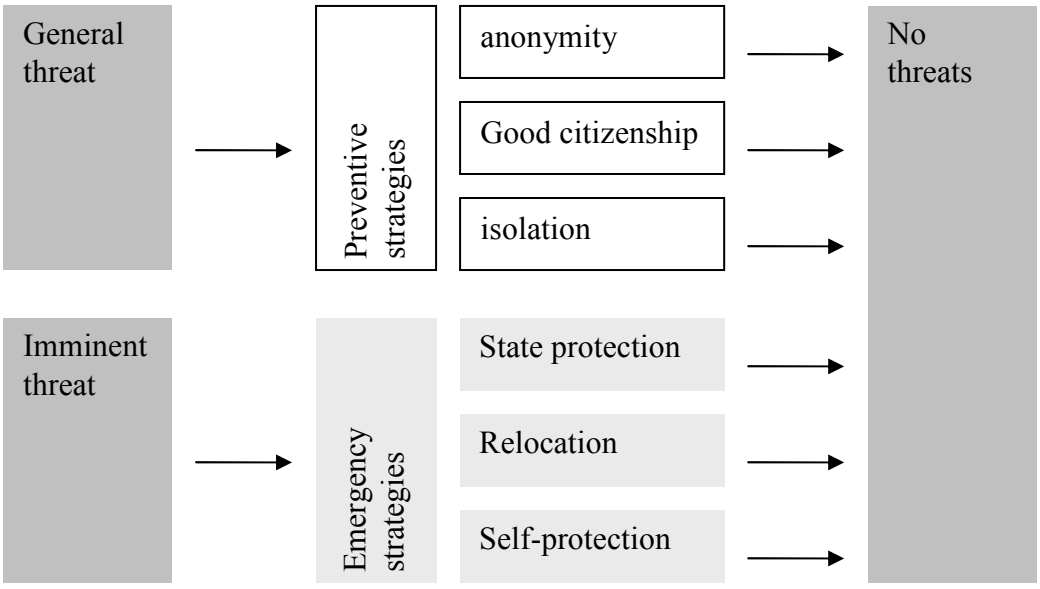
[118] This number does not include demobilised persons killed in police or military interventions.

6.2. Overview

Security threats emerged as a central theme from the interviews with demobilised paramilitaries. For the present purpose, I define security according to the understanding of most of ex-combatants, as an *absence of perceived threats to an individual's physical integrity*.[119] They are 'perceived threats' because ex-combatants base their security strategies on a subjective assessment, rather than an objective threat. By strategy (see Introduction), I mean a *plan, a 'how', a means of getting from here to there, to achieve a particular goal* (Mintzberg 1994). The 'here' is the perceived threat and the 'there' a more secure situation. The means chosen to get from here to there are the strategies. They do not only depend on the threats and the particular goal of security, but also on the circumstances in which the ex-combatants live. Where encountered, I refer to the circumstances that influence the selection of one or another strategy.

In order to provide the reader with a general overview of the perceptions of varying security situations and the corresponding strategies, I propose the following Figure 10:

Figure 10: Strategies to confront perceived security threats



This chapter is divided into three sections following the subcategories of security threats that emerged from the interview analysis. In the first section, the security situation as perceived by the demobilised people is briefly described, and divided into the three dimensions: no threats, general threat and imminent threat. No threats mean that ex-combatants feel free from any threats. The second group who perceive general threats are

[119] The interviewees mostly refer to individual, physical security and do not include the other topics related to human security (see Footnote 117).

those who feel vaguely insecure primarily due to their membership in the group of 'demobilised' – often the target of general threats. The people who are imminently threatened have sufficient reasons to believe that they are directly and personally threatened. The second section describes various strategies that help ex-combatants to cope with insecurity. Anonymity, good citizenship and isolation have a preventive character. State protection, relocation and individual as well as collective self-protection may rather be applied in a situation of imminent insecurity. Other possible strategies are not mentioned because interviewees refer to them much less frequently.

6.3. Security perceptions

Generally speaking, the demobilised people interviewed for this study can be located on a continuum ranging from no perceived insecurity to imminent threats to their physical integrity. I distinguish three types: For some demobilised persons, security is simply not an issue because they feel secure. Others feel generally threatened and a third group claims to be imminently threatened. The boundaries between the three categories are vague.

One could expect that ex-combatants generally have a higher tolerance for insecurity since they are accustomed to living in insecure situations. In their lives today, however, they lack the protection they counted on before, such as their weapons, their comrades, or their uniform. *'The first days in civil life, walking around without a weapon was like being naked. I felt unprotected'* (Barrancabermeja)[120]. This lack of protection may explain why many interviewees feel insecure after demobilisation, despite the fact that they are used to situations of insecurity.

The perception of security has a time dimension. Various interviewees claimed that they felt some kind of paranoia in the beginning demobilised life, but that this has slowly declined over time. One's perception of security may also be influenced by the media coverage of post-demobilisation issues. The constant references to demobilised people involved with violence, either as perpetrators or targets, may influence their perception of security.[121]

The proportionally large number of demobilised persons who have been killed does not necessarily lead to a feeling of insecurity. In fact, with respect to the perceptions of security, no differentiation could be established between interviewees of different locations. This is despite the fact that demobilised people in Bogotá live in an objectively much safer environment than ex-combatants in Medellín (see Annex I: in Bogotá, 22 collectively demobilised people have been killed since 2003 whereas in Medellín 274).

No threat

Few demobilised individuals did not consider security to be an important issue and did not mention it in the interview. This small group feels more secure than before demobilising, and secure in absolute terms, that is, free of perceived threats. They look at their new secure life as a positive dividend that comes from living life as a civilian. *'It's better to stay a civilian, it's better to be able to go somewhere and not to be afraid that they're going to mess with you or*

[120] *'Los primeros días en la vida civil, para uno andar sin arma era como andar sin ropa. Me sentía como desprotegida.'*

[121] The 'Observatorio de Procesos de Desarme, Desmovilización y Reintegración' of the Colombian National University follows the media coverage on DDR: http://www.observatorioddr.unal.edu.co/.

kill you' (Tierralta)[122]. This newly found sense of security might have different sources. Some attribute it to a more effective security policy of the state. Others claim that the violence in their area is purely targeted against the "bad" ex-combatants, the ones who are illegally active.

General threat

Most of the interviewees feel a general sense of threat or insecurity. The most common general threat is represented in the following quotation: *''Oh my God, they [undefined] are going to kill the demobilised people!' You feel afraid then, it makes you feel pretty insecure thinking they may come to kill you'* (Barrancabermeja)[123]. The unspecified 'they' in this quote is typical. There is a complete uncertainty as to the potential authors of threats. *'You can never be trusting. Thinking that the guerrilla, another paramilitary group, or your own paramilitary organisation may ... That creates an uncertainty so that you always have to watch out'* (Bogotá)[124]. Uncertainty at times reaches a level of paranoia, and may convert every suspicious observation into a possible threat.

Some ex-combatants perceive the killings as targeting mostly the 'bad ones' among the demobilised community. However, there is an important group of interviewees who classify the killings not just against the 'bad ones', but even against 'the good ones'. *'I have seen many cases of comrades who wanted to move on and who have studied more than me, and they killed them. That makes you reflect'* (Medellín)[125]. The conviction that every demobilised person, even 'the good ones', is exposed to threat, produces a feeling of insecurity.

Another source of general insecurity is the environment where some of the interviewed people reside. Many live in problematic neighbourhoods with widespread insecurity. *'In the neighbourhood I live, it is like dangerous. There are a lot of youth gangs. Precisely three days ago, they killed a friend of mine'* (Bogotá)[126]. The ex-combatants often move to big cities in search of anonymity in order to avoid stigmatisation (see Stigma within the Community) or insecurity, and instead encounter an environment of urban insecurity.

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[122] *'Es mejor estar en la vida civil, es mejor llegar a cualquier parte y no tener miedo que lo van a joder, que lo matan.'*

[123] *''¡Uy, van a matar a los desmovilizados!', usted sabe que a uno en el momento le da miedo, porque son cosas que uno se siente como inseguro, pensar: '¿qué tal que lo vengan a matar a uno?'.'*

[124] *'Uno nunca puede estar confiado, ¿si? Uno pensando que de pronto, que la guerrilla, que otro grupo de paracos, que la misma organización, que… O sea una incertidumbre que siempre tiene que estar uno mirando.'*

[125] *'He visto muchos casos de compañeros que son echados de pa'lante y que han estudiado más que yo y los han matado. Lo pone a uno a pensar.'*

[126] *'En el barrio que vivo, o sea es como caliente, hay mucha pandilla juvenil. Precisamente hace tres días me mataron a un amigo.'*

The majority of the demobilised interviewees claimed to have received offers from former companions or friends to join armed groups or participate in some sort of illegal activity. According to the interviewees, these proposals do not imply a direct threat with a message of 'either you join, or you die', but they create an insecure feeling. Most of the demobilised people maintain contacts with former companions who have rejoined armed groups. *'I'm still their friend and I can't tell anything to the government because they're still my friends'* (Medellín)[127]. The loyalty to their old companions may generate its own security problems such as undesired complicity, even when they are not directly involved in illegal activities.

Imminent threat

An imminent feeling of insecurity – as a result of a direct personal threat – is present in a smaller number of interviewees. Attempts by new armed groups to forcibly recruit as reported by the Support Mission to the Peace Process (MAPP-OEA 2009a) are just vaguely present in a few interviews. Various interviewees claimed that they have never heard about such practices. Three demobilised individuals professed that they were exposed to attempted murder because of their earlier activities in the AUC. One was the bodyguard of an important AUC commander in Medellín. His job made him a possible assassination target. A former mid-level soldier expressed fear that he will fall victim to his own former subordinates, as he is conscious of his past abuses. A third person, another former mid-level paramilitary, has suffered various assassination attempts already. *'They've made attempts on my life, they've tried it all. We can perish on the street lying on our backs as far as they're concerned, because we were "perpetrators"'* (Barrancabermeja)[128]. The fact that mid-ranked ex-combatants may maintain their leadership position, as in the case of this last example, may increase their security risks.

The most obvious source of threats is being illegally active oneself. Considering the number of interviewees, it is likely that some have been dedicated to illegal activities even while participating in the programme (MAPP-OEA 2009b; Munévar and Nussio 2009; see also Describing the Colombian Context). Mostly, the interviewees did not feel comfortable talking about this topic. One exception is a young former combatant who continued participating in the successor organizations of the AUC. His involvement in criminal organisations exposed him to security risks: *'I had a motorbike, a jacket, in the jacket was my*

[127] *'Sigo siendo amigo de ellos y yo tampoco puedo admitirle nada al gobierno, porque ellos siguen siendo amigos.'*
[128] *'Me han hecho atentados, me han hecho de todo. O sea, nosotros tenemos derecho a terminar en la calle, boca arriba, porque fuimos victimarios.'*

gun, well hidden. I was cruising around the neighbourhood watching out for the drugs. But there were many traitors yet, they wanted to kill me' (Medellín)[129]. Another demobilised person started coca-leaf picking in Tierralta due to his precarious economic situation: *'I went to pick coca somewhere. The guerrilla caught me and nearly killed me [for being a demobilised person]'* (Tierralta)[130]. Illegal activities are at the origin of these life-threatening situations.

Some demobilised individuals also reported physical abuses at the hands of police. *'The police hit you because you're a demobilised person. That happened to me various times. They hit me. You know what they do to you there? They take your clothes off, touch your testicles'* (Bogotá)[131]. While the demobilised people alleging police abuses attributed it to their being demobilised, it is unclear if this type of abuse is actually related. The fact is that in various interviews, ex-combatants complained about maltreatment by police officers. This surely exacerbates the already precarious relationship of trust between ex-combatants and authorities (see Pact with the State).

[129] *'Tenía mi moto, mi chaqueta, en mi chaqueta estaba mi fierro, bien cuidado. Andaba allá mirando quien andaba por el barrio, cuidando la mercancía. Pero ya había mucho sapo, a mí me querían ya matar.'*
[130] *'Me fui a raspar hoja de coca por allá y me agarró la guerrilla y casi me matan.'*
[131] *'La policía te pega porque eres desmovilizado. Me ha pasado muchas veces, me han pegado. ¿Sabe que le hacen a uno allá?, te desnudan, te tocan los testículos.'*

6.4. Security strategies

The strategies that demobilised persons utilise for tackling situations of insecurity or preventing insecure situations from occurring are classified into six categories here: anonymity, good citizenship, isolation, state protection, relocation and self-protection. Some of them have more of a preventive character, such as anonymity, good citizenship and isolation. Also, they are often used in conjunction with each other. I separate them for analytical reasons, as they respond to differing perceptions. Anonymity is based on the premise that demobilised people are generally exposed to insecurity. Good citizenship is predicated on the assumption that only the 'bad' demobilised individuals are exposed to insecurity. Isolation is a response to the perception that other demobilised persons are a source of insecurity.

The other strategies tend to be used in acutely insecure situations or when such situations are expected to arise. Soliciting state protection is a response to the premise that the state is a trustworthy and effective guarantor of security. Relocation is based on the assumption that in a different place, the security problems are going to be reduced. Self-protection rests upon the belief that the only one that can effectively look after his or her security is oneself, either alone or in a group.

The strategies proposed here are overlapping and may be subdivided in further categories. However, I suggest that they are sufficiently distinguishable and reasonably well represented in the interview data.

Anonymity

Anonymity is the principal preventive strategy to confront security problems applied by a large number of ex-combatants. I define anonymity as not revealing one's own identity as a demobilised person. Many interviewees consider that public knowledge of being a demobilised person produces situations of insecurity. They fear that violence is not purely selective against the 'bad ones' but may also be directed towards righteous ex-combatants. Therefore, they opt for a strategy of anonymity. *'I have to be very cautious about the fact that I'm a demobilised person because there are very resentful people. And there may always be some FARC militias or right-wing militias that want to hurt you'* (Bogotá)[132].

The strategy of anonymity is by no means available under all circumstances. In places where demobilised people return to their families, or when they fought in the same neighbourhoods they are living in now, the community knows about their identity. Most of

[132] *'Me toca andar muy reservado de que soy desmovilizado porque hay gente muy rencorosa y no falta que hayan milicias de las FARC o milicias de la derecha que también le quieren hacer daño a uno.'*

the interviewees from Tierralta for example are natives, and went back to their families after demobilisation. *'Do they know that you're a demobilised person? – Yes, sure, as I was born and grew up there. They have known me since I was a little boy'* (Tierralta)[133]. Most of the interviewees in Medellín were urban paramilitaries, and some were even active in the same neighbourhood where they grew up and still live. Hence, the strategy of anonymity is often combined with relocation to another place or another neighbourhood where they are unknown. The capital and largest Colombian city, Bogotá, is an ideal environment for employing this strategy. *'Because of security, you have to go to the city, there, they [the guerrilla] won't find you that easily'* (Bogotá)[134].

The fact that the demobilised people are required to participate in ACR activities in order to access to the reintegration benefits decreases the effectiveness of the anonymity strategy. At the ACR sites, they publicly demonstrate that they are ex-combatants. Due to the difficulty in compatibility between anonymity and participation in reintegration activities, some demobilised persons have left the programme to break their public identification with the demobilised community. This is the case of the following former mid-ranked paramilitary: *'I left the programme because it's of no advantage to me and also because I don't want to be known as a demobilised person'* (Bogotá)[135].

Anonymity is an effective strategy not only to prevent situations of insecurity but also to fight against stigmatisation (see Stigma within the Community). Demobilised persons are often stigmatised by community members and have difficulties obtaining work, as many companies do not want to hire ex-combatants (see Economic Difficulties). This dual function makes anonymity a particularly attractive strategy. In the context of stigma reduction I call this strategy 'denial', in order to avoid confusion.

Good citizenship

The strategy of good citizenship reflects the common assumption that it is only the 'bad ones' among the demobilised people who are exposed to a real security risk. Those who try to be 'good citizens' assume that violence against ex-combatants is targeted towards the illegally active and not towards just any demobilised person. This corresponds to the recurring belief in Colombian society that *'if they kill somebody, it's for a reason'* (Barrancabermeja)[136].

[133] *'¿Saben que usted es desmovilizado?' – 'Sí, claro, como yo nací y me crié allí, de chiquitico me conocen.'*
[134] *'Por la seguridad hay que buscar la ciudad, porque allá [la guerrilla] no lo encuentran a uno tan fácil.'*
[135] *'Dejé el programa porque no me sirve y también porque no quiero ser conocido como desmovilizado.'*
[136] *'Si van a matar a alguien, será por algo.'*

A typical example of the good citizen strategy can be seen in the following quotation from a demobilised interviewee who implicitly believes that only the 'bad ones' need to fear being killed: *'In the pamphlets*[137]*, it says that the demobilised people are stealing, assassinating and blackmailing. So as long as I don't get involved in this stuff, they won't threaten me'* (Barrancabermeja)[138]. People who apply this strategy generally dedicate themselves to family, studies and work. They usually do not take part in activities that are somehow related to their earlier life as a combatant.

Most of the demobilised individuals who do not mention security issues in the interviews make a point of doing 'good' things. The connection between good citizenship and living a secure life is no coincidence. Being a good citizen may also serve to overcome prevalent stigmas, by demonstrating that 'I'm a good one', or that 'I'm living like a normal citizen' (see Stigma within the Community). This strategy is especially important in circumstances where anonymity is difficult to achieve such as in Tierralta and Medellín. In these locations, demobilised people tend to be known by other community members, moreso than in Barrancabermeja and Bogotá. Ex-combatants who show signs of war fatigue are specifically prone to applying this strategy since it necessitates a rupture with their former lifestyle (see Emotional Legacies of War).

Isolation

Self-imposed isolation from other demobilised people is another preventive strategy often encountered in the interviews. This strategy is a consequence of the widespread perception that the demobilised persons themselves are a source of insecurity. By putting distance between them – the 'isolators' say – the potential risks and threats are reduced. This assumption reveals a contradiction: Frequently, ex-combatants complain about being labelled as 'killers' or 'wrongdoers' by the larger society (see Stigma within the Community). At the same time, they themselves often generalise about other demobilised people as a potential threat to their security.

The strategy of isolation takes different forms – from being selective with respect to other ex-combatants (trying to stay away from the 'bad ones') and the extreme form of avoiding all demobilised persons. *'You don't have to get involved with your old comrades. Because some day, they're going to arrest them and they'll catch you as well for hanging around with them.*

[137] In various regions of Colombia, pamphlets threatening with social cleansing or killings of demobilised people have appeared. The alleged authors of these pamphlets are mostly from newly armed groups.

[138] *'En los panfletos dice que los desmovilizados andan robando, matando, extorsionando. Entonces, si yo no me meto en eso, no se meten a amenazarme a mí.'*

I try to avoid that' (Medellín)[139]. This citation reveals an implicit assumption – the 'old comrades' are illegally active. General avoidance therefore becomes a cautious strategy. This strategy also reduces the potential points of connection to newly armed groups, and thus creates a protective shield against possible illegal offerings and their negative implications.

The isolation strategy may be seen as a break with the former life. It is hence frequently utilised by war-fatigued ex-combatants (see Emotional Legacies of War). The ones who apply this strategy do not stay connected with the same friends and same networks as before, but instead opt for a rupture. This may be easier in a new location. It is therefore not surprising that in Tierralta and Medellín, the isolation strategy seems to be less 'available'. This is likely due to the frequent intimate connections between demobilised people in certain neighbourhoods, which are not the case in a rather anonymous place such as Bogotá.

As with anonymity, participating in ACR activities may complicate this strategy. It is difficult to isolate oneself from other demobilised people if the only possible access to reintegration benefits is through participation in ACR group activities. Also in the context of a large city, getting in touch with other demobilised people may be the easiest way to create social contacts. Another complicating element for isolation may be the stigma encountered by ex-combatants (see Stigma within the Community). This stigma may impede relations to other citizens and give them no other choice than to socialise with others in the demobilised community. On the other hand, avoiding the company of former companions could also help in overcoming stigmatisation. That is why I call this strategy 'avoidance' in the chapter on Stigma within the Community. According to the interviewees, community members tend to marginalise groups of ex-combatants and reward ex-paramilitaries who distance themselves from their earlier networks.

State protection

Seeking protection from state institutions is a possible strategy to confront situations of insecurity. This strategy is based on the assumption that the state is a trustworthy and effective guarantor of security. It is however rarely applied. In fact, in none of the interviews with former paramilitaries did anyone actually find effective protection by state institutions.[140] The largest difficulty with this strategy is the lack of confidence in the state and the perceived

[139] *'Uno no debe estar enredándose con los viejos compañeros, porque algún día le echan mano a ellos y lo cogen a uno también, por estar con sus viejos amigos. Yo evito mucho esto.'*

[140] In one of the complementary interviews with ex-guerrilleros, one former mid-level FARC member asserts that since he left his troops, he counted on protection measures offered by the state. He was exposed to assassination attempts due to the delicate information he holds about his former companions (see also Semana.com 2010).

lack of effectiveness of security measures offered by the state. Munévar and Nussio (2009, 106) observe in the case of Tierralta, that only a minimal number of demobilised people look for state protection when under threat.

When we speak about the 'state', it is necessary to differentiate between the different institutions (see Pact with the State). A positive interaction with the ACR and its tutors creates trust in most cases. However, a lack of confidence in authorities as a result of past and ongoing negative experiences is difficult to overcome. The police are especially perceived as corrupt. *'When I was involved in crime, the police themselves came to our commanders asking for money. So the police themselves are corrupt'* (Medellín)[141].

The perceived lack of effectiveness further exacerbates access to state protection. Two frustrated attempts of seeking protection from the authorities illustrate this. First, I describe the case of a former mid-ranked female combatant who received direct death threats. *'They made an attempt on my life, and they [the police] gave me a document. [It said:] 'If I feel unsafe, call this number'. So, if they're after me to kill me, I just dial the number?'* (Barrancabermeja)[142]. She is frustrated about the help offered by the state, which in her view is ineffective, and does not give her any sense of security. So she concluded sarcastically: *'I keep the document in my purse, so that they see it at least when they find my body'*[143]. As a result of her frustrated collaboration with the state, she considered self-protection as the only way out of her situation of insecurity.

Second, a young demobilised person received death threats after being illegally active in drug-trafficking. Although he had never been in contact with public institutions after his demobilisation (except for his registration at the demobilisation site), he decided to look for help with a Centre of Reference and Opportunities (CRO)[144]. *'I thought 'what am I going to do? They may kill me'. I went to one of these CRO offices. To the point where I got sick and went to use the CRO card, but it was of no use, so I got annoyed'* (Bogotá)[145]. The perceived lack of help at the CRO made him relocate, and never again look for any contact with state authorities. In other words, his situation of insecurity opened a window of opportunity for the authorities to get him 'back on track', but the lack of help made him distance himself definitively from any institution.

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[141] *'Cuando yo estaba en la ilegalidad, la misma policía llegaba a hablar con los patrones de uno para que ellos les dieran plata. Entonces de por sí, la policía es corrupta.'*

[142] *'A mí me hicieron un atentado y me dieron una cartica que decía que si me siento en peligro, llame a este número. O sea, que si me están ajusticiando pues ¿marco el número?'*

[143] *'Yo la [cartica] cargo en la cartera, para que al menos cuando me hagan el levantamiento me la encuentren.'*

[144] The 'Centres of Reference and Opportunities' is the predecessor office to the Service Centres of the ACR.

[145] *'Pensé entonces: '¿qué puedo hacer?, están que me matan'. Entonces me fui a una de estas oficinas del CRO. Hasta que yo me enfermaba y yo iba con la carta, pero no me servía así que me aburrí.'*

If state institutions cannot effectively guarantee the security of the demobilised persons, they may look for other strategies such as relocation or self-protection. Seeking state protection as an effective strategy has been equally dismissed by persons from all ages and regions.

Relocation

Relocation is utilised by people who want to escape from a situation of imminent insecurity, or prevent a possible threatening situation from occurring. Apart from insecurity, a difficult economic situation (see Economic Difficulties) and feeling stigmatised by the community (see Stigma within the Community) are recurring reasons for relocation. I use the term relocation and not displacement due to a semantic difference. While displacement implies an involuntary action, relocation can be either voluntary or involuntary. Frequently, it is difficult to distinguish between them, which is why I prefer the broader term.

Demobilised people have repeatedly been the victim of threats in rural areas and have had to flee. Many ex-combatants who currently live in cities left their native region or did not return after demobilisation because of the insecure environment they experienced or expected to confront there. *'As a demobilised person, what would you go to the countryside for? There may be the guerrilla that find and kill you. The circumstances don't permit going back to live in a rural area'* (Medellín)[146].

The insecure environment created by repeated solicitations to rejoin an illegal group, even if not accompanied by a direct threat, is one reason for relocation. *'When I demobilised, a delinquent group remained in the zone, the 'Traquetos'*[147]*. They looked for me to hire me. So I left, and came back two years ago'* (Tierralta)[148]. In the case of a former mid-ranked combatant, the solicitations did not result in direct threats but generated a situation of insecurity that she preferred to avoid by relocation. After demobilisation, she remained for a time in the rural area where she was active, and was surrounded by former companions. *'They told me 'come on, help us transport some drugs'. That's why I left the village, because they bothered me a lot there'* (Barrancabermeja)[149].

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[146] *'Uno como desmovilizado, ¿a qué se va a meter al campo?, no falta la guerrilla por allí y se lo encuentran a uno y lo matan. No da como para uno volverse a vivir en el campo.'*

[147] The 'Traquetos' ('drug dealers') were one of the new armed groups that emerged after the demobilisation of the AUC, active especially in the region of Tierralta and the neighbouring municipality of Valencia (MAPP-OEA 2006; Munévar and Nussio 2009). The 'Traquetos' were later incorporated into other groups.

[148] *'Yo me desmovilicé y quedaba un grupo allí delinquiendo, los 'Traquetos'. Me venían a buscar a trabajar y me tuve que ir de aquí y hace dos años regresé.'*

[149] *'Y me decían: 'vamos y nos ayudas a pasar una mercancía'. Por eso me vine del pueblito, porque me molestaban mucho allá.'*

Relocation is not a phenomenon exclusive to rural areas. A young demobilised person who was illegally active in Medellín after his demobilisation, escaped from a direct death threat related to his illegal activities. *'They wanted to knock me off. I got annoyed and I said to myself 'no, I have to go'. So I ran away together with my girlfriend and came to Bogotá'* (Bogotá)[150]. Once he arrived in Bogotá, he went into hiding as an anonymous person. The example of a female ex-combatant from Barrancabermeja, whose demobilised boyfriend was allegedly killed by fellow demobilised persons, shows yet another form of urban relocation. *'When they killed my boyfriend, I went to Bucaramanga*[151]*, I was terrified. And still, I'm very afraid'* (Barrancabermeja)[152]. After some time in Bucaramanga, she returned to Barrancabermeja but not to her original neighbourhood. She isolated herself completely from other demobilised people to prevent any potential threatening situations.

The most important intervening variables in the decision of relocation seem to be the economic (see Economic Difficulties) and family situation (see Disrupted Family Life) of the individual in question. Although the sample for this study is not representative, it is striking that most of the relocated persons are single or have no children. There appears to be a type of implicit calculation between 'social certainty here' and 'physical security there' (see Munévar and Nussio 2009, 110). Many demobilised persons prefer to stay at home with their family and tolerate situations of insecurity above relocating to a possibly more secure place but losing their entire social network. The security situation must be quite precarious for an ex-combatant with an intact social network to change his or her domicile. A situation of insecurity however, coupled with a lack of job opportunities and a difficult family life, seems to increase one's desire to relocate.

The reluctance to change residence is not without grounds. It is especially demobilised people with a rural background who have difficulties adapting to urban life. They are not used to paying rent for accommodation, and often lack the necessary skills for the urban labour market. In addition, the loss of one's social safety net may increase their vulnerability toward engaging in illegal activities (see Stigma within the Community).

[150] *'A mí me querían hacer la vuelta [matar]. Entonces ya me aburrí y dije: 'no, me tengo que ir'. Me volé con la pelada [novia] para acá a Bogotá.'*

[151] Bucaramanga is the departmental capital of Santander and has a little more than one million inhabitants. It is relatively close to Barrancabermeja.

[152] *'Yo, cuando mataron a [nombre del novio], yo me fui para Bucaramanga, yo tenía mucho miedo. Y todavía, muchísimo miedo.'*

Individual self-protection

'Where's the state, where's the police officer? I have to take care of myself. You need to protect your life because nobody's going to take care of you' (Bogotá)[153]. This is a typical example of the self-protection mentality that former paramilitary fighters often adhere to. The lack of a trustworthy guarantor of security requires them to look after their own security. There are different types of strategies that I subsume under the category of self-protection.

Some ex-combatants confront potentially insecure situations by preparing for any possible contingency – for example, by hiding a gun at home "just in case" (Theidon 2009). Confidence in one's own capabilities combined with distrust in state institutions makes this type of self-protection an attractive strategy. *'When something happens to you, when your head has a price, you think like a bandit. You know how the other people think, how they might attack you. By means of this knowledge, you can defend yourself'* (Medellín)[154].

Collective self-protection

Besides the individual search for protection, demobilised people also attempt to look after their security within a group. Some interviewees – particularly observed for those in Medellín – continue their role as a parallel security authority in their neighbourhoods (see for example Rozema 2008). Nostalgic ex-combatants resort to vigilante activities (see Emotional Legacies of War), especially in times of economic hardship (see Economic Difficulties). The organization of security in the 'barrios' relates to a tradition of self-protection that did not come to an end with the demobilisation of the AUC. Ex-combatants may even be solicited by locals to work as security personnel in their neighbourhoods (see Stigma within the Community).

Self-protection is particularly problematic when it takes the form of rejoining a full-blown illegal armed group that is dedicated to more than just vigilantism. Reengagement in armed groups is often combined with a belief that protection against threats is more effective within than outside an armed group. *'When the killings of the demobilised people began*[155]*, the majority of us were thinking about regrouping ourselves again and entering the group for*

[153] *'¿Dónde está el estado?, ¿Dónde está el policía? Yo tengo que cuidar a mí mismo. Toca salvaguardar la vida porque nadie se la cuida a usted.'*

[154] *'A la hora de que le va a pasar alguna cosa, si su cabeza tiene precio, ya uno piensa como un bandido. Sabe como piensa la otra gente, como lo puede atacar a uno. Mediante eso, uno se puede defender.'*

[155] With 'when the killings began', the interviewee refers to the considerable number of killings of former combatants in the department of Córdoba and specifically in Tierralta in 2007 and 2008 during confrontations of newly armed groups. In January 2008 alone, 15 persons – mostly ex-combatants – were killed in Tierralta (see Munévar and Nussio 2009).

protection' (Tierralta)[156]. The mechanism of joining for security reasons can be observed in the original motivation for joining the paramilitaries (see Emotional Legacies of War). It corresponds to the logic of 'if you want to stay safe, you have to ally yourself with the enemy of your enemy'. In the interviews, there is not an actual example of a demobilised person who admits to having rejoined an armed group for security reasons, but some have considered it. *'When they threaten, you have to go. Here, neither the police nor anyone else can help you. No, no, no, it's better to go back to your group again, to defend yourself'* (Tierralta)[157]. When asked under what circumstances they would rejoin an armed group, the ex-combatants normally replied 'under no circumstances'. However, the majority of those who gave a substantive answer said that they would join if they or their families faced extreme insecurity (see Disrupted Family Life). *'For saving my life, I would do it, and everyone would do it, you don't let yourself get killed'* (Tierralta)[158].

The somehow paradoxical choice of a risky strategy to overcome insecurity may be explained by additional incentives, such as those related to economics. Recruitment solicitations to newly armed groups appeal primarily to the economic situation of the individual (see Economic Difficulties). Most demobilised persons have friends who are illegally active and are consequently well informed about the conditions of a renewed illegal life. As there are rumours that payments are much higher as compared to what demobilised people receive from the ACR, the threshold for joining might be lower, at least for some. Economic attraction combined with imminent insecurity may be sufficient for entering new armed groups. Negative information may however, have a contrary effect. *'I have comrades there and I talk to them constantly. More than one is coming back and saying "they're not paying, they're killing so badly"'* (Medellín)[159].

Collective self-protection carries with it the highest amount of risk as compared to the other strategies. Other variables may therefore discourage or interfere with the selection of this strategy. Having a stable family (see Disrupted Family Life) and job, or owning a house (see Economic Difficulties) may make ex-combatants more risk-averse. *'Before, you were*

[156] *'Cuando comenzó la matanza de desmovilizados, la mayoría de nosotros pensamos en reagruparnos otra vez y entrar al grupo para protegernos.'*
[157] *'Cuando amenazan, tiene que irse uno. Aquí no vale policía ni nada. No, no, no, eso es mejor irse uno para su grupo otra vez, para defenderse.'*
[158] *'Para salvar la vida, yo lo haría, y cualquiera lo haría, uno no se deja matar.'*
[159] *'Tengo compañeros que estan allá, y hablo con ellos constantemente y más de uno viene y dice: 'no están pagando, están matando tan berracamente'.'*

alone and you just said that it didn't matter, "I go anywhere". Today though with a wife and a daughter ...' (Medellín)[160].

[160] *'Uno antes era solo y decía: 'pues no me importa nada, voy a donde sea'. En cambio, ya uno ahora con una mujer y una hija ...'*

6.5. Policy implications

Ex-combatants of illegal armed groups are experts in the field of insecurity, as war *was* their life. After demobilisation, they are overproportionally exposed to insecurity and are at the same time, a possible threat to the security of others due to their skills and know-how.

On a policy level, the principal aim must be to reduce the number of ex-combatants using uncontrolled self-protection strategies for tackling their security problems. As long as some police officers stigmatise the demobilised community and ex-combatants see the police as a corrupt institution, state protection will not be seen as an option in situations of insecurity. Under such conditions, self-protection may be an attractive alternative. Self-protection may lead ex-combatants to reengage in illegal activities. Although economic reasons may be the main driver (see Economic Difficulties), insecurity can be seen as another motive or at least a favourable condition for reengagement. Reengagement motivated by insecurity can be remedied by providing effective security measures for threatened ex-combatants. However, if they do not trust in the state as their guarantor of security, they will not appeal to it. The reintegration programme is a possible entry point to improve trust and the poor relationship between ex-combatants and the state, and to create positive interactions (see Pact with the State). However, in order to design an effective and trust-enhancing security milieu, the collaboration between the reintegration programme and police must work smoothly. Even the slightest abuse of power by representatives in positions of authority, undermines the advancement of confidence building.

Facilitating relocation may be another possible policy to reduce the utilisation of self-protection strategies. Reintegration programmes could proactively help with relocation. As demobilised people who consider relocation for security reasons need to do so rapidly, the relocation process must be quick and unbureaucratic. Furthermore, involvement in relocation activities may simplify the tracking system for ex-combatants. Without such assistance, participants in the reintegration programme may try to go into hiding without informing anyone, augmenting their vulnerability at the place of arrival.

Policy refinement based on the reintegration programme faces an important dilemma with respect to security issues. From the point of view of the demobilised people, preventive strategies are the easiest means to confront insecurity. However, the reintegration programme complicates the strategy of anonymity by frequently revealing the demobilised people's identity. For example, when they wait outside of the ACR service centres, ex-combatants are publicly distinguished as demobilised people. By bringing together ex-combatants for reintegration activities, the programme also undermines the efforts of some to isolate

themselves from other demobilised persons. These dilemmas possibly lead ex-combatants to leave the reintegration programme and expose them to difficulties in other areas (lack of economic support, lack of education opportunities, lack of healthcare etc.).

However, the aim of DDR programming must be to shift the number of people who choose self-protection towards other less problematic strategies. The first step for designing effective policy is to acknowledge and take seriously those options that ex-combatants perceive as feasible.

'I once read somewhere:

"Yesterday combatants, today dedicated to peace, tomorrow poor on the street?"

There is some truth in that.' [161]

Demobilised person from Bogotá, January 2009

7. Overcoming Economic Difficulties

There are few interviewees without economic difficulties immediately after demobilisation. The overwhelming majority claims to have problems generating a stable livelihood until now. Only 8 of the 54 randomly selected interviewees from the primary set of data indicated having formal employment. The rest are divided into two more or less equal groups of persons with either an informal job or no job at all.

As a consequence, economic difficulties have been identified as one of the central themes in the interviews with ex-combatants. All interviewees referred at some point to their economic situation. This is not surprising since ex-combatants lose their 'jobs' upon demobilisation – they turn into unemployed people. This expression makes sense, considering that they often viewed paramilitarism as an employment possibility, a way out of a miserable economic situation. But they are not 'usual' jobless people, they have specific characteristics that either ease or aggravate their search for a stable livelihood. On the one hand, they count on economic support offered by the reintegration programme. On the other hand, they often have a low level of education and poor social acceptance, both of which complicate their ability to integrate into the civilian economy.

[161] *'Alguna vez ví: "Ayer combatientes, hoy comprometidos con la paz, mañana indigentes?" Es algo sabio.'*

7.1. Related literature

There is no shortage of literature that describes the economic dimension of reintegration. Most academics agree that 'if demobilised combatants are not placed into employment or provided with skills-training opportunities, the lack of an income source increases their propensity to commit crimes' (Mark Knight and Özerdem 2004, 502). A lack of economic opportunities is considered to be one of the main drivers for engagement in illegal armed groups in the first place (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Henriksen and Vinci 2008; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Justino 2009; Keen 2000) or for reengagement in illegal activities after demobilisation (Richard Hill, Gwendolyn Taylor, and Temin 2008; Nilsson 2008; Nussio 2009a). The aim of economic reintegration is to contribute to ex-combatants' financial independence and self-reliance in order to prevent recidivism. With respect to this goal, ex-combatants find difficulty with two points. First, the acquisition of civilian life skills as opposed to military skills may be particularly complicated for them (Berdal 1996). Second, military life may have created a 'dependency syndrome' (Schafer 2007, 13) that works against the aim of financial self-reliance.

I divide the literature on the economic aspects of DDR into context-focused literature, policy-focused literature and empirical studies. The context-focused literature analyses the challenging economic environment of DDR, often associated with destroyed economies and high numbers of unemployed people, and war economies that emerged during conflict (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005; Nitzschke and Studdard 2005; Spear 2006; Stedman 1997; Torjesen 2006). This larger economic picture is dealt with more extensively in the chapter called Introducing DDR.

At the policy level, the Integrated DDR Standards (United Nations 2006a, Chapter 4.30; see also ILO and UNDP 2008) call for education, skills training, job creation, microenterprises and micro-grants in order to confront the difficult economic situation of ex-combatants, or as Nilsson (2005) describes, in order to 'substitute the benefits of war'. Some reintegration processes have almost exclusively focused on the economic dimension of reintegration, such as was the case in Kosovo (Heinemann-Grüder and Paes 2001) and Bosnia and Hercegovina (Heinemann-Grüder and Pietz 2003). The economic dimension of reintegration is examined by a large number of conceptual and case studies (see for example Ball and van de Goor 2006; Body 2005; Kingma and Muggah 2009; Specker 2008; Tajima 2009). Whether there should be any cash payment during reinsertion and reintegration is a source of dispute. Even the IDDRS (United Nations 2006a, chapter 4.20, 8.9) does not define standards concerning this topic (see also Isima 2004; Mark Knight and Özerdem 2004;

Özerdem and Podder 2008; Willibald 2006). With respect to financial assistance, Nilsson (2005) particularly warns against the risk of ex-combatants becoming dependent in the long run. Various studies argue that economic reintegration is easier to achieve in rural areas than urban environments due to the less complex rural labour market (Buxton 2008; Kingma 2000; Nilsson 2005; Specker 2008). However, empirical evidence for this assertion is scarce (Gomes Porto, Parsons, and Alden 2007).

Aside from contextual and policy-focused literature, some empirical studies have examined the economic dimension of reintegration, mainly for African cases. For example, Gomes Porto et al. (2007) study the economic reintegration of ex-combatants in Angola with a quantitative design. Amongst other things, they claim that ex-combatants are overly dependent on secondary assistance. They are often unable to find formal or informal employment due to the overall conditions of the economy and lack of qualifications. Ex-combatants who own their own home or who engage in some type of economic activity indicate a higher sense of belonging to the society. Angolan ex-combatants expect the government to help them with employment and training opportunities based on earlier promises. Unfulfilled promises are also an important ingredient identified in a qualitative study on Liberia (Jennings 2007). The phrase 'no satisfaction, no peace' expressed by a Liberian ex-combatant reveals the importance of satisfied expectations. Another study in Liberia reports that 13 per cent of interviewed ex-combatants would turn to illegality for material benefits (Richard Hill, Gwendolyn Taylor, and Temin 2008). As a result of weak formal economies, informal jobs are often the only way for ex-combatants to earn a living. A good example is the motor-bike taxi-drivers in provincial towns of Sierra Leone (Peters 2007b). As a result of aforementioned difficulties, the expressed priorities of ex-combatants participating in DDR programming include: access to jobs after training, longer training periods, support for start up small businesses and larger allowances – all of which are economic needs (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004).

For the Colombian case, there is almost no academic literature on the economic dimension of DDR (see Describing the Colombian Context). Public institutions provide some information – for example, the document that guides the public reintegration policy (Conpes 3554 2008). In comparison to other countries with DDR programmes, Colombia has a much higher GDP per capita. This should have at least at the macro-level, a positive influence on reintegration (Nussio 2009a). Nevertheless, low education levels and a lack of job opportunities are common at the micro-level (Conpes 3554 2008). The Foundation Ideas for Peace (Palou and Méndez 2010) made a large-scale enquiry about the reintegration process of

collectively and individually demobilised people. At the time of the investigation (2007), almost half were employed, and only 3.6 per cent fell beneath the poverty line. This success was related to the 'humanitarian aid' provided by the ACR. According to official information, of the 34'000 active participants of the programme (individually and collectively demobilised people), 18'000 had a formal or informal job by the end of 2009 (ACR 2010).

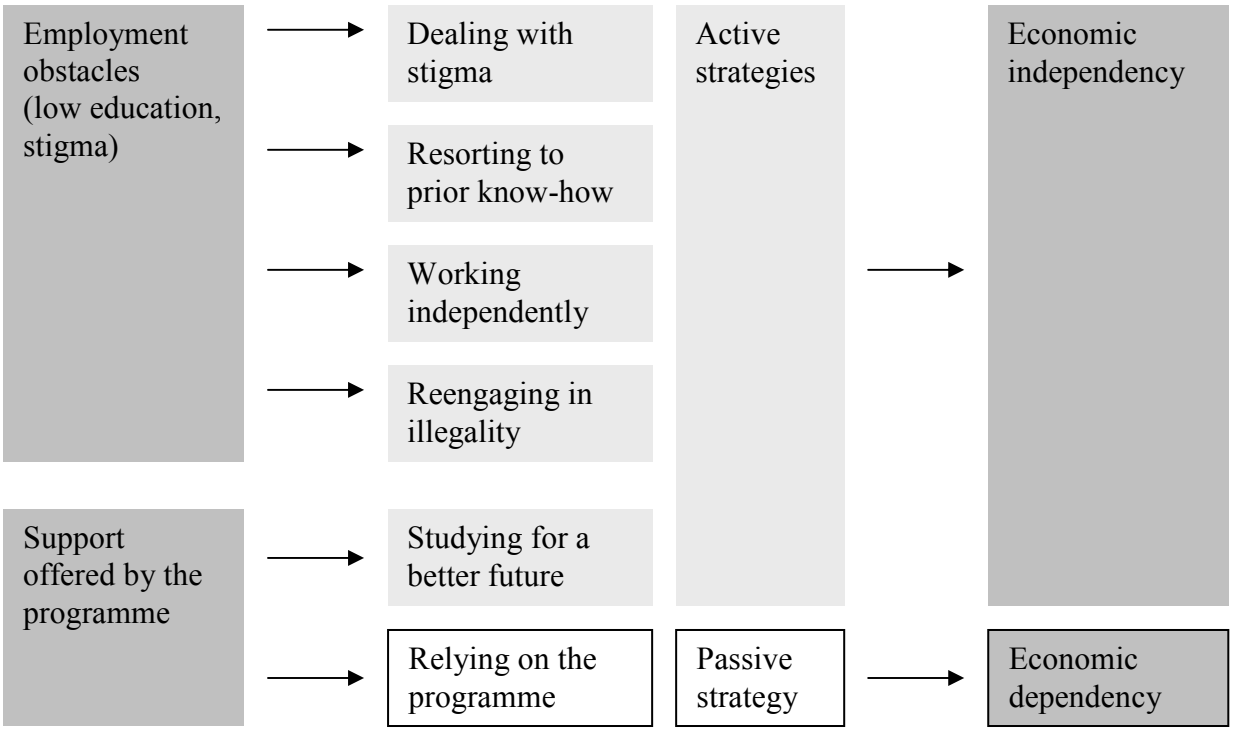
7.2. Overview

When ex-combatants speak about their economic situation, they generally refer to their *current state of livelihood, including such principal topics as income, employment opportunities or housing*. Employment difficulties, economic support offered by the state, and expectations of reintegration benefits (created before and during demobilisation) are the primary determinants of one's perceived economic situation.

Similar to what has been found in the literature, demobilised people assert that it is difficult to obtain a job for two main reasons. First, they consider themselves stigmatised by potential employers, and this lowers their hiring possibilities. Second, they are conscious of their inadequate skill and education level for the legal job market. In contrast, their economic situation is aided by state intervention, which provides them with a monthly stipend, as well as educational and vocational training. However, the economic support offered by the state often collides with the expectations that former combatants held during their active time, and to the promises made by former commanders and authorities (see Pact with the State). These expectations influence the level of economic satisfaction of each ex-combatant.

The main elements of the central theme of economic difficulties are assembled in the following Figure 11:

Figure 11: Strategies to overcome economic difficulties



Ex-paramilitaries apply different strategies to confront economic difficulties. Some try to fight against stigma and improve their low level of education in order to increase employment possibilities. Few ex-combatants have the possibility to apply their existing know-how to legal employment. Others try to establish independent work, often in an informal context. Another group relies on the state and may become dependent on it. Some ex-combatants reengage in illegality to overcome economic dissatisfaction. Another strategy that was expected – relying on family help – rarely surfaced in the interviews. However, a significant number returned to their parents' home, easing their economic situation since they do not have to pay for housing (see Disrupted Family Life).

An alternative way of categorizing the coping strategies found in interviews is to differentiate between strategies of 'independence' and 'dependence'. Independent ex-combatants seek to overcome economic difficulties on their own, or by using their formerly acquired skills. Dependent ex-combatants rely on state assistance as they had relied on the armed group before, following the guidelines set by those who pay. In essence, they merely change the organisation they belong to – from AUC to ACR – but not their behavioural pattern of dependency.

The different strategies presented are not mutually exclusive and may be used in combination. Strategies are based on one's perceived economic situation and not on an objective level of income. The foremost goal of these strategies is to find a sustainable workplace: *'My goal is to have a job when this ends, to be financially stable in order to give my children a dignified life'* (Medellín)[162].

In the following sections, I focus on the perspective of former combatants and disregard macro-economic considerations that lie beyond the scope of this study. Macro-economic conditions are the same for ex-combatants as for other civilians.

[162] *'El ideal de que se acabe esto, es uno tener un empleo. Quedar uno laboralmente estable para darle una vida digna a los hijos.'*

7.3. Perceptions of the economic situation

Employment obstacles

As opposed to other civilians, former combatants described two main impediments to entering the formal economy: inadequate know-how and a low level of social acceptance. Another and minor reason for their difficulty is the supposed incompatibility between ACR and job obligations.

Ex-combatants are usually trained in war-related activities, which range from combat skills to logistics. They know about coercion techniques and other specific activities that are useful within an armed group. Usually, they lack civilian capacities. *'I'm from the countryside, from the plains near Venezuela. I can use a weapon, whatever falls into my hands, I know how to use it. But if you make me use a computer, competing with a young lady who has studied computation her whole life, that will be difficult for me'* (Bogotá)[163]. Even civilian-like skills may not be sufficient for the post-demobilisation life. Here is an example of someone who was not a combatant in the strict sense, but was dedicated to communication within her troops. Even with these skills, she has difficulty becoming accustomed to the civil labour market: *'It was hard for me to think "what am I going to do?", "where will I work? I don't know anything else". The only thing that I knew was looking around with a pistol in the belt, and receiving orders like "buy this", "look at that". And ultimately also the radio unit, I miss the radio. This was my work. So, I didn't see any other way to make a living'* (Barrancabermeja)[164]. Furthermore, demobilised persons often left school early and have a low level of education. Most are conscious of their inadequacy for the formal economy and named it as a reason for their difficulties in the job search.

They also perceive that they are not well accepted by their communities (see Stigma within the Community). Frequently, they complain about prejudices against and generalisations about ex-combatants, both of which make their job search difficult. On the one hand, there is widespread stigmatisation that hinders their entry into a formal company. *'As soon as they find out that you're a demobilised person, they close the door. Because the ex-combatant was the one who killed and caused problems. In this sense, we're quite affected'*

[163] *'Yo soy del monte, del campo, soy de la llanura entre Colombia y Venezuela. Yo sé manejar un arma, lo que caiga, lo sé manejar. Pero me van a poner a manejar un computador delante de una señorita que lleva todo el tiempo estudiando la computación para yo venir y hacerle competencia, me queda difícil.'*

[164] *'Fue muy difícil como pensar: "¿qué hago?, ¿en qué trabajo?, es que yo no sé hacer más". O sea, uno lo único que sabía era andar por ahí mirando con una pistola en la cintura y que a uno lo mandaban, que "compre esto", "que mire aquello", "que esto". Y a últimas la radio, yo por ejemplo extrañaba la radio. Ese era mi trabajo, entonces uno no ve otra forma de ganarse la vida.'*

(Barrancabermeja)[165]. This was the general perception of most interviewees. They consider themselves affected by this prevalent negative view in society, and potential employers in particular. *'I spoke to many comrades who had a job and after one or two weeks, the employer found out that the guy was a demobilised person. So, no more work for him'* (Medellín)[166]. On the other hand, many ex-combatants are resentful towards their former comrades who were offered employment but refused it. This behaviour is seen as intensifying the present level of stigma. *'I had a friend that had a good job and came in drunk every week. One rotten apple spoils the barrel. That ruined a lot of the opportunities with the companies'* (Medellín)[167]. Hence, the demobilised people blame themselves, or perhaps more accurately, other ex-combatants for creating and maintaining societal prejudices. This stigmatisation has a further, indirect effect on the employment topic – it makes contact with other civilians difficult. A network of contacts would facilitate the job search (see below).

A minor source of difficulty is the supposed incompatibility between work and ACR obligations. *'The vocational training schedules are affecting us. You come out of class at half past two. Who gives you a job [in these circumstances]?'* (Bogotá)[168]. The ones that try to work become frustrated when their economic incentives are cut back for non-attendance. *'Here, the only thing you may get, is as a construction worker. The day I work, I don't go to the workshops, I can't study. And here, they don't understand that. They are not aware that the guy was working. "You haven't been to the workshops? Failed!" I think they should be more understanding'* (Medellín)[169].

Economic support offered by the state

The reintegration programme is designed to tackle economic difficulties faced by ex-combatants. Access to such a programme differentiates them from other civilians. How do they perceive the economic support? Most of the demobilised interviewees recognised the importance of the economic support offered by the state (see Pact with the State). They tend to appreciate receiving a monthly stipend and the possibility to study. However, most also

[165] *'Tan pronto saben que uno es desmovilizado le cierran la puerta, porque el desmovilizado fue el que mataba, creaba problemas. En eso si estamos bastante afectados.'*
[166] *'He hablado con muchos compañeros que le han dado un trabajo y a los ocho o quince días el empresario se da cuenta que el man es desmovilizado y entonces ya no hay más trabajo para el.'*
[167] *'Tenía un compañero que le dieron un puesto bueno y cada ocho días llegaba borracho. Por eso, por una papa podrida, se pudre todo el costal. Eso desmejoró mucho que nos dieran oportunidades en muchas empresas.'*
[168] *'Los horarios de capacitaciones nos están perjudicando. Sale usted a las dos y media del colegio y ¿quién le va a brindar un trabajo?'*
[169] *'Aquí lo único que le dan a uno es en construcción. Ese día no voy a talleres, no puedo estudiar y aquí no entienden esto. No están concientes que el pelado si estaba trabajando. "¿Usted no fue a talleres? ¡La falla!" Yo creo que aquí sí tendrían que comprender más.'*

complained about specific programme elements, such as a productive project that did not work out, the lack of employment help or housing aid. Ultimately, perceptions of one's economic situation depend on the expectations created while being active with the paramilitaries and during demobilisation. A descent in economic terms or unfulfilled promises usually leads to dissatisfaction with respect to one's current state of livelihood.

Many demobilised individuals believe it is the state's obligation to support them. Their demobilisation is often understood as a kind of pact with the state. *'Without the benefits of the government, we would not have demobilised, we would have our food, our time off and would not pass through this darkness'* (Tierralta)[170]. As they handed in their arms and demobilised, the state was and is obliged to help them. *'Without benefits, believe me, few would have done it. Few would have come back. But as they promised that we would stay well, would be safe, would have employment, would have accomodation, would receive support for a productive project, a micro-enterprise, ...'* (Bogotá)[171]. This is the expectation many demobilised individuals maintain. When these expectations do not turn into reality, they are dissatisfied. *'They promised us heaven and earth, they told us a lot of things, that we would receive land and houses, I was happy and my comrades were motivated as well. And eventually, when we arrived here, they only gave us little things. Until now, they only complied with payment and vocational training, but neither land, nor housing aid, and I think that was what we most expected'* (Tierralta)[172]. The sources of unfulfilled promises are varied. Sometimes, the author of the alleged promise is the state authorities, and sometimes, former AUC commanders. The resulting dissatisfaction of unfulfilled promises seems to be the same in both cases.

However, not all the demobilised persons are dissatisfied with the economic help of the state. In fact, interviewees can be roughly divided into two equal groups: those who are satisfied (*'What the state promised, the humanitarian aid that it promised, was always fulfilled, it never disappointed me nor anything. I have lived with this aid.' (Bogotá)*[173]*)),* and those who are dissatisfied. I highlight dissatisfaction, as it is an undesirable state of being from the ex-combatant's perspective, and the dissatisfied may develop strategies to confront

[170] *'Sin los beneficios del gobierno no nos hubieramos desmovilizado, teníamos nuestra comida, el permiso, no pasaríamos esta penumbra.'*
[171] *'Sin beneficios, creame que más de uno no lo hace. Más de uno no se viene, pero como nos prometieron que nosotros íbamos a estar bien, que íbamos a tener seguridad, que íbamos a tener trabajo, que nos iban a ayudar con la vivienda, que nos iban a ayudar con el proyecto productivo, con la microempresa, ...'*
[172] *'Nos pintaron muchos pajaritos, nos dijeron un poco de cosas, que íbamos a recibir tierras, casas y yo estaba contento y mis compañeros también los veía motivados. Y al fin y al cabo cuando llegamos acá que ya estábamos libres, nos salieron con poquiticas cosas. Hasta la fecha solo han cumplido con el sueldo y las capacitaciones, pero ni tierra, ni subsidio de vivienda y yo creo que eso fue lo que más se planteó.'*
[173] *'Lo que el prometió, o sea la ayuda humanitaria que prometió siempre la ha cumplido, nunca me ha fallado ni nada. Con eso he vivido.'*

it. Alternatively, satisfaction is a sustainable state of affairs without the necessity for change (see below).

The different elements of economic support are reflected in the interviews with former combatants, the most important of which is the monthly stipend. Some refered to it as their salvation but most of them request more money. *'Look, what the government has helped me is with the money that I receive each month. This money is blessed. With this money, 100'000 pesos [50 dollars] without work or anything, I eat, I pay my rent. So, without this support, ...'* (Bogotá)[174]. Demobilised persons sometimes compare their current economic situation to that of their past as combatants, as in this case of a former mid-ranked soldier. *'Imagine, 358'000 pesos [180 dollars]. When many of us gained 2 millions [1000 dollars] before'* (Barrancabermeja)[175]. The significant decrease in economic terms is a possible source of dissatisfaction. Furthermore: *'There, you earned your money without paying for anything. You had your Colgate, your soap, water, you didn't have to pay electricity, you had food, they gave you a uniform, boots and shoes as well. So, there you didn't have any expenses. When you took it, you knew that you didn't owe anything to anybody and here, you take your money and you know that you have to pay electricity, water, clothes, food and so on'* (Tierralta)[176]. This demobilised individual has not been aware of the daily necessities of civil life and appreciates the facility of living his combatant life, thus showing nostalgic tendencies (see Emotional Legacies of War). He is somehow disillusioned by his current economic situation. Others prefer their current situation. For simple rank-and-file soldiers, the ACR payment may be even higher than their earlier salary: *'They payed me 350'000 pesos [monthly] there. And here, lately I receive a salary of 510'000 [255 dollars]. So, I feel happier here'* (Tierralta)[177]. In most cases, the financial help is welcome. The same holds for the possibility of studying and vocational training. *'To me, the studies were very useful because I was basically illiterate and last year, at least I learned some things that I didn't know before'* (Bogotá)[178].

While study opportunities, vocational training and financial assistance are seen as favourable, productive projects (a seed capital to create a micro-business), employment help

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[174] *'Vea, a mí con lo que me ha ayudado el gobierno es la platica que me llega cada mes. Esa platica es bendita. Con esa platica, 100'000 pesos sin trabajo ni nada y esa platica, con esa es que yo como, con esa es que yo pago arriendo. Entonces si no hubiera ese apoyo, ...'*

[175] *'Imagínese, 358'000 pesos. Cuando muchos de nosotros nos ganábamos dos millones de pesos.'*

[176] *'Uno allá se ganaba el sueldo libre, uno tenía Colgate, jabón, tenía agua, no tenía que pagar luz, la comida la tenía allá, el uniforme se lo daban a uno y botas y zapatos también. Entonces en ese sentido uno allá cogía esa plata libre. Uno cuando la cogía, sabía que no le debía a nadie y uno acá coge esa plata y sabe que tiene que pagar la luz, el agua, que la ropita, comidita y eso.'*

[177] *'Me pagaban 350'000 pesos allá y acá, ultimamente me estaba llegando el sueldo en 510'000. Entonces, me siento más contenta acá.'*

[178] *'A mí me ha servido mucho el estudio porque yo era casi digamos que alfabeta [sic] y yo por lo menos el año pasado aprendí muchas cosas y miré muchas cosas que yo las ignoraba.'*

and housing aid are viewed as largely deficient. Not all the ex-combatants applied for productive projects, but for those who did participate, all projects failed without exception. This was mostly due to administrative problems or disputes between the ex-combatants who received the seed capital. *'I was involved in a productive project [...] but it didn't work out because the guy in charge stole the money. I don't know who he was, he was a doctor, we just all called him doctor. This was a problem, they had to get him out of there because the demobilised people that were working there, we were going to lynch him'* (Medellín)[179].

There are few interviewees who found a job with the help of the reintegration programme. Many see it as the programme's responsibility to help with employment. Some would even prefer employment assistance over the monthly stipend. *'I can't find a job and I have been looking for it. I am thankful for everything about the programme that I told you: I went through an incredible change. However, I would be even more thankful if they helped me with getting a job and took away the humanitarian aid'* (Medellín)[180].

Housing is a significant problem for ex-combatants. The reintegration programme has not financed housing, something that many ex-combatants expected. Some are not used to paying rent because they grew up in rural areas. *'They should help us with a little house, but here [in the city], we constantly pay rent and we don't have any benefit from it. It's just handing over the money. That's where they didn't help us'* (Bogotá)[181]. The lack of housing aid is a frequent critique of the programme, as it aggravates their financial situation.

In summary, where expectations have been met, demobilised ex-combatants feel satisfied with the economic support of the state. Study opportunities, vocational training and in part, financial assistance generally meet their expectations whereas the productive projects, employment help and housing aid lag behind. As presented in the following section, feeling more or less satisfied may influence how ex-combatants select their coping strategies.

[179] *'Estuve en un proyecto productivo [...] y no resultó nada, porque el encargado se robó la plata. No sé quien era ese, era un doctor y todo el mundo lo llamábamos doctor. Eso fue un problema allí, tenían que sacarlo, porque los desmovilizados que trabajábamos allá, lo íbamos a linchar.'*

[180] *'Yo no puedo conseguir un trabajo y yo he buscado. Yo agradezco al programa en todo lo que te hablé, o sea hice un cambio del hijueputa. Le agradecería aún más al programa si me ayudara a colocarme a trabajar y que me quitara la ayuda.'*

[181] *'Que le ayuden a uno con algo para uno tener su casita, pero es que acá, esa pagadera de arriendo y sabiendo uno que paga y no va a tener ningún beneficio, es solo entregar la plata. Eso es lo que veo que no nos han colaborado.'*

7.4. Economic strategies

Studying for a 'better future'

A considerable number of interviewees take advantage of the study opportunities offered by the state. They have one main goal: a better future. They also study to become independent of state support with a longer-term perspective. *'This [the reintegration programme] won't last forever. On the other hand, I'll finish my studies and that will be it for me. With this, I can get by, I can find a job. And I can improve the quality of my life'* (Barrancabermeja)[182]. Some even prioritise their studies over looking for a job. *'If I dedicate myself to working, I miss a lot of my classes. I want to progress with my studies first. Maybe with something well studied, I'll get a stable job'* (Medellín)[183]. In few cases, the vocational training has resulted in finding a job. *'Now, I'm working in what I like, welding. I'm a technical assistant. Thank God I progressed'* (Barrancabermeja)[184].

However, not all the demobilised people can afford studying. A recurring sentiment is that the short-term need of income generation is more pressing than the creation of long-term opportunities through studying. Many simply want to work in order to earn a living for their families now. *'It's very hard to stay in a classroom on Saturday from six in the morning until five in the afternoon knowing that the fridge is empty'* (Medellín)[185]. Some complained about the incompatibility between work and education as seen in a previous section. Additionally, some demobilised persons are frustrated with the training offered, since they do not see any opportunity in a poor labour market. *'We're not interested in studying, we have families, children. I don't have enough to pay the rent. We are studying but what for, if there isn't any employment opportunity for us?'* (Tierralta)[186]. Hence, there are some factors that limit the use of education as a strategy to overcome employment difficulties.

Overcoming stigma-related challenges

Most of the demobilised people encounter stigmatisation, which complicates their work life. Some are actively trying to fight this stigma in order to have a better chance in the job market. Here, I only present strategies that are closely related to the search for employment,

[182] *'Eso [el programa de reintegración] no va a durar para siempre. En cambio, yo saco mi carrera y a mí me va a quedar y yo con eso me puedo defender, puedo conseguir un trabajo. Y pues ya uno mejora la calidad de vida de uno.'*
[183] *'Si yo me dedico al trabajo, pierdo mucho el estudio. Yo quiero primero mi estudio para seguir adelante. De pronto algo bien estudiado y tengo un trabajo bien estable.'*
[184] *'Ahorita estoy trabajando con lo que me gusta, soldadura. Soy ayudante técnico. Gracias a Dios he salido adelante.'*
[185] *'Estar en una aula, un sábado de las seis de la mañana hasta las cinco de la tarde, sabiendo que la nevera está vacía, es muy duro.'*
[186] *'A nosotros no nos interesa estudiar, tenemos familia, tenemos hijos. No me alcanza para pagar el arriendo. Estamos estudiando pero para que sirve, si no hay fuente de trabajo para nosotros.'*

as stigma-related strategies are explored more extensively in the chapter entitled Stigma within the Community.

One important strategy is interacting with the community in order to improve social relations. A possible result is the offering of small jobs by people who are known in the neighbourhood. *'In the neighbourhood I live, everybody knows me. "Hey, look at him going to the workshop, you could help me with something." So I work for two days. After that, another guy calls me: "look, it's that …", and so on'* (Bogotá)[187]. People who maintain contacts from the time prior to recruitment may have an advantage as they have the support of old friends. This is more common in locations where people returned home after demobilisation, such as in Tierralta, and less common in anonymous cities like Bogotá.

In an anonymous environment, another feasible strategy to fight stigma is to deny being a demobilised person. *'I always do independent work, as a construction worker. At the moment, I'm working with "Empresas Públicas de Medellín". I'm always hiding my past. You don't tell anybody that you're a demobilised person. People resent that'* (Medellín)[188]. This strategy has its limitations in smaller-scale environments where the ex-combatants are known to the community.

In this context, relocation is an effective strategy to first eliminate stigmatisation, and second to encounter a more dynamic job market (see also Security Threats). It is common for demobilised persons to relocate to bigger cities as the following two examples show. *'When I arrived to Bogotá, I met with a cousin and he got me a job in a bakery. There, I was working for nearly one year, as a home deliverer and a bakery helper'* (Tierralta)[189]. Another case of a successful relocator (from Tierralta to Barrancabermeja) shows the double function of relocation: fighting stigma and having a more dynamic job environment. *'Since I arrived, I have had a job. I haven't stopped working for even one day. [...] Getting a job was the best thing because it keeps your mind busy. [...] Here, the population is a little bigger, they almost don't notice you, there, everybody knows you. I have made myself for what I am, a worker, for working with a contractor, for nothing else'* (Barrancabermeja)[190]. Stable employment

[187] *'En el barrio donde vivo, todo el mundo ya me conoce y dice: 'Ay que mire, que él va al taller [del programa], que ayuda en una vaina.' Después trabajo dos días, después me llama otro man: 'que mire que…', y así sucesivamente.'*

[188] *'Yo siempre hago trabajo independiente, en construcción, en el momento trabajo con Empresas Públicas de Medellín. Siempre es uno tapando el pasado de uno. Uno no le dice a nadie que es desmovilizado. A la gente le da recelo.'*

[189] *'Cuando llegué a Bogotá, me encontré con un primo y me consiguió un trabajo y trabajé bien en una panadería y ahí duré casi un año, de domiciliario y ayudante.'*

[190] *'Desde que llegué ya tengo un trabajito. No he dejado de trabajar ni un día. [...] Conseguir un trabajo ha sido lo mejor, porque uno ocupa la cabeza. [...] Aquí la población es un poco más grande, pasa uno casi desapercibido, allá todo el mundo lo conoce. Yo me he hecho por lo que soy, por ser trabajador, que yo trabajo en una empresa contratista, no por más nada.'*

empowers this person. Against the odds, he found a job and this is a great source of pride for him.

Resorting to existing know-how

The handicap that some ex-combatants face in terms of civilian education can be overcome by utilizing previously acquired skills in the security field. A small number of ex-combatants find employment as security personnel in the aftermath of demobilisation. As such, they can exploit their formerly acquired knowledge and skills, while overcoming their difficulties with civilian education. They work for example as bodyguards, doormen in bars or as guards of parking lots. *'Imagine that sometimes when I finish working on Saturdays, I go working in a police tavern and register everybody'* (Bogotá)[191]. A demobilised person from Tierralta explained that he received a job offer due to his skills as demobilised person. *'There was a bull fight and they looked for me to protect a person who managed the money of the bull fight'* (Tierralta)[192].

For some, working in a related field may also satisfy their need to stick to a similar lifestyle, as they feel nostalgic for their past involvement in war (see Emotional Legacies of War). However, there are not enough employment opportunities for all ex-combatants in the legal security field.

Working independently

Working independently, often in an informal context, can tackle various economic difficulties faced by ex-combatants. Those who work independently do not come under the scrutiny of potential employers, lessening the potential negative effects of stigma. They are independent of economic assistance, which prepares them for a life free of state support. They do not necessarily need specific training, as informal work often consists of providing basic services. Engaging in the informal sector is a widespread coping strategy in developing countries where formal job offers are limited[193]. Due to the aforementioned reasons, this is even more the case for demobilised people. *'They don't give you a job because you're a demobilised guy. So you work on your own'* (Tierralta)[194].

[191] *'Imagínate que a veces salgo del trabajo los sábados y me pongo a trabajar en una taberna de policía y a todo el mundo registro.'*
[192] *'Yo conseguí trabajo por ser desmovilizado. Hubo una fiesta de toros y me buscaron a mí para resguardar a un señor que guardaba la plata de los toros.'*
[193] In the thirteen largest cities of Colombia, 58 per cent of all the labour force work in the informal sector (Portafolio 2009).
[194] *'No le dan trabajo a uno porque es desmovilizado, entonces trabaja uno acá de su cuenta.'*

A common form of informal work within the demobilised community is motor-bike taxi-driving, especially in mid-size and small towns with a warm climate. *'I don't have stable employment, I have to work as a motor-bike taxi-driver because as soon as they find out that we're demobilised people, they close the door'* (Barrancabermeja)[195]. Apart from the advantages of informal work, the motor-bike may be seen as a symbol of masculinity that persists in the aftermath of demobilisation (Theidon 2009). Three interviewees openly declared being motor-bike taxi-drivers without having been directly asked for it.[196] Depending on the context, demobilised people also work as subsistence farmers, informal vendors in urban areas, or craftspersons in order to confront employment difficulties.

Relying on the programme

'You depend on the government's help? – Yes, yes, almost 100 per cent, because at the moment we haven't got any employment, we have nothing' (Tierralta)[197]. Two groups of ex-combatants tend to rely exclusively on programme support as indicated in this introductory quote (see Pact with the State). The first are those who have lost the initiative to look for alternatives due to frustrated attempts, and the second are those who deliberately choose to be dependent on state protection.

One of the demobilised persons ruled out any alternative to relying on state support since the alternatives are not promising. *'The truth is that I lack the education. And right now, there is not even work on construction sites. Each day more unemployment. I survive thanks to the help of the government'* (Medellín)[198]. For this person, the state seems to be the only anchor in difficult economic times. It is not surprising that ex-combatants who feel this way are afraid that state support may terminate some day. *'Today or tomorrow, the government will say "the help for you has come to an end". So what am I going to do, if I don't get a job? What shall I do?'* (Medellín)[199]. These examples illustrate how some people who have attempted to become self-sufficient are unsuccessful and end up becoming frustrated and dependent on the state.

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[195] *'No tengo trabajo fijo, me toca piratear [trabajar de moto-taxista] porque apenas sepan que somos desmovilizados, nos cierran las puertas.'*

[196] The motor-bike taxi-drivers are sometimes seen by the community as allies of newly armed groups working as informants, vigilantes or goods providers (Munévar and Nussio 2009, 111).

[197] *'¿Se puede decir que usted depende de la ayuda del gobierno?' – 'Sí, sí, casi cien por ciento, porque ahora no tenemos empleo, no tenemos nada.'*

[198] *'La verdad es que uno está muy poco capacitado en el estudio. Y ahora es tan duro que ya ni trabajito en construcción resulta. Cada día más desempleo, con la ayuda del gobierno sobrevive uno.'*

[199] *'Hoy o mañana, el gobierno dice: "se acabó la ayuda para usted", entonces ¿qué hace uno?, si no consigue trabajo. Entonces ¿qué hace uno?'*

On the other hand, there are examples of ex-combatants who rely on the state not due to a lack of alternatives, but due to a mentality of dependency that reproduces old patterns of receiving orders and money from a boss or an institution. This mentality may even hinder a sustainable integration into the economy. *'Do you believe that if the programme had finished one year ago, you would have found a job? – Sure, yes, I think so'* (Bogotá)[200]. Another version of this mentality is reflected in ex-combatants who prefer state support over becoming independent. *'I have to go each Monday to the ACR, each Saturday to school, and like this, it is difficult to get employment because they [the potential employers] won't accept that'* (Tierralta)[201]. This type of demobilised persons seems to respond to a duty to participate not because it is viewed as useful, but because it pays (the amount of the monthly stipend is tied to participation in different reintegration activities – see Describing the Colombian Context). Ex-combatants who merely rely on state support may become dependent on it. Before they were dependent on the AUC, now on the ACR.

Reengaging in illegality

When the expectations of civil life – including state support – are not satisfied and there are no alternatives at hand, ex-combatants may reengage in illegal activities in order to improve their economic situation. Their formerly acquired knowledge and skills convert ex-combatants into an attractive workforce for the illegal job market with newly armed groups or criminal gangs. The temptation of 'going back' to some sort of illegal activity is present for many ex-combatants. In the context of another study conducted for the Toledo International Centre for Peace (Munévar and Nussio 2009, 110), we gained interview access to former AUC members who are imprisoned. They reported that they mostly turned to criminal activities for economic reasons.

The majority of the interviewees have received proposals to reengage in illegal activities at some point after demobilisation. *'Many have gone back. The armed groups are just there: "Come on in!" It's easy to go back. All you need are balls and people have them'* (Bogotá)[202]. The main motivations for going back are of an economic nature. Some described the temptation as a trade-off between money and risk. *'If you have money, you don't go and risk*

[200] *'¿Usted cree que si se hubiera acabado el programa hace un año, hubiera encontrado trabajo?' – 'Claro, pues sí, yo creo que sí.'*
[201] *'Yo tengo que ir los lunes a la ACR, los sabados al colegio y pues así es difícil para uno conseguir empleo porque no te van a aceptar eso.'*
[202] *'Muchos se han devuelto. Los grupos armados están allí: "¡ven!", es fácil volver. Lo que se necesita son cojones y la gente los tiene.'*

your life' (Bogotá)[203]. For others, there are additional reasons for going back to illegality. Some long back to the 'good old days' of being a part of the paramilitary group (see Emotional Legacies of War), others feel pushed to engage in new illegal armed groups due to security concerns (see Security Threats). A socially isolated person who has nothing to lose, may be prone for reengagement as well (see Stigma within the Community). *'Sometimes, you despair without any work or anything. Me at least, if I don't find anything these days, I will go back again, I have already decided. I am desperate, I owe two months of rent and the landlord is after me. This here is crazy while there, I lived well, I had a good time. [...] I have nothing to lose since I have no wife, no children, no anything'* (Bogotá)[204]. The interviewees usually have friends who have reengaged in illegal activities and are hence well informed about the conditions of the 'illegal job market'. Some make a comparison with their current economic situation. *'At least he told me that they [a newly armed group] were paying him almost three million pesos [1500 dollars]. Here, they give you 400'000 pesos [200 dollars]. Imagine the difference of three million pesos!'* (Tierralta)[205]. In times of economic hardship, such proposals may sound tempting.

The degree of temptation depends on the alternatives – in this case, the economic support offered by the state. Failure of the payment system can have disastrous short-term effects for ex-combatants who depend solely on state support. *'For example in 2005, they didn't pay me for January and February, or June and July. So I went to pick coca'* (Tierralta)[206]. Ex-combatants may consider reengaging in illegal activities that are reminiscent of their past in order to survive. *'"Oh my god, what shall I do? They didn't pay in the ACR, I have no job. What shall I do?" In such moments, thousands of ideas pass through your head, even doing bad things, even stealing. Because you're not going to starve to death'* (Bogotá)[207]. On the one hand, dependency on the state may drive ex-combatants into illegality when there is a problem receiving benefits. On the other hand, support from the government serves as a protective shield against choosing illegal strategies to overcome difficult economic situations. *'Why don't I go back? Because I want to give myself a chance. I don't want to see myself*

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[203] *'Si uno tiene plata, no se va a ir a arriesgar la vida.'*
[204] *'Uno a veces se desespera sin trabajo ni nada. Yo por lo menos, si no me sale en estos días, me abro para allá otra vez, yo ya estoy decidido. Estoy desesperado, debo dos meses de arriendo y ya el man me está cobrando. Eso aquí es berraco, mientras que uno por allá, ¡pa'que!, yo por allá viví, la pasaba bien. [...] Yo no tengo nada que perder porque yo no tengo mujer ni hijos ni nada.'*
[205] *'Por lo menos me dijo que le estaban pagando casi tres millones de pesos. Acá le dan 400'000 pesos, ¿la diferencia a tres millones de pesos?, ¡imagínese!'*
[206] *'Por ejemplo en 2005, a mí no me pagaron ni enero ni febrero, ni junio ni julio. Entonces me fui a raspar hoja de coca por allá.'*
[207] *'"Uy, ¿qué hago?, no me pagaron en la Alta Consejería, no tengo trabajo. ¿Qué hago?" Ahí pasan mil ideas por la cabeza, hasta hacer cosas malas, hasta ir a robar, porque uno no se va a morir de hambre.'*

there again, in anxiety, in restlessness. I want to stick with the programme until the end' (Bogotá)[208].

According to the previous analysis, the economic situation is an important driver for reengagement in illegality. However, this should be appraised in light of other factors such as nostalgia, security concerns, dependence on state support, the relationship to the state as well as the community and family situation. The example of a demobilised person who is about to have his first baby demonstrates the connection to family life: *'When you're broke, you think like, if they pay me 100'000 or 200'000 pesos [50 or 100 dollars], I'll do it and kill the guy. But now it's different. Now you think about the family of the other as well as about my family, because I wouldn't want that they do the same thing to me'* (Bogotá)[209].

[208] *'¿Que por qué yo no? Porque yo me quiero dar una oportunidad a mí, a mi vida. No me quiero ver otra vez allá, en zozobra, en intranquilidad. Quiero esperar al programa hasta lo último.'*
[209] *'Uno es pelado y dice: "y no pues, si me dan 100'000, 200'000 pesos, yo voy y lo pelo [mato]". Ahorita ya es de pensar. Ahora uno piensa en la familia del otro como en la mía, porque no quiero que me harían lo mismo.*

7.5. Policy implications

Based on the description of economic difficulties by former combatants, there are various implications for an economic reintegration policy. Ex-combatants should be prepared to generate a stable livelihood on their own, as there is a high risk of dependence on programme assistance. A mentality of dependency resulting from participation in an armed group may aggravate this condition. Some demobilised individuals do not change their behavioural pattern of obeying the organisation that pays them. In the long run, this hinders their capacity to generate a sustainable income. After the potential end of programme support, they may look for a substitute organisation that meets their economic needs in exchange for obedience. In the short term, they risk being attracted by other, possibly illegal organisations whenever a problem with their payments arises.

While it is difficult to change someone's mentality, it is possible to provide incentives that minimise the negative effects of this way of thinking. For example, many ex-combatants complain about the incompatibility between work and programme obligations. Many of them choose to stay on the safe side and rely merely on state assistance. Those who do try to work, feel punished by the programme. They do not receive full payment because they are unable to participate fully in reintegration activities. A reintegration programme should send a positive signal to the ex-combatants who try to secure employment and work independently. Such ex-combatants are clearly advancing towards what is meant by economic reintegration: financial independence and self-reliance. Every step towards this goal should be rewarded and not punished.

Providing incentives for independent income generation may have further positive effects. Financial independence in adverse circumstances is a source of personal empowerment (for example: 'I am somebody in civil society'). This kind of empowerment must not be underestimated as an effective protective shield against reengagement in illegal activities. On the contrary, working towards independence may have undesirable effects with respect to the tracking of former combatants. Authorities may lose contact with ex-combatants who earn a living on their own and as a result, decide to leave the programme.

Another crucial topic is the creation of expectations before and during demobilisation. Unfulfilled promises produce dissatisfaction ('I deserve better than that'). This may be a reason for considering alternatives to state support. Regardless of what was actually communicated to ex-combatants in Colombia, the perception of promises regarding housing aid, employment help and productive projects indicates considerable failures in communication. As demobilised persons often see their demobilisation as an act that entails

obligations on the part of the state (see Pact with the State), every unfulfilled promise is judged as a violation of the demobilisation pact. As the reintegration programme loses its legitimacy by unkept promises, ex-combatants feel less obliged to comply with their part of the pact (at a minimum: not reengaging in illegal activities). Therefore, the heat of negotiations and the haste in which armed groups were convinced to demobilise should not result in unsustainable promises that potentially undermine reintegration efforts in the long term.

Concerning education and vocational training, an assessment of what is useful to the labour market and the corresponding needs of former combatants is indispensable. It may even be seen as an opportunity to retrain a large number of people, often of prime working age, in fields that are of strategic importance for the economy. However, one has to be realistic. Some ex-combatants – especially the nostalgic ones (see Emotional Legacies of War) – loved their 'jobs' within the armed group. It may be easier to look for some security-related employment in a legal context than to retrain them against their will. However, massive employment of former combatants in the private security field may be contested by civil society and victims' communities.

Additionally, vast employment experiences with ex-offenders and ex-prisoners in different parts of the world may inspire the design of employment policies for former combatants (see for example Gill 1997; Graffam 2008; Harrison and Schehr 2004; Visher, Winterfield, and Coggeshall 2005). Ex-combatants and ex-offenders share similar characteristics in terms of low education skills, stigmatisation and potential recidivism. At the same time, differences between them must be carefully kept in mind.

'I signed an agreement, I'm complying with my agreement,
my studies and my sessions with the psychologist.'
– You signed a contract?
– *'Yes, with the government. They made us sign.'*[210]
Demobilised person from Medellín, February 2009

8. Committing to a Pact with the State

The relationship to the state is an important element in the interviews with demobilised persons. Almost all ex-paramilitaries refer to state institutions at some point during the interview. For them, going through the demobilisation process meant committing to a pact with the state, even though they demobilised following their commanders' orders. Ex-combatants perceive themselves, with very few exceptions, as a specific kind of citizen who is subject to a particular pact with the state. They do not merely demobilise and become subordinate to the generally effective social contract.

The identity card provided to ex-combatants by the Committee for the Disposal of Arms (CODA)[211] is the physical expression of the relationship between the demobilised and state, as described by this former combatant: *'They gave you this [the CODA card], like a second identity card. Even for making a consultation, they ask you, "give me the number of your CODA". I know they're just protocols but everyone reminds you that you were [sic] a demobilised person and that you need this number to access your benefits'* (Barrancabermeja)[212].

[210] *'Yo firmé un compromiso, estoy cumpliendo mi compromiso, mi estudio, los talleres con las psicólogas.' – '¿Firmó un contrato?' – 'Sí, con el gobierno. Nos hicieron firmar.'*
[211] The CODA is the institution that certifies the right of demobilised persons to access DDR benefits, amongst other things. It was created by decree 1385 of 1994 (Decreto 1385 1994).
[212] *'Eso [el carné del CODA]se lo dieron a uno, como una segunda cédula. Uno hasta para hacer consulta, le preguntan: "deme el número de su CODA". Sé que son protocolos, pero cada quien le recuerda a uno que uno fue desmovilizado y tiene que tener ese número para acceder a algún beneficio.'*

8.1. Related literature

How do ex-combatants interact with the state[213]? From the ex-combatants' perspective, what does the 'state' mean? What factors influence the relationship between state and ex-combatant? Rarely have these questions been examined in the DDR literature. However, some related elements can be identified.

On a general level, the Integrated DDR Standards (United Nations 2006a, chapter 3.30, 4.1) call for 'national ownership' of DDR processes. The guiding institutions and principle interlocutor of the demobilised community should therefore be state institutions rather than external actors (see also Kingma and Muggah 2009). With regard to their policies, building confidence and establishing legitimacy should be at the forefront of the national institutions' goals. When examining the academic DDR literature, three particular themes related to the relationship between state and demobilised arise: state absence, political participation and benefits offered by the state. These three topics will be examined briefly through the general DDR literature as well as the Colombian context.

First, the potential success of a DDR process depends on the level of state presence. Almost all states that undergo a peace process can be labelled as fragile[214] (see Introducing DDR). General deficiencies in the supply of security exacerbate reintegration efforts. 'In cases where there is barely a state or any external power to hold parties to their agreement, demobilisation has little chance of success' (Kingma 2002, 188).

Second, the political participation of ex-combatants influences their relationship to the state. This is ultimately due to the fact that combatants sometimes enter armed groups for political reasons (see Emotional Legacies of War) and may hence expect political benefits in the aftermath of demobilisation. Many conceptual studies outline the importance of the political reintegration of former combatants (see for example Buxton 2008; Nilsson 2005; Zartman 1995). Political reintegration plays an important role, not only on a group level (e.g. turning armed groups into political parties or former leaders into high-ranking politicians), but also at the individual level (e.g. converting rank-and-file ex-combatants into citizens who

[213] In general terms, we define the 'state' as a set of governing and supportive institutions that have sovereignty over a definite territory and population. Below, we introduce the ex-combatants' understanding of the state and use their term subsequently.

[214] The label 'fragile state' refers to three types of states that lack to different degrees, state authority: weak, failing and failed states (Risse and Lehmkuhl 2007; Scheye and Andersen 2007; Schneckener 2007). State fragility is measured by the capacity of service delivery. The core functions that a state has to offer are legitimacy, welfare and security. Security is at the top of the hierarchy, since all other services a state delivers depend directly on the security situation (Rotberg 2007). Strong states perform well in all areas. Weak states fulfil the security function more or less, but have grave deficiencies in one of the other functions. Failing states can not safeguard the security of its population, but are able to work in at least one of the other areas. Failed or collapsed states have huge deficits in all of the three areas (see also the yearly published Failed States Index of Foreign Policy and Fund for Peace).

exercise their political rights). A study of Gomes Porto et al. (2007) focuses on the latter aspect by analyzing the voting habits and intentions of former fighters of the UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). The process of political inclusion of former combatants may be particularly challenging when they reject the political system altogether, as with the case of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) from Sierra Leone (Mitton 2008). Studies about the political dimension of DDR generally share the view that political inclusion increases confidence in state institutions.

Benefits offered by the state are the third component that impacts the ex-combatants' view of the state. The continued interaction with DDR-related institutions may improve the relationship to the state – as in the case of Sierra Leone (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004). A recurring theme in the literature that affects the relationship between state and ex-combatants are unkept promises about DDR benefits (Schafer 2007; Springer 2005; United Nations 2006a). In the case of Liberia, Jennings (2007) warns against the dissatisfaction that arises from unkept promises (see Economic Difficulties). Also related, Knight and Özerdem (2004, 506) criticise that the current approaches to disarmament have a strong military focus, despite the fact that they imply a social contract between the disarmed persons and the state: 'By disarming, the combatants are forging a new social contract with the government and the international community, which act as impartial mediators; the combatants surrender the security and economic surety that their weapons provide, in exchange for opportunities and assistance in finding new peaceful livelihoods.' According to Knight and Özerdem, failing to conceptualise disarmament as a social contract between disarmed people and the state may result in undermining the peace agreement.

The three elements of state absence, political reintegration and DDR benefits described in the general literature, can also be identified in Colombia-specific literature. First, the state has extended its institutional presence during the past years due to the Policy of Democratic Security (República de Colombia 2003; 2007). However, in remote areas – both in the countryside and in marginalised urban neighbourhoods where demobilised people often reside – there is evidence that state control is still lacking (MAPP-OEA 2009a; McDougall 2009; Waldmann 2007). For Rotberg (2007), Colombia is still a weak state due to the presence of multiple insurgencies, but it is comparatively strong in the areas it controls (see also Bejarano and Pizarro Leongómez 2005; Pizarro Leongómez 2004).[215] Renewed violence after demobilisation is an indicator of the state's inability to fill in the vacuum left by the AUC (see Describing the Colombian Context). Summarizing the first element that conditions the

[215] In the 2009 Failed States Index of Foreign Policy and Fund for Peace Colombia ranks 41st: www.fundforpeace.org.

relationship between state and ex-combatants, the state is stronger in Colombia than in other contexts but its presence is still incomplete.

Second, the political reintegration of ex-members of the AUC has been widely neglected or even suppressed during current DDR efforts. This may be due to the AUC's criminal character and its historical manipulation of local politics (Guáqueta 2007; Seguridad y Democracia 2008b). It is especially the middle and higher-ranking ex-combatants who may see their exclusion from institutional channels as unfair (Palou and Llorente 2009). Generally speaking, reintegration policy has focused on economic and social issues rather than on political inclusion. This may be seen as a deficiency in the process with the AUC as compared to other cases, including earlier demobilisations in Colombia (see Describing the Colombian Context).

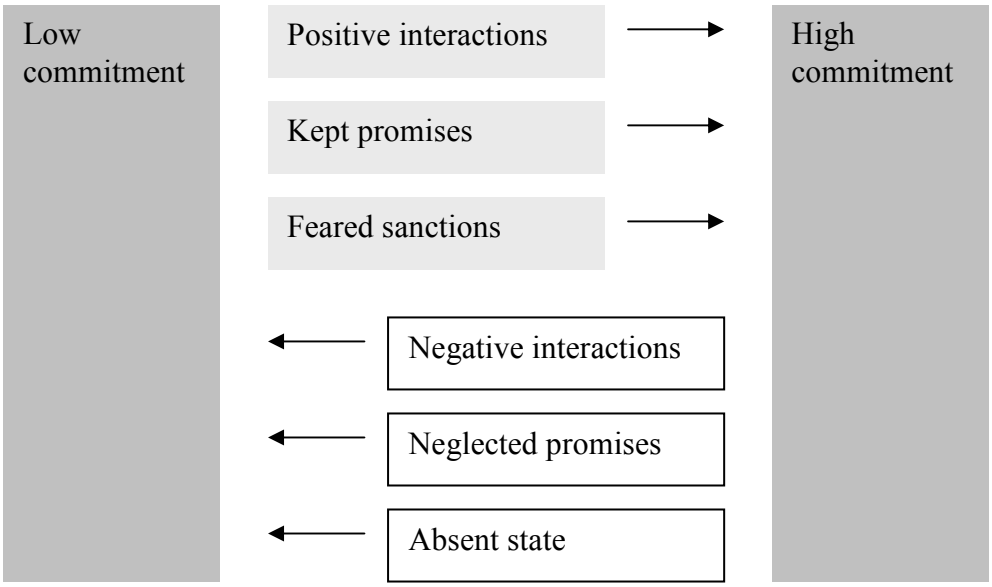
There is little literature that explores the impact of the third component – the benefits of DDR. The Bachelor's thesis by Méndez (2008) about the fractured state in a DDR process provides some insight. She examines the relationship between the state and ex-paramilitaries making reference to the 'pact' that binds a combatant to demobilise and the state to comply with its promises. Demobilised people evaluate the state's efforts through the lens of this pact. This backward-looking perspective may explain a finding from the Foundation Ideas for Peace (Palou and Méndez 2010): after the beginning rise in confidence towards state institutions, trust decreased over time amongst individually and collectively demobilised ex-combatants. This shift is possibly due to disappointing experiences in light of the 'pact'. With respect to the reintegration benefits, Denissen (2010, 337) identifies a common feeling of frustration or disillusionment among former combatants: 'They feel betrayed, left on their own by the government, that their needs are not sufficiently taken into account, and that the government does not do enough to protect them against the still active guerrillas.' This feeling of dissatisfaction is further nurtured by the fact that ex-combatants are exposed to irregularities, including abuse, from some members of law enforcement agencies (MAPP-OEA 2009c).

8.2. Overview

The relationship that emerges as a result of demobilisation is complex. Perceptions of what the state is, and what the obligations of the state and the ex-combatant are, vary considerably. The state is – for most of the former combatants – a *non-unitary actor consisting of different institutions such as the ACR, police, military, government and persons such as ACR-officials, police officers or the President*. Further elements may contribute to the relationship between the state and demobilised people. Here, I focus only on the relationship to the state as conceived by a *pact that implies different obligations and different levels of commitment on both sides*. The term pact alludes to mutuality. Even so, I focus on how the ex-combatants relate to and perceive the state, and not vice versa.

This findings chapter is divided into three parts: the first distinguishes the levels of commitment that ex-combatants have toward the pact. The second and third develop the commitment-increasing and commitment-decreasing elements resulting from interactions between ex-combatants and state institutions. The overall logic of this central theme is illustrated in the following Figure 12:

Figure 12: Committing to a pact with the state



I first place the ex-combatants' level of commitment to the pact on a continuum. There are three levels: low, intermediate and high commitment. *Low commitment* typically means that 'I complied with the pact by demobilizing, now it is all up to the state'. The persons with a low level of commitment are mostly nostalgic fighters who did not want to demobilise (see Emotional Legacies of War). They see a large obligation on the side of the state to

compensate them for laying down their arms. Often, they perceive themselves as heroes who with the very act of demobilizing, already complied with the pact.

Intermediate commitment can typically be understood as 'me and the state, we must equally comply with our obligations'. This intermediate type perceives the pact as an agreement that implies obligations from both sides. He or she has to comply with what the state asks for and the state has to comply with what it promises.

High commitment can be illustrated with 'I will do whatever it takes to comply with the pact since I am grateful for this opportunity'. The highly committed former combatants are usually war-fatigued persons who are happy with demobilisation. They are grateful for the opportunity given to them by the state and are ready to do whatever it takes not to violate the 'liberating' demobilisation pact.[216]

These levels of commitment to the original pact are to be understood as starting points for a dynamic process. In proceeding sections, I focus on the subsequent elements that increase or decrease the initial levels of commitment to the pact in the post-demobilisation period. The relationship to the state is generally assumed and perceived to be something that ex-combatants experience passively. Former combatants do not usually employ an active strategy to improve this relationship. Instead, they draw personal conclusions from their interactions with, and the impositions from the state. Kept promises, positive interactions and feared sanctions are internalised as signals from the state that it is complying with its obligations. Such indications have the potential to increase an ex-combatant's level of commitment. Neglected promises, negative interactions and an absent state may create the opposite effect.

Commitment-increasing elements generally have a positive impact on the ex-combatant's relationship to state institutions, and create a stronger bond to their tacit pact. Commitment-decreasing elements have the contrary impact. Ex-combatants with initial low levels of commitment may become more committed to the pact when and if they have positive experiences with the state. The same may occur in the opposite direction after frustrating experiences. However, mobility between the different levels may be limited by selective perception[217]. Ex-combatants with a low commitment tend to selectively perceive trust-decreasing elements more strongly. Highly committed demobilised persons are particularly

[216] We could argue that there is a further type – those who are not committed to the pact at all, those who did not demobilise. The lack of trust in state institutions, the unwillingness to end the possibly attractive combatant life or wanting to gain distance from any conflict-related issue – including demobilisation – may have led them to this decision. This type lies beyond the scope of the present study since I did not interview former members of the AUC who did not participate in demobilisation.

[217] Selective perception is a form of cognitive bias related to the manner in which expectations may affect perceptions.

benevolent toward the state since they were happy with demobilisation, and every additional benefit may be seen as a bonus.

The primary obstacle for the aforementioned pact is the general lack of confidence in state institutions, at least in the early stages after demobilisation. *'So they came and put us on a bus and we left. There, everything came to an end. So you were thinking like, oh man, what is the state going to do against you?'* (Medellín)[218]. Frequently expressed existential fear before demobilisation shows that the level of confidence at this time was at rock bottom. *'When they told us that we were going to demobilise, we thought that the same would happen to us as to the M-19*[219] *and they would shoot us'* (Tierralta)[220]. Some demobilised persons have experienced killings of family members by the authorities, been involved in combat against military or police units, or know about corrupt practices. All of these elements undermine their relationship to the state and may result in a lower commitment to the pact.

[218] *'Entonces llegaron y nos montaron a un bus y vamos para allá. Y allí se acabó todo. Entonces uno era como pensando: "uy, después a uno el estado ¿qué va a hacer contra uno?"'*
[219] The M-19 was a guerrilla group that demobilised in the early 1990s (see Describing the Colombian Context).
[220] *'Cuando nos dijeron que nos íbamos a desmovilizar, pensamos que nos iba a pasar lo mismo como al M-19 y nos ajustician.'*

8.3. Levels of commitment

Low commitment

A considerable number of ex-combatants do not feel particularly committed to the pact with the state. They would probably say that 'it is all up to the state', that they have complied with their part by demobilising, often even against their will.[221] In their view, the state has to comply with the range of promises made before demobilisation: *'There is an obligation. If, when I was in the armed group, they had told me, "OK, there is a demobilisation, and they want that we surrender. There are no benefits, nothing. We just go, you will be free, and maybe, a salary some day." Believe me, more than one would not have done it'* (Bogotá)[222]. From this perspective, demobilisation implies a commitment from the state but not from the demobilised person. Some ex-combatants claimed that they have made a step towards peace, that they were heroes because they sacrificed their lives for the fatherland, or that they are victims of the conflict – this last case is especially true for resentful ex-combatants (see Emotional Legacies of War). Hence, they arguably deserve a strong commitment or payback from the state.

Some of the ex-combatants who belong to this category were unhappy with demobilisation. *'I did not agree with the peace process. But, you simply follow the instructions because you learned to obey'* (Barrancabermeja)[223]. They participated in demobilisation because of an order and against their will. This type of ex-combatant usually does not feel very committed to a pact that he or she did not seek.[224] Some even considered not participating in demobilisation at all. *'I did not believe in demobilisation. How shall I say? At the beginning, I was thinking about it, and I felt like going back again. [...] The 13 years [with the paramilitaries] were great'* (Medellín)[225].

Generally speaking, there are two reasons for having a low level of commitment to the pact – a large amount of distrust in state institutions and nostalgia. Nostalgic ex-combatants simply prefer their earlier life as combatants and did not want to put an end to it (see Emotional Legacies of War). Nostalgic ex-combatants are often associated with unwilling participation

[221] According to Arjona and Kalyvas (2006), 8 per cent of the collectively demobilised persons did not agree with demobilisation. However, most complained about unfulfilled promises at an early stage of reintegration.
[222] *'Hay un compromiso. Si yo, cuando estaba en el monte, nos dijeron: "bueno, hay una desmovilizacion y quieren que nos entreguemos. No hay beneficios, no hay nada, vamos solamente, ustedes quedan con libertad y ya, de pronto un sueldo ahí." Creame que más de uno no lo hace.'*
[223] *'Yo no estuve de acuerdo con el proceso de paz. Pero uno simplemente se acoge a las directrices porque uno aprendió a obedecer.'*
[224] According to Ribetti (2009), ex-combatants who demobilised against their will are more prone to recidivism.
[225] *'Yo no creía en la desmovilización. Como te digo, al principio me ponía a pensar eso y tenía ganas de ir otra vez. [...] Los 13 años [en las AUC] fueron una bacanería.'*

in demobilisation and low commitment to the pact since they do not want to close the door definitively on an armed way of life.

Intermediate commitment

Most of the interviewees see demobilisation as a pact that implies an obligation on both sides – the state and ex-combatant. They feel committed to the pact as long as the state shows its commitment as well. *'I think we deserve it, those of us who follow the right path and comply with what they ask, we deserve it. Housing, having a dignified job, enough salary, and being with our family. With this, I would say to the ACR and to the government: "I don't want anything more from you. Good bye. And be assured that I won't ever take up arms again"'* (Barrancabermeja)[226]. This intermediate type of a demobilised person would say, 'it is up to both of us'.

However, there is a wide spectrum of varying views within this intermediate type. Some ask for a state that complies with everything promised before and during demobilisation. Others are happy with minimal benefits. Some require that they comply with everything the state prescribes, whereas others assert that staying 'legal' is sufficient. *'For me to consider myself reintegrated or reintegrated into civil life, I think that I have to comply with the agreement that was made: not going back to criminal life, not having problems any more, and this is what I have been doing for four years'* (Bogotá)[227].

The majority of ex-combatants belong to this intermediate type. They are conscious of their obligations, but at the same time ask that the state comply with its part. Mostly, these are ex-combatants that are located somewhere between the extreme of nostalgia and fatigue. Ex-combatants with low levels of commitment may arrive at this intermediate level after having positive experiences with the state and civil life.

High commitment

A third, smaller group of interviewees is thankful for the opportunity to demobilise. After the state 'liberated' them from the paramilitaries, they might say, 'it is all up to me.' They see demobilisation as a welcome opportunity offered by the state, and comply unconditionally

[226] *'Yo creo que nosotros nos lo merecemos, los que de pronto sigamos por el camino que es, cumplimos todo lo que nos piden. Yo creo que nos lo merecemos. Vivienda digna, tener un empleo digno, un salario digno, estar bien con mi familia. Con eso yo digo a la Alta Consejería y al Gobierno, "no quiero más nada de ustedes. ¡Chao! Y ténganlo por seguro que yo de la guerra no vuelvo a participar más."'*

[227] *'Pues para yo considerarme reintregado, o sea reintregado a la vida civil, pues yo considero que yo debo cumplir con los compromisos que se hizo: no volver a delinquir, no volver a tener problemas y eso hace cuatro años lo estoy cumpliendo.'*

with whatever the state dictates. *'I am in the programme and I comply with what they command'* (Barrancabermeja)[228].

Typically, the persons that feel highly committed to the pact are fatigued ex-combatants (see Emotional Legacies of War) who desired nothing more than to return home to their families (see Disrupted Family Life). *'I mean, I was really yearning to get out of there. And when the day came to demobilise, it took so long, it was an intense moment for me joining my family again. I couldn't wait to hug them'* (Tierralta)[229].

Sometimes, they even feared staying with the AUC a moment longer since they could have been killed in combat or for minor infractions against the group's internal rules. *'Demobilising was the best thing to happen to us because in reality, we would never go back there, because there, if you arrive late to an appointment, they shoot you'* (Bogotá)[230].

High commitment is often associated with war fatigue and gratitude[231] towards the state. However, disappointing experiences in the course of reintegration may undermine the feeling of gratitude and decrease the level of commitment to the pact.

[228] *'Estoy en el programa y acato lo que mandan.'*
[229] *'Yo, mejor dicho, no veía la hora ni el momento de salir de allá. Y cuando venía ya el día que ya era la entrega de todo, se veía tan largo, como tan intenso, para venir acá con mi familia y tenía tantas ganas de abrazarlos.'*
[230] *'Lo más bonito que nos pasó fue habernos desmovilizado, porque prácticamente allá, no volveríamos, porque allá si uno no llegaba a la hora, lo ajusticiaban.'*
[231] Grateful persons generally feel compelled to return a potential favour (see Alex Wood, Joseph, and Linley 2007) or in this case, to comply with everything the state dictates, as the demobilisation is seen as a favour.

8.4. Commitment-increasing elements

Kept promises

Ex-combatants generally have expectations of what the state should supply them with (see also Economic Difficulties). These expectations are the result of promises made by their commanders or state authorities before and during demobilisation. Expectations are reflected in what demobilised persons believe they deserve based on their level of commitment.

Many ex-combatants are convinced that the state has complied with what it has promised. *'What else do you ask for in life? They have treated us very well and everything. After demobilizing, everything has been good for me'* (Bogotá)[232]. When they talk about kept promises, they refer to the benefits received from the ACR – humanitarian aid, education, vocational training, access to the health system etc. What they receive from the ACR increases not only their commitment to the pact, but also their general trust in state institutions. *'It's coming up on three years now, you have to admit that if they'd wanted to put you in prison, they would have done it long ago. And why would they have paid all of these courses and studies? They wouldn't have invested money in that. But at first, we were kind of distrustful'* (Tierralta)[233].

As seen earlier, demobilised persons are often deeply distrustful of state institutions since they have witnessed corruption and may have fought against military or police. Kept promises are a positive experience that builds trust and increases commitment to the pact.

Positive interactions

Positive interactions with state representatives or institutions are a second element that improves the relationship between ex-combatants and the state. These interactions increase the level of commitment to the pact.

Frequently, ex-combatants refer to the positive relationship they have with their 'psychologists' – the psychosocial personnel of the ACR. These are the persons that have the closest contact to demobilised people since they follow them through the programme. *'Here, if you do not attend a meeting, they call you and ask why. These are the things that motivate you to stick to the programme, independently of what else has happened'*

[232] *'¿Qué más le pide uno a la vida? Se han portado muy bien y todo eso. Después de que me desmovilicé, todo para mí ha sido bueno.'*
[233] *'Ya uno con el tiempo, ya voy para tres años de desmovilizado, entonces uno se da cuenta que si lo querían a uno para meterlo a una cárcel, hace rato lo hubieran hecho y ¿para qué le hubieran pagado los cursos y estudios? No hubieran invertido plata en eso, pero uno primero venía como con esa desconfianza.'*

(Barrancabermeja)[234]. The caring attitude of some psychosocial tutors is appreciated by some of the former combatants. Although criticised by some, many ex-combatants like to participate in psychosocial workshops. *'I participate a lot, they have taught me about many topics, about values. I had lost all of that, even the respect for the older people. I was very resentful toward elderly persons'* (Bogotá)[235]. Many ex-combatants recognise that they are in need of learning simple behavioural skills. When the difficult transition to family and community life is alleviated with the help of psychologists, they are thankful for the support and feel empowered by their own achievement (see Disrupted Family Life). *'If you talk to my psychologist, my change has been totally different [sic]. For me, the programme was great, it helped me a lot, both in my family life and outside of my family circle'* (Medellín)[236]. These positive interactions with the ACR personnel create an emotional bond to the pact.

Pride is another positive feeling that is sometimes attached to the interaction with the programme. *'If I compare myself to when I arrived, in my resumé there was just my name. Now, the resumé hasn't enough space for the many courses I've attended. I made a crazy progress. Now, I ask myself which course to put on the curriculum. It's great, man!'* (Medellín)[237]. If the opportunities that the state offers become a source of pride, the demobilised persons may feel gratitude. Gratitude raises the level of commitment to the pact since grateful people feel compelled to give something back to those who helped them.

It is not only the direct contact to low-level civil servants and the ACR programme that may have a positive impact on ex-combatants. Supportive declarations from high-ranking politicians can have a similar effect. Various demobilised persons highlighted the positive attitude that the former mayor of Medellín Sergio Fajardo holds toward ex-combatants. *'He accompanied us, he helped us. He even went to the school and talked to us: "I am going to help you, accompany you as much as I can, let's make Medellín ...", because he's always like he loves Medellín a lot. He was always very attentive'* (Medellín)[238]. Speaking in military terms, the mayor's 'backslapping' seems to fulfil the function of elevating the 'troop moral'. In the other interview locations, there were no specific references to mayors and governors.

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[234] *'Aquí cuando uno de pronto no asiste a las reuniones, lo llaman y preguntan por qué. Esas son cosas que lo motivan a uno a que uno siga en el programa, independiente de que hayan pasado muchas cosas.'*

[235] *'Yo participo mucho, me han enseñado muchos temas, sobre los valores. Yo todo eso lo había perdido, hasta el respeto a los mayores. Yo era una persona muy rencorosa hacia los mayores.'*

[236] *'Si tú hablas con el psicólogo mío, el cambio mío ha sido totalmente diferente. Para mí, el programa ha sido la putería, me ha servido tanto familiarmente como fuera de mi núcleo familiar.'*

[237] *'Si yo me pongo a comparar cuando yo llegué, en mi hoja de vida solo tenía el nombre, ahorita la hoja de vida no tiene espacio por tanto cursito que tengo. Se ha visto un progreso a la berraca. Ahora me pregunto: ¿cual curso pongo? Entonces es una bacanería, hermano.'*

[238] *'Nos ha acompañado, nos colaboró mucho. El señor iba hasta [nombre del colegio] y hablaba con nosotros: "yo les voy a ayudar, a acompañar lo más que puedo, vamos a que Medellín ...", porque el señor siempre como que quiere mucho a Medellín. El señor siempre estuvo muy pendiente.'*

At the national level, the counterinsurgency policy of Álvaro Uribe's government has had a positive effect on those ex-combatants who joined the fight for ideological or 'counterinsurgent' reasons. They identify themselves with his hard-handed policy. *'I think Uribe is wonderful, I'd vote for Uribe again. He goes and tells the armed groups to either surrender and receive benefits or otherwise pay the price. [The demobilisation wouldn't have worked without Uribe] because he could relate to the commanders, he has the same ideology, he's against the FARC'* (Medellín)[239]. Some demobilised individuals are even afraid that the reintegration benefits will terminate after Álvaro Uribe's term ends. Their approval of his government elevates their level of commitment to the pact. In their view, the paramilitaries are no longer needed due to the progress of the state's fight against the guerrillas.

Positive contact with other state institutions may have a similar impact on the level of commitment to the pact. *'Sometimes, I come home at 11 o'clock at night after watching a game at a friend's place. This fear that I had when I thought they [the police] would kill me has gone. Now, any problem, I communicate it to them and I know that they will listen to me'* (Tierralta)[240]. This ex-combatant first believed the police might kill him. Now, he has an amicable relationship with police officers. This enhanced trusting relationship toward members on the other side of the pact elevates his level of commitment.

Feared sanctions

There is also a negative incentive that keeps ex-combatants committed to the pact – feared sanctions for illegal activities. Various interviewees had spent time in prison before demobilisation. This experience deters them from leaving the path of reintegration. *'I was in prison for a long time, five and a half years and another time 18 months. This is not the best thing. So if you want the best for you, you have to try to do good things, fight and get along. This is not the path to follow, they catch you and kill you'* (Medellín)[241].

Feared sanctions are also an incentive for many ex-combatants not to reengage in illegal activities because the authorities are seen as more effective today. *'Medellín isn't like it was before, when being a criminal was easy. Nowadays, the police are very effective, there's a lot of security. So the ones that are criminally active, either get killed or end up in [the prison of]*

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[239] *'A mí me encanta Uribe, yo votaría por Uribe otra vez. Va y dice a los grupos violentos: "entréguese y tiene beneficios, pero si no, paga." Sin Uribe no hubiera funcionado la desmovilización, porque como que le simpatizaba a los comandantes, tiene la misma ideología, está en contra de las FARC.'*

[240] *'A veces me voy a la casa a las 11 de la noche después de ver un partido en la casa de un amigo. Ya no es este miedo como entonces cuando pensaba que me iban a matar [la policía]. Ahora cualquier problema, lo comunico y sé que me van a oir.'*

[241] *'Yo pagué mucha cárcel, cinco años y medio y una condena de 18 meses y eso no es lo mejor. Entonces si uno quiere lo mejor, trata de hacer las cosas bien, luchar y seguir adelante. Este no es el camino, te cogen robando y te matan.'*

Bellavista.' (Medellín)[242]. In the face of hard sanctions, ex-combatants see themselves as forced to commit to the pact with the state, or at a minimum, not to reengage in illegal activities.

They are conscious of the fact that their earlier illegal activities had no juridical consequences after demobilisation and they have been given a second chance. [243] Risking to lose these juridical benefits by reengaging in illegal activities, is for some unthinkable. *'Many have been proved to be responsible for two or three deaths. And they give you a reduction for the demobilisation, maybe you have to stay a little while in prison, pay money or something. But after that, you're clean. Yet this information remains in the system. In the case that you fall back, everything appears again. So, they make you pay for this, and they make you pay the double because you did it again'* (Barrancabermeja)[244].

The more the authorities are perceived as effective, the more committed are the ex-combatants. Through the interviews, I did not identify a specific type of ex-combatant who fears sanctions more than others.

[242] *'Medellín ya no es como en el tiempo de nosotros que delinquíamos tan fácil. Ya hoy en día, la policía es muy efectiva, hay mucha seguridad. Y entonces, uno que sale a delinquir, o lo matan o termina en [la cárcel de] Bellavista.'*

[243] This is not the case for at least one interviewe who was allegedly involved in the killing and torture of three persons as a mid-ranked soldier. He was arrested approximately one year after the interview.

[244] *'A varios les comprobaban dos o tres muertes. Y eso se lo rebajan por la desmovilización, de pronto paga un cierto tiempo de cárcel o de plata o lo que sea y ya queda limpio. Pero eso queda ahí en el sistema. En el caso en que usted vuelva a llegar a caer, ahí le aparece todo. Entonces le cobran eso y le cobran el doble por volverlo a hacer.'*

8.5. Commitment-decreasing elements

Neglected promises

The memory of ex-combatants is long for promises made to them by former commanders and state officials before and during demobilisation. In an earlier chapter (see Economic Difficulties), I refer to neglected promises with respect to economic benefits and in particular housing aid, productive projects and employment help. These are the most neglected promises remembered by interviewees. *'The opportunities they promised were: Job. I don't have a job. Education. I haven't received any education. Housing. I don't receive housing aid. What's the benefit then?'* (Bogotá)[245]. Neglected promises create a negative view of the state. This demobilised individual is frustrated by the lack of employment help: *'The state has practically forgotten about us. None of the demobilised persons here in Tierralta or in Montería has a formal job, not that I have heard about it'* (Tierralta)[246]. Other topics not directly related to economic benefits such as education or security, may have a similar impact. The demobilised persons feel betrayed as they expected the state to provide security (see Security Threats) and tailor-made education. As opposed to kept promises, neglected promises decrease commitment to the pact.

Negative interactions

Just as there are positive interactions that potentially augment the level of commitment to the pact, negative interactions with state institutions and representatives are common as well. Negative interactions with the ACR, the police and high-ranking politicians were a recurring topic in the interviews.

Few demobilised individuals complained about the personal treatment received by the ACR. Officials, however, are sometimes perceived as too strict. They supposedly apply ACR rules without taking into account the situation of the ex-combatants. *'They are interested in your studies, your work life, but your conflicts, if you have enough money, how you live, you understand? They don't know anything about this. If you don't attend the meetings, you won't get paid'* (Barrancabermeja)[247]. Other demobilised individuals do not feel taken seriously in the psychosocial workshops, which touch 'ridiculous' topics. *'How can this psychologist help me? Those people talking about God, but their heart is far from him. They can't help me. I*

[245] *'Las puertas [abiertas] que me dijeron eran: Trabajo, no tengo. Educación, no tengo. Vivienda, no tengo. ¿Cuál es el beneficio adquirido?'*
[246] *'El estado nos tiene prácticamente olvidados. Ningún desmovilizado aquí en Tierralta o en Montería trabaja en un puesto fijo, no lo he oido.'*
[247] *'Lo que les interesa es si uno estudia, trabaja, pero los conflictos que uno tiene, si le alcanza el dinero, como vive, ¿entiende? De eso no saben nada. Si uno no asiste a reuniones no le pagan.'*

don't say that the psychologists are bad, but we deal with some topics – that Ronaldinho is the best football player. Who cares?' (Bogotá)[248]. When they feel 'taken for a ride' or belittled, they become less committed to the programme and also to the pact. *'I don't want to be a manual worker as they want to see everybody here in the programme. We have talent, there are people with talent. I like physics, chemistry, I am fascinated by it. Who says that I won't discover a chemical element within 30 years? The talent is lost. The programme is made by poor people for poor people'* (Bogotá)[249]. For this demobilised individual, the state does not want to contribute to his development. Why should he be committed to a pact with a counterpart that underestimates his capabilities?

Even the slightest perception of injustice within the ACR system undermines the ex-combatants' commitment to the pact. Various demobilised persons from Bogotá complained that individual ex-combatants (mostly former guerrilla members) receive more money for their productive projects than they do.[250] *'There is an immense difference, sir, because the individuals [individually demobilised combatants] can hand in a project alone and receive eight million pesos [4000 dollars], whereas the collectives only receive two [1000 dollars], and they tell you that you need to associate with four or five persons'* (Bogotá)[251]. In the other interview locations, none of the demobilised persons made reference to this topic. This is most certainly due to a lower number of individually demobilised people in Medellín, Tierralta, and Barrancabermeja. In Bogotá, the majority of the demobilised community is made up of individually demobilised combatants (see Annex I).

Abusive police officers create a further element of negative interaction between ex-combatants and the state (see also Security Threats). Demobilised persons in all four locations describe abuses of power. Prejudice of police officers toward ex-combatants undermines the development of an already strained trusting relationship. *'Once, even a police officer told me, '"you paramilitaries killed my cousin", and I replied: "Brother, it wasn't me, that was someone else somewhere else, because it wasn't me". "You're nothing more than*

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[248] *'¿Qué me va a solucionar a mí esa psicóloga? Gente de esa hablan de Dios, pero lejos su corazón está de él. No pueden ayudarme a mí. Yo no digo que las psicólogas sean malas, pero tratamos unos temas – "que Ronaldinho es el mejor futbolista". ¿Qué me importa?'*

[249] *'Yo no necesito ser obrero como quieren ver a todos aquí en este programa. Nosotros tenemos talento, hay gente que tiene talento. A mí me gusta la física, la química, me encanta. ¿Quién me dice a mí que dentro de 30 años no descubra un elemento químico? Se pierde el talento. El programa es de pobres para gente pobre.'*

[250] Collectively demobilised people receive two million pesos (about 1000 dollars) for their productive project while individually demobilised people get 8 million pesos (4000 dollars) (Méndez and Rivas 2008). The difference is due to the assumption that collectively demobilised people may find it easy to associate with companions while individually demobilised people often do not have the necessary contacts (see Describing the Colombian Context).

[251] *'Hay una diferencia inmensa, doctor, porque los individuales, solos, pueden meter el proyecto y les dan ocho millones. Mientras que al colectivo le dan dos y le dice que tiene que asociarse con cuatro, cinco personas.'*

murderers", and so on and so on' (Bogotá)[252]. Prejudice is not only related to the earlier activities of demobilised people. Apparently, police officers allude to the participation of demobilised people in illegal activities today. *'Whenever they [the police] stop us, it's: 'are you demobilised people?, what are you doing?'. Once we had a problem with a personal search, 'motorbike documents! You're collecting protection money, you're blackmailing people'. And I said, 'wait a minute, do you have any evidence to be accusing me like this? I'm not refusing to be searched or anything, but you don't have to treat me like this''* (Medellín)[253]. Direct physical violence against ex-combatants was reported by two interviewees. However, it is unclear if this violence was related to their status as demobilised persons.

Perceived unsupportive messages from high-ranking political personalities within state institutions also have a negative impact on the commitment to the pact. The High Counselour for Reintegration, Frank Pearl, is amongst the people who are criticised for their distance and unsupportive messages on various occasions. *'[Frank Pearl] said that we, the demobilised people, did not deserve a house. [...] He keeps defending the internally displaced people. He should be the one responsible, the director of the displaced people then'* (Bogotá)[254]. Also, as opposed to Sergio Fajardo who with some gestures created proximity and confidence among the demobilised community, the ex-combatants from Medellín feel distant to his successor, Alonso Salazar.

The perceived distance from important personalities representing state institutions results in a feeling of exclusion from political decision-making and ultimately, lowers the commitment to the pact. Ex-combatants frequently feel excluded from the development of the reintegration policy, which makes them feel like outsiders and second-class citizens. This feeling is stronger amongst former mid-ranking combatants or ex-combatants who consider themselves as heroes, or people who fought for ideals: *'This country doesn't deserve ... I mean, this is what you talk about with the other [demobilised] folks. They say: 'But what am I*

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[252] *'Una vez me dijo hasta un policía: "es que ustedes los paracos me mataron a mi primo". Y yo: "pues hermano, yo no fui, eso fue otro, por allá en otro lado porque yo no fui". "¡Ah! Que ustedes son unos asesinos" y no sé que más me decía ese señor.'*

[253] *'Cada vez que nos cogen [la policía], nos dicen: "¿ustedes son desmovilizados?, ¿qué hacen?". Entonces tuvimos el problema de una requisa, "¡papeles de la moto!, ustedes cobran vacuna, ustedes extorsionan a la gente". Entonces dije: "un momentico, ¿tiene pruebas para decirnos esto? Yo no me estoy negando a una requisa ni a nada, pero tampoco me trate mal."'*

[254] *'[Frank Pearl] dijo que es que nosotros, los reinsertados, los desmovilizados, no merecíamos casa. [...] Él mantiene defendiendo a los desplazados, debería irse entonces a ser el encargado, el director de los desplazados.'* It is possible that this ex-combatant refers to the following view expressed by Frank Pearl (Semana.com 2008): 'Considering that in Colombia, there are internally displaced people and victims who don't have a roof over their heads, and poor people who have never had a chance to own a property, it would be tremendously unfair to give the ex-combatants this possibility.' (Translated from Spanish by the author.)

going to do? I gave everything for my country and what does the country give in return? Have they even bothered to sit down and speak with us?'' (Barrancabermeja)[255].

Absent state

Some demobilised people perceive the state as widely absent, especially in relation to the field of security (see Security Threats). This opinion decreases their commitment to the pact since they do not have to fear immediate sanctions for illegal activities, nor can they count on state institutions in insecure situations. In fact, some ex-combatants see reengagement in illegal armed groups or relocation as a more effective security strategy in an emergency situation than soliciting help from the state. The private vigilante activities that many ex-combatants in Medellín are involved with, is a sign of state absence (see Emotional Legacies of War). These ex-combatants prefer organizing security in their own neighbourhoods than waiting for the state to do it.

A persistently absent state – as perceived by demobilised people – lowers the level of commitment to the pact. They must look for their own protection and do not fear the possibility of sanctions.

[255] *'Este país no merece ... Eso es lo que uno habla con las personas [los otros desmovilizados]. Dicen: "¿pero yo qué hago? Dí todo por el país y el país ¿qué? ¿El país se ha preocupado en sentarse con nosotros a hablar?"'*

8.6. Policy implications

The previous analysis identifies some implications for the design of reintegration policy. The interviews indicate that the emotional legacies of war are related to the level of commitment to the pact. Nostalgic former soldiers usually have a low level of commitment, while fatigued ex-combatants are highly committed. If a nostalgic, low-committed ex-combatant senses that the state violates the pact, he does not feel obligated to the pact anymore and is therefore prone to reengagement in illegal activities. A specific focus on low-committed and therefore 'high-risk' ex-combatants may make reintegration efforts more efficient. This type of ex-combatant has to be convinced that the state is a trustworthy partner or at least effectively pursues those who do not comply.

Since more security on a general level, and non-reengagement into illegal activities on an individual level are among the foremost goals of a reintegration programme (see Introducing DDR), less attention may be paid to the highly committed 'low-risk' demobilised persons if budget restrictions require it. However level of commitment to the pact is not the only element that determines reengagement. It has to be appraised with an overall view together with other topics that may influence the proclivity for recidivism, such as emotional legacies of war, security threats, economic difficulties or social isolation.

Each abuse or miscommunication by state agencies and representatives has a negative impact on the ex-combatant's level of commitment to the pact. Hence, the reintegration process cannot be 'outsourced' to the reintegration programme alone. On the contrary, there should be a generalised consciousness and support for the reintegration efforts throughout all involved institutions. As seen in the interviews, the police are an especially dominant player in the perception of ex-combatants. Every negative interaction with this institution and its members may undermine commitment to the pact. Coordination with reintegration efforts and the instruction of police officers in this area are therefore of utmost importance.

Simple gestures from high-ranking politicians or approval from the current government surely facilitate the process of trust building. Former president Álvaro Uribe and Medellín's former mayor Sergio Fajardo are good examples. In different DDR contexts, other politicians may play the same role. However, executive politicians have to bear in mind the interests of all stakeholders to a DDR process, otherwise they may face criticism from victim communities for their perceived exaggerated support of reintegration efforts.

Communicating promises has to be managed very cautiously (see Economic Difficulties). Interviewed demobilised persons have not forgotten what they were promised. In spite of the need to make demobilisation attractive to active combatants, promises must be made

responsibly before and during demobilisation in order to avoid long-term negative repercussions. Optimally, the reintegration programme will outperform the expectations of ex-combatants. A surplus of assistance (material or otherwise) results in a feeling of gratitude, and usually corresponds to high commitment levels.

Few ex-combatants refer to political participation or inclusion in the design of reintegration policies. However, some – especially former mid-ranking combatants – would appreciate being included in the development of policy design. In other cases where DDR is taking place, representatives of former armed groups are members of the reintegration programme's committee (United Nations 2006a, chapter 3.30, 4.2). Knowing that they are at least indirectly represented by some fellow ex-combatants would likely enhance their commitment to the pact.

In general terms, the reintegration programme opens a window of opportunity for the creation of confidence in state institutions. It reaches people who have been neglected by the state in the past and makes a new start possible. In this sense, a reintegration policy can be seen as a 'state building' activity (see Rocha Menocal 2009). The reintegration programme may create state legitimacy among a group of people who have questioned the core element of the state – the monopoly of force – by their very act of taking up arms.

'In any case, you end up with this label,
in the face of justice, the people and the neighbourhood.
"Oh, look, this is the bad guy. He's going to hurt me, hurt my family."'[256]
Demobilised person from Medelllín, February 2009

9. Dealing with Stigma within the Community

The interviews for the present study indicate that the community level – that is, the immediate social surroundings – is an important reference point for former paramilitaries. When specifically asked about what is necessary for reintegration into civil life, ex-combatants frequently declare that one crucial element is a good relationship to the local community.

Many ex-paramilitaries, however, complain about being socially rejected by their community. They claim that the other civilians look upon them with feelings of fear or resentment and that they consequently feel 'stigmatised' – a term often used by the interviewees. In this chapter, I focus on stigma as the defining element of social acceptance at the community level, from the perspective of ex-combatants.

[256] *'En todo caso, queda usted con este cartel de estar señalado ante la justicia, ante la gente, ante el barrio. '¡Ah! mire, este es malo, me hace daño a mí, a mi familia.''*

9.1. Related literature

The current mainstream position in the DDR literature is that the community needs to be integrated into DDR efforts. Here is a short review of what the existing literature says about the community dimension of DDR.

The Integrated DDR Standards (United Nations 2006a, chapter 1.10, 2) make reference to the community in its definition of reintegration, an activity that is 'primarily taking place in communities at the local level'. The main dilemma in this context is the possible differing interests between former combatants and the receiving community. As long as DDR strategies tend to exclusively target ex-combatants, receiving communities may reject former combatants. Often, community members are fearful of ex-combatants because of their potential to be dangerous. They may also feel resentful because of past abuses, or envious for the benefits they receive (see Introducing DDR). Community members may perceive DDR benefits as a reward for perpetration of violence, and feel excluded from state assistance (Borzello 2007; Hagmann and Nielsen 2002; Kingma and Muggah 2009; Nilsson 2005). Past abuses intensify the divide between community members and ex-combatants. Humphreys and Weinstein (2007, 533) claim that in the case of Sierra Leone, 'past participation in an abusive military faction is the strongest predictor of difficulty in achieving social reintegration'.

Due to the complicated relationship between receiving communities and arriving ex-combatants, aligning measures to enhance the economic reintegration of former combatants and reconciliation with the community is challenging. The IDDRS (United Nations 2006a) propose a 'community-based' reintegration strategy that includes the wider community ex-combatants live in. Community-centred or area-based approaches have been applied for example in Haiti, Mozambique, Philippines, the Republic of Congo, Sudan (Muggah 2009) or Aceh (Beek 2007). Annan and Cutter (2009) call for community sensitisation, justice and reconciliation processes, psychological support, and general involvement in community activities as basic components of social reintegration. As a complementary policy within the realm of peacebuilding, measures of transitional justice (Sriram and Herman 2009) have the potential to increase the legitimacy of the process for victims and communities (Sriram and Herman 2009; Stockholm Initiative 2006; United Nations 2006a). The elements mentioned here aim to confront the dilemmas outlined above by 're-knitting the social fabric of divided societies' (Annan and Cutter 2009, 2).

Empirical studies generally use the acceptance level of ex-combatants within a community as an indicator of social reintegration. For example, Pugel (2006) finds that for the case of Liberia, ex-combatants who completed the DDR programme perceive community acceptance

at a higher level than non-participants. Also, these ex-combatants perceive themselves as much more accepted (94 per cent) than the wider demobilised population to which they belong (66 per cent). In Angola, 90 per cent say they were well received by the community (Gomes Porto, Parsons, and Alden 2007). However, the authors of this study warn that DDR programmes might reinforce the sense of difference experienced by ex-combatants, as well as the cleavages which separate them from the receiving communities (see also Bøås and Hatløy 2008; Jennings 2007). As a result, the demobilised persons' network of friends is often limited to other ex-combatants. Since integration into the economy depends largely on access to informal networks (see Economic Difficulties), this constitutes a major handicap for former Angolan fighters.

The strategies used to overcome a lack of acceptance, often expressed as prejudice or stigma is rarely explicitly addressed in existing literature. One exception is the study of Annan et al. (2009, 650) who describe the salient issues for abducted former combatants in Uganda: 'When youth experienced problems with neighbours or other community members, most described reacting passively – staying silent or walking away.' According to Annan et al., returnees are aware that communities fear them because they were rebels. Anonymity is another strategy mentioned in the literature. High numbers of ex-combatants in large cities are an indicator of the search for anonymity. Caramés et al. (2006) have found that for the case of Sierra Leone, ex-combatants often move to the anonymous capital Freetown in order to escape stigmatisation. In Sierra Leone, public wrongdoing is often attributed to ex-combatants. Similar perceptions are common in neighbouring Liberia (Jennings 2007). Low levels of acceptance may augment the ex-combatants willingness to reengage in violence. This has been evidenced by Hill et al. (2008) in the case of Liberia. Consequently, they call for improving the 'soft side', that is, the social dimension of DDR programmes to prevent recidivism.

In various African societies, traditional cleansing rituals have been used to reconcile former combatants with receiving communities, as in the case of Mozambique (Granjo 2007; Schafer 2007) or in Sierra Leone (Stovel 2008; see also Honwana 2007). Cleansing rituals expurgate the individual veteran from being in danger and being considered dangerous to the community. As a result of these rituals, the homecomers are seen as 'people as the others' (Granjo 2007, 382), hence freed from any stigma.

For women, there may be 'added stigma' (Annan and Cutter 2009, 13; see also de Watteville 2002). Coulter (2006, 6) found that some former female fighters in Sierra Leone did not register for disarmament because they feared stigmatisation: 'I was thinking that when

we disarm, then later, they will say, “these were the rebels”, and then they’ll kill us. So I was afraid to disarm.’

For the Colombian context, the perception that reintegration benefits are a reward for perpetrators is common, causing distrust and resentment within receiving communities (Conpes 3554 2008). The divide between ex-combatants and community is further aggravated by the fact that there are no guarantees for non-reoccurence of violence due to the ongoing conflict (Gómez Isa 2008). As a result, demobilised persons often feel unjustly stigmatised by society (Denissen 2010; Varela 2007).

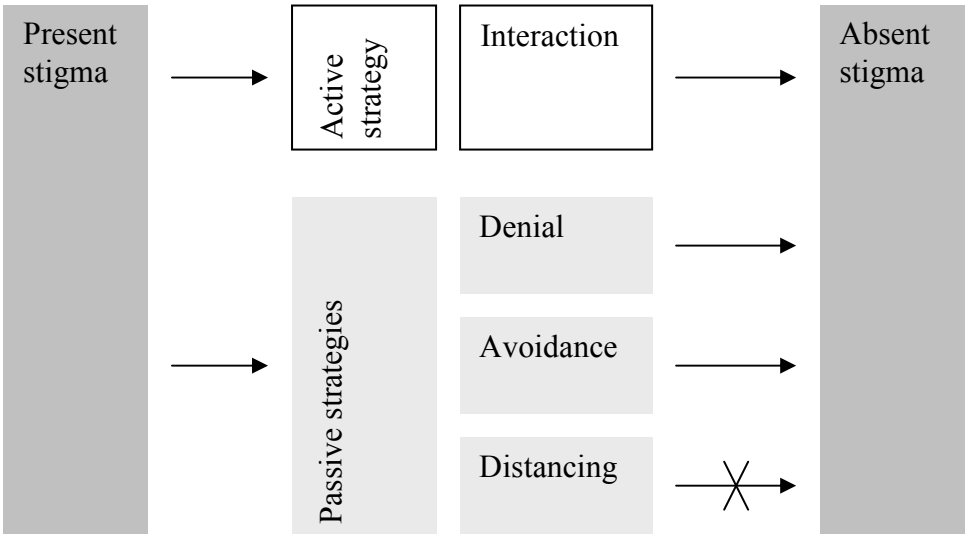
Even the institutions responsible for reintegration programming in Colombia recognised in 2008 that the efforts made with respect to reconciliation and community-based reintegration have been insufficient thus far (Conpes 3554 2008; see also Rivas and Méndez 2008). From an academic perspective, Theidon and Betancourt (2008) highlight the importance of local initiatives for reconciliation and reparation that should accompany DDR. They claim that in the absence of ‘human communities’ receiving former combatants, the way back to fighting will remain open for them. Similarly, Hop (2008) calls for local initiatives to examine reconciliation efforts in Northern Colombia and identifies a lack of attention to local realities within the government.

As a response to these shortcomings, the reintegration programme has extended its focus to community reintegration (see Describing the Colombian Context). The National Council of Economic and Social Policy published a document about a community reintegration support programme (financed by the European Union) that should help with compensating for this deficiency (Conpes 3607 2009). The objective of this programme is to generate and solidify meeting spaces that permit the restoration of confidence, coexistence and reconciliation. Furthermore, the ACR created a unit that promotes community projects. From 2007 to 2009, 68 ‘community interventions’ have been implemented with the goal of augmenting the level of confidence between communities and demobilised people (ACR 2010). The programme of the mayor’s office of Medellín, which started in 2004 after the first demobilisations of urban paramilitaries in the city, has consistently focused on reconciliation activities (Alcaldía de Medellín 2007b).

9.2. Overview

By community, the former paramilitaries usually mean the *people physically surrounding the ex-combatants in their daily life, in their 'barrios' – their neighbourhoods*. While the relationship to the community is a central point of reference in their lives, the stigma they are often exposed to is a central concern. In this chapter, I focus on the characteristics of stigmatisation and the strategies ex-combatants adopt to cope with it, as outlined in Figure 13:

Figure 13: Dealing with stigma within the community



For them, the relationship to the community is *affected by the presence or absence of a particular stigma*. The great majority of the interviewed persons *feel socially devalued by the fact that they belong to the demobilised population*. 'Feeling devalued' is what they understand or perceive as stigma or prejudice. I highlight the community level since the interviews gave a clear impression that ex-combatants are much more concerned about their immediate surroundings than the more abstract macro-level of society.

Although the term stigma is used as it surfaced in the interviews, a short review of related research may be useful (see for example Heatherton et al. 2003). A person who is stigmatised is a 'person whose social identity, or membership in some social category, calls into question his or her full humanity – the person is devalued, spoiled, or flawed in the eyes of others' (Crocker, Major, and Claude Steele 1998; Goffman 1963). Dovidio, Major and Crocker (2003) see at least two fundamental components to the social construction of a stigma: the recognition of difference, and a consequent devaluation of the person. According to Phelan, Link and Dovidio (2008), the related concepts of prejudice and stigma are 'two kinds of the same animal'. They basically have three functions: to keep people down (exploitation and

domination), to keep people in (norm enforcement) and to keep people away (avoidance). However, stigma does not necessarily have a negative effect on the stigmatised person. The effects depend on his or her capacity to cope with them (Miller and Kaiser 2001; Oyserman and Swim 2001). Stigma may even have positive outcomes. Shih (2004) describes individuals who experience an empowering process by overcoming the adversities related to stigmatisation. In what follows, I do not actively use these categories for analysis, but rely on the interview data. However, the coping strategies revealed by ex-combatants may resemble some of the concepts described here.

In the detailed findings section to follow, I first describe the individual perception of stigma prevalent among the interviewed persons (and not the level of acceptance within the receiving communities). Few demobilised persons do not perceive any stigma. This minority is often those ex-combatants who return to their native villages, meet with family and old friends, and literally 're-integrate' into their old neighbourhoods (see Disrupted Family Life). The majority of ex-combatants, however, do feel stigmatised. This is frequently due to resentment, fear or envy within the community. It is important to bear in mind that this analysis is not about whether stigma is justified or not. Although it would be enriching to introduce the other group's perspectives – such as receiving communities or victims – I am focusing here, as in the whole study, uniquely on the perspective of former combatants.

Secondly, the strategies and interactions related to stigma are developed. I focus on the most recurring patterns, and distinguish between interaction, denial, avoidance and distancing. There may be overlap and mixed approaches between the different strategies. Interaction is the only proactive strategy. To interact is to demonstrate a willingness to reconcile with the rest of the community. The goal of denial is to hide one's demobilised identity and is often applied in an anonymous context. Avoidance responds to a social pressure not to be seen or associated with other, particularly 'bad' demobilised people. This decreases the possibility of being identified with the negative attributes attached to them. Distancing is adopted by ex-combatants who do not feel responsible for either the emergence of stigma, or for finding the solution to problems arising from stigmatisation. Other possible strategies are not elaborated on here either due to their negligible occurence (ignoring), or because they are described within other concepts (relocation as side-effect of denial). The general goal that ex-combatants try to achieve is to reduce stigmatisation. At the same time, coping with stigma is not only an end in itself, but may also serve to overcome difficulties in other areas such as employment (see Economic Difficulties) and physical security (see Security Threats).

The result of utilizing such coping strategies in its extreme form may be to experience empowerment or frustration. Those who, against great odds, achieve acceptance as equals within their community may feel particularly empowered. Frustration and distancing, on the other hand, may be the result of fruitless efforts.

9.3. Perception of stigma

Absent stigma

A minority of demobilised people do not feel exposed to stigma, that is, they feel treated as equal to others in the community. From interviews, three life circumstances can be identified that augment the level of community acceptance: living in the same neighbourhood as before engaging in war activities, living in the same neighbourhood as during the active time combined with having had a good relationship to locals during war, or simply being unknown to other community members.

Demobilised soldiers who came back to their original neighbourhoods after demobilisation, often state that they were well received by the community. *'In my village, many people were happy for me, "hey, it's great that you came back, that you demobilised". I have never had any problems with them'* (Tierralta)[257]. There is a high level of trust between homecomers and neighbours that transcend the fact that they are demobilised people. *'They didn't look at me with this fear or this hesitation because I'm a demobilised person. Maybe they know how my parents raised me'* (Barrancabermeja)[258]. When demobilised persons return to their original communities, most people know about their earlier activities. *'Everybody, everybody knows, because previously, when I was there, they were good friends with my mother. So, my mother told them that I had gone there'* (Tierralta)[259]. A persisting confidence between local community and homecomers may have positive effects in terms of employment (*'My boss has known me since I was a little child. And as she runs her own business, she hired me.'* (Tierralta)[260]) or social inclusion (*'I participate in the communal council in the neighbourhood. I'm a dignitary there. And with the community, excellent!'* (Barrancabermeja)[261]). Homecomers were the predominant type of demobilised interviewees in Tierralta and to a lesser degree in Barrancabermeja (see Annex I). Seventeen of the 19 interviewed persons in Tierralta said that they were originally from Tierralta. They were mostly active as paramilitaries somewhere else in Colombia and came back after demobilisation. Most returned to their families who frequently still live in the same neighbourhood. In contrast, of the ten interviews conducted in Bogotá, none of the ex-combatants returned to the same neighbourhood where they lived before.

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[257] *'En mi pueblo, mucha gente se alegró de mí, "hombre, que bueno que te viniste, que te desmovilizaste", con ellos nunca he tenido problemas.'*

[258] *'No me han visto con ese temor o con ese cuidado, porque es una persona que es desmovilizada, de pronto sabrán como lo criaron los papás a uno.'*

[259] *'Todos, todos saben, porque anteriormente, cuando estaba por allá, eran muy amigos de mi mamá. Entonces mi mamá les comentaba que yo me había ido.'*

[260] *'Mi patrona me conocía desde pequeña y como ella tiene su negocio, pues me contrató.'*

[261] *'Hago parte de la junta de acción comunal del barrio. Soy un dignatario allá y con la comunidad, ¡excelente!'*

For the case of Medellín, seven out of ten interviewees claimed to have been active in the same neighbourhood they live now. This was also the area they grew up in. This corresponds to a characteristic of urban paramilitarism in Medellín (Rozema 2008). Local people often know who the demobilised persons are. Under such circumstances, having been a fair combatant with a good relationship to residents facilitates community acceptance. *'Thank God, in the neighbourhood I live and where I was active, the people can't say that I was a murderer, that I treated the community badly. The community likes me a lot in this neighbourhood. [...] I behaved and I still behave very well with the community'* (Medellín)[262]. Some demobilised people in Barrancabermeja have similar characteristics since this city also relied on the strong presence of urban paramilitaries. *'I still live in the same neighbourhood. If I had been bad, they would have thrown me out already, they would have lynched me, they would have told me "go away, you were bad with us", but no'* (Barrancabermeja)[263].

Another reason for an absence of stigma is that some are not known as demobilised people. I consider this type as a result of a strategy of denial, described below.

Present stigma

The majority of the interviewees feel exposed to stigmatisation. Even those who are living comfortably in their own community may feel stigmatised outside of the close context of friends and family.

In general terms, stigma is perceived by ex-combatants as a result of their past activities in the AUC and the negative image of demobilised people commonly held in society today. *'You end up stigmatised as if you were the scum of the earth, a plague or something. That's the way most people look at you, like you're bad, like demobilised people are bad'* (Tierralta)[264]. They often referred to a latent fear among community members. Other civilians supposedly perceive them as a possible security threat. *'People don't like demobilised persons, nobody wants to get together with them. Why? Because that guy wants to kill me. It makes people step back'* (Bogotá)[265].

Non-beneficiaries of the programme who see themselves as victims of violence may become jealous of the benefits received by ex-combatants, while at the same time, feel

[262] *'Gracias a Dios, en el barrio donde yo vivo, fue donde estuve, la gente no puede decir que yo fui un asesino, que traté mal a la comunidad. A mí me quiere mucho la comunidad en este barrio. [...] Me comportaba y me comporto muy bien con la comunidad.'*

[263] *'Todavía vivo en el mismo barrio, donde hubiera sido mala, ya me hubieran sacado de allá, me hubieran linchado, me hubieran dicho "salga de aquí, usted fue mala con nosotros", pero no.'*

[264] *'Uno queda señalado como si uno fuera lo peor del mundo, una plaga o algo así, como lo ve mucha gente a uno, que uno es malo, que los desmovilizados son malos.'*

[265] *'La gente no quiere a los desmovilizados, nadie quiere juntarse con ellos. ¿Por qué? "Porque ese sujeto me quiere matar." Todo eso hace que la gente se retire.'*

forgotten by the government. However, few demobilised persons attach stigma to envy. This is a rare exception: *'They're jealous of anyone who studies and tries to move forward with their life. Why? Jealous of what? Instead of being happy that a person is doing better in life. "No, this person should be dead by now"'* (Medellín)[266]. From an ex-combatant's perspective, envy seems to be a minor reason for the development of stigma.

Another form of stigmatisation may relate to the fact that the ex-paramilitaries are still held responsible for security issues in the neighbourhood. *'In the beginning, they [community people] looked at you as if you were that person that belonged to the group and that may, if there is any difficulty, any problem, help out'* (Barrancabermeja)[267]. This is common, especially when people have been active in the same neighbourhood they currently live, as is often the case in Medellín and to a lesser extent, in Barrancabermeja. Some demobilised people respond to the request of the local community and continue working as informal vigilantes (see Security Threats), while others want those requests to stop. On one side, there is a connection between nostalgic ex-combatants and those who continue to be involved in security issues. On the other side, ex-combatants who are war fatigued tend to be those who want the 'security-expert-stigma' to stop to have a rupture with their past role (see Emotional Legacies of War).

Stigmas are usually perceived as negative since they have adverse effects on other important areas of life – especially employment (see Economic Difficulties). Ex-combatants complained about the difficult access to employment due to stigma, as well as the possibility to lose a job because of prejudice. *'It's maybe due to anger or vengeance that some people don't give us jobs. "No, this man, where has he been? I'm angry with him"'* (Medellín)[268]. Demobilised people also complained about the negative effects of stigma on their families. Their children may be exposed to problems in school. *'They told my seven year-old girl: "Look, your mother is a demobilised person. So your mother worked with those bad people, your mother is bad". My child came home crying. They nearly threw her out of school'* (Tierralta)[269].

Often, demobilised persons are conscious of belonging to a specific group that is different from other citizens (see Pact with the State). In interviews, they used such phrases as 'we, the

[266] *'Gente que estudia, que sale para adelante y le tienen envidia. ¿Por qué? ¿Producir envidia de qué? En vez de alegrarse que una persona mejoró como ser humano. "No, este man tendría que estar muerto".'*
[267] *'Al principio, pues lo veían a uno como aquella persona que perteneció a un grupo y que de pronto, algún inconveniente, algún problema, me puede ayudar.'*
[268] *'Es como por una rabia o una venganza que mucha gente no le da trabajo a uno. "No, es que este man, ¿a donde fue?, yo le tengo rabia."'*
[269] *'Le dijeron a mi niña, que tenía siete añitos: "mira, tu mamá es desmovilizada, entonces tu mamá trabajó con esa gente mala, tu mamá es mala", y mi niña llegó llorando a la casa. Casi la echan de la escuela.'*

demobilised people' or referred to issues that clearly differentiate them from other people. *'When I arrived here soon after demobilizing it was like "What's up? How's it going?" You could see it in my face and in my short replies, I couldn't relate to people. It was like other people didn't have anything to talk with me about, I mean "why should I talk with this guy?" I like to talk about war'* (Medellín)[270]. If we suppose that difference is one of the primary attributes of stigmatisation, then one could say that the ex-combatants sometimes even stigmatise themselves. *'Although we're here outside, but here, in your head, you're not outside of it'* (Barrancabermeja)[271]. Furthermore, as seen in the chapter on Security Threats, ex-combatants often consider the demobilised community as a possible threat to their own security. In doing so, they share the main prejudice against the demobilised population with the rest of the society ('Demobilised people are dangerous').

Looking for differences based on region or age is not the main purpose of this study. The unrepresentative but varying sample does not allow for clear assertions in this respect. However from their own point of view, it appears that ex-combatants living in the same neighbourhood where they grew up (such as Tierralta) are more accepted by the community than ex-combatants living in the same 'barrio' where they were active (such as Medellín) or in a completely foreign context (such as Bogotá).

[270] *'Cuando llegué recién desmovilizado aquí solo decía: "¿Qué hay? ¿Qué hubo?" En el físico se me veía, de cortas palabras, de muy poco relacionarme. Para mí, otro ser humano no tenía que hablar conmigo, o sea yo digo "¿qué voy a hablar con este man?" Es que a mí me gusta hablar de la guerra.'*
[271] *'Aunque estamos aquí afuera, pero uno, aquí en la cabeza, no está afuera. Uno está dentro de algo.'*

9.4. Stigma-related strategies

Interaction

Interaction with the local community is one proactive strategy applied by a considerable number of interviewees to cope with or overcome stigmatisation. The ex-combatants who adopt this strategy presume that by interacting positively with, or providing a good example for other community members, the denigrating stereotypes can be neutralised. This strategy resembles the security strategy of good citizenship (see Security Threats), although it responds to another objective (reducing stigmas through trust-building) and is more interaction-focused in its method.

There are many examples of ex-combatants who decide to interact with community members. *'I got out and what I did was interacting more with them, so that they would build confidence in me and they would see that you can change and integrate yourself into the society as a person, forgetting all and that we would treat us with respect'* (Tierralta)[272]. Some demobilised persons are driven by their own independent initiative to interact. They are aware that they have to build trust if they want to overcome stigma. *'First, they look at you like afraid, and now there is a mutual respect, there is confidence. I feel better now, I feel like a human being. They don't look at you anymore as if you were this thing that causes damage to the community'* (Medellín)[273]. The same person quoted previously attributed his improved relationship to the community to the activities he proposed for his neighbours. For example, he gave talks on the negative effects of paramilitarism to prevent the recruitment of adolescents, and organised other community-based activities. *'We met a lot with the children, with the community. We made cakes and soup for them. This was to help integrate us, and help the children understand that the life we led before was no good.'*[274]

Small-scale reconciliation activities initiated by ex-combatants are quite common. Soccer tournaments, involvement in the local council, participating in church activities or just having a beer with neighbours after work can increase positive interactions and lower levels of stigmatisation faced by demobilised persons. *'We formed four teams and we said that the ones that win, get a fried chicken, the second a soft drink and the others nothing. That is when I created trust with the youth, their parents. I was the president of sports activities in the*

[272] *'Yo salí y lo que hice fue interactuar con ellos más, para que cogieran confianza y vieran que uno puede cambiar e integrarse a ellos, como persona en la sociedad, olvidando todo y que nos tratemos con respeto.'*
[273] *'Primero lo miran a uno como con miedo y ya es un respeto mutuo, hay confianza. Ya me siento mejor, me siento como un ser humano. Ya no le miran a uno como esta cosa que le está haciendo daño a la comunidad.'*
[274] *'Nos vimos mucho con los niños, con la comunidad. Nosotros mismos les hicimos natillita, sancocho, entonces como para integrarnos bien, como para darles a entender a los niños de que esa vida que llevamos antes no es buena.'*

neighbourhood. That is when I got close to the community' (Barrancabermeja)[275]. One interviewed person even stated that he publicly asked for pardon. *'In the stadium during a celebration, we went on stage and asked the people for pardon. I felt happy. My children and my wife said that it was touching. I asked for pardon for things that had been done'* (Tierralta)[276].

For some interviewees, earning the confidence of the people seems to be a technique learned during the paramilitary time. *'You have to praise, you have to thank, you have to help the community. This is what they drummed into us'* (Barrancabermeja)[277]. Interactions with the community may also increase the social control exercised by the community over demobilised persons (see Avoidance). This social control serves as a protective shield against returning to an illegal life. *'As this village is small, everybody knows who's who. They tell me not to get involved with this any more. Because you know, there are other groups'* (Tierralta)[278]. Trespassing this rule would destroy their painstakingly constructed confidence with other community members.

A minority of demobilised people claimed that their initiative to interact with the community was partly based on the help or advice given by the ACR. *'Here in the workshops, they teach you how to behave and how to interact with the community. You try to start with your closest neighbours with the objective of showing them that you're a normal person, so that they won't think of you as a monster'* (Barrancabermeja)[279]. A more institutionalised form of activating low-scale reconciliation is the jobs offered by ACR's Social Service Programme[280] (see Describing the Colombian Context). *'They created all kinds of groups for the programme "being social" in order to integrate us better into the community. We started painting schools to make them see that we're doing good things as well'* (Tierralta)[281].

Interaction as a strategy for coping with stigma is often associated with former combatants who feel regret and nostalgia (see Emotional Legacies of War), especially when this initiative

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[275] *'Sacamos cuatro equipos y dijimos el que gane, gana un pollo asado, el segundo una gaseosa y los otros nada. Allí fui cogiendo la confianza con la juventud, con los padres. Fui el presidente de deporte del barrio. Mejor dicho, me familiaricé con la comunidad rapidamente.'*

[276] *'En el estadio subimos y pedimos perdón al pueblo en una fiesta. Me sentí contento. Mis hijos y mi señora me dijeron que bonito. Pedí perdón por cosas que se hicieron.'*

[277] *'La comunidad hay que alabarla, hay que agradecerle, hay que ayudarla. Entonces eso es lo que nos inculcaron a nosotros.'*

[278] *'Este pueblo como es pequeñito, saben quien es quien. A mí me dicen que no me meta más a esa vaina. Porque tú sabes que hay otros grupos.'*

[279] *'Aquí en los cursos le enseñan como uno se debe comportar y como uno debe estar con la comunidad. Y uno trata de comenzar con los vecinos más cercanos, que vean en uno una persona normal, no que piensen: "llegó un monstruo".'*

[280] The short version of this programme in Spanish is 'Ser Social' ('being social').

[281] *'Aquí sacaron varios grupos para "Ser Social", para nosotros integrarnos más a la comunidad y de una vez pintábamos colegios, para que vean que nosotros hacemos cosas buenas también.'*

comes directly from the ex-combatants themselves. Those who regret are generally more open to low-scale reconciliation activities, whether fuelled by personal motivations or the reintegration programme. It seems as if the interaction strategy is more common in environments with multiple social contacts such as Tierralta or Barrancabermeja, and less common in an anonymous city like Bogotá.

Relationships to the community and stigmatisation have a time dimension, specifically with respect to the strategy of interaction. Stigmatisation is usually felt more strongly shortly after demobilisation, but decreases with continuing interaction. *'When you demobilised, the comments were like, "look, this is the one, he's in that zone, he's the commander". And you arrive and maybe the people still have this idea in their heads but no, little by little, they have removed it and you also try to help them understand that this was before but not any more'* (Barrancabermeja)[282].

Demobilised people who overcame stigmatisation of their own initiative often feel empowered or motivated by the social acceptance received by their community. However, when interaction attempts fail to produce a better relationship to the local community, the result may be frustration and distancing. *'The society has not understood yet. They are not thinking, "this is the guy who's working with the community", no. Even if you kill yourself for the community, "you were this and that"'* (Medellín)[283].

Denial

The ex-combatants who use denial to cope with stigma put their identity as demobilised persons aside. This may be a convenient, passive strategy for many demobilised persons who for whatever reason, do not want to make the effort to interact with the community. Denial is similar to the strategy of anonymity described in the chapter on Security Threats. These two strategies differ only in their objectives – coping with stigma and overcoming security threats – but not in their method.

Some deny their identity because of the stigmatisation it provokes. *'You don't tell anybody that you're a demobilised person, [...] nobody supports that still'* (Barrancabermeja)[284]. Others deny their identity because of the negative effects on their personal security (see

[282] *'Cuando uno se desmovilizó, de pronto los comentarios de: "no, mire, ese es fulano, está en tal parte, es el comandante". Y uno llega y de pronto la gente tiene todavía esa idea en la cabeza pero no, poco a poco se han ido ellos quitándosela y uno también les ha ayudado a que entiendan que eso era antes, ya no.'*
[283] *'La sociedad todavía no ha aprendido esto. No van a pensar: "este que trabaja con la comunidad", no, así uno se mate por la comunidad dirán: "usted era eso y lo otro".'*
[284] *'Uno no comenta con nadie si es desmovilizado, [...] aquí nadie apoya eso todavía.'*

Security Threats) or job life (see Economic Difficulties). *'You try to hide it as much as possible, above all in employment issues. For some reason, I am not working'* (Medellín)[285].

The denial strategy is not feasible in every context. A large anonymous city with a general low level of interaction between community members – such as Bogotá – is the most promising for denial. The interview data indicates that women apply this strategy with greater ease, as they are not usually suspected to be demobilised people. Also, the activities that they often partook in during their active time – not directly related to combat – allow them to live an inconspicuous life. In addition to the technical advantages, women may tend to use this strategy because they feel shameful. This is an emotional legacy of war almost exclusively encountered within female interviewees (see Emotional Legacies of War).

Returning to the same neighbourhood or village where ex-combatants lived before engaging with the paramilitaries makes denial more difficult or even impossible. This is often the case in Tierralta. *'Everybody knows [that I'm a demobilised person], because many guys who were members of the same organisation before, live there. And all the neighbours know about it'* (Tierralta)[286]. When everybody knows, denial is impossible. This may compel ex-combatants to adopt an interactive strategy to cope with stigma.

Surprisingly often, demobilised people reported that denial would not work when it comes to employment, because they imagine there is a computer system where they are identified as demobilised people. *'You know that they ask for a resumé, search in a computer system and we appear. So "this guy was what he was", and there's no work for us'* (Tierralta)[287]. While the reintegration programme does store data on demobilised people, the conviction that potential employees have access to this database is erroneous. Regardless, demobilised people reported that they occasionally identify themselves as ex-combatants in order to thwart a potentially humiliating discovery in the future.

Another element that further complicates the use of a denial strategy is participation in the reintegration programme. *'The people find out from the programme that you're a demobilised person and the stigma starts all over again. "You were this and that", they don't trust you, they think who knows what you might do, rob them or something. That's where they keep their distance'* (Medellín)[288]. Identification with the programme makes them publicly known as

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[285] *'Uno trata de ocultarlo lo más posible, sobre todo en cuestiones laborales. Por algo no estoy trabajando.'*
[286] *'Todo el mundo sabe [que soy desmovilizado], porque allí viven muchos muchachos que fuimos antes de la misma organización y todo el mundo, los vecinos saben.'*
[287] *'Usted sabe que piden una hoja de vida y nos buscan en el computador y salimos y entonces, 'ese muchacho fue lo que fue' y no hay trabajo.'*
[288] *'Por el programa es que la gente se entera que uno es desmovilizado y allí empiezan otra vez los estigmas. 'Usted era esto', no confían en usted, de pronto quien sabe que le da por hacer, por robarle a uno. Allí es donde lo frenan a uno.'*

demobilised people. One of the interviewed non-participants of the ACR referred to this condition to explain his non-participation: *'I left the programme because it's of no advantage to me and also because I don't want to be known as a demobilised person'* (Bogotá)[289]. Some of the interviewees who do participate considered leaving the programme at some point for the same reason. *'Some time ago, I nearly didn't want to attend the programme because everybody was looking at you and the people were thinking that these are the ones from there, these are the demobilised persons'* (Barrancabermeja)[290]. Even ACR officials advise ex-combatants not to disclose their identity. *'They taught us that as well, in talks of the psychologists, that we don't have to tell about it'* (Bogotá)[291]. Some of the psychosocial tutors are conscious of the troublesome compatibility between participation in the reintegration programme and the denial strategy and agreed to alternative solutions for participation. *'So I say [to my tutor]: "Nobody knows around here, they think that I'm a retired soldier from the armed forces. I don't want them to find out." We came to an agreement, the guy's coming to my place every two weeks'* (Medellín)[292].

Besides leaving the reintegration programme or creating tailor-made participation, relocation may be another way out of an environment that complicates the use of denial. Relocation is not presented here as a subcategory in its own right since it is more often used to manage security threats or economic difficulties. However, relocation may have the convenient added benefit of facilitating denial as a coping strategy for stigma. In the database of this study, only one example of a pure 'stigma-relocater' has been clearly identified. *'If you want to change your life, you have to change the neighbourhood because the people will always recognise you as the bad one. For example, I live in a neighbourhood called [...] and the other guys who attend the workshops with me, know that I'm a demobilised person. But the people don't know. This is what I wanted, to start from zero'* (Medellín)[293].

As indicated in the previous quote, denial may have different degrees. For some demobilised people, it is possible to deny their identity in their workplace but not in their neighbourhood. Others may be able to use denial within their neighbourhood, but not in their

[289] *'Dejé el programa porque no me sirve y también porque no quiero ser conocido como desmovilizado.'*
[290] *'En un tiempo, casi no quise asistir al programa porque todo el mundo miraba y la gente pensaba que estos son de allá, son desmovilizados.'*
[291] *'Eso pues nos lo han enseñado también, en charlas de psicólogas y todo, que uno no tiene que ponerse a decir.'*
[292] *'Entonces digo a [nombre del tutor]: "por aquí nadie sabe, piensan que soy pensionado del ejército. A mí no me gusta que se enteren." Llegamos a un acuerdo, el hombre viene cada quince días a mi casa.'*
[293] *'Si quieres cambiar la vida, tienes que cambiar de barrio, porque la gente siempre te va a conocer como el malo. Por ejemplo, yo vivo en un barrio que se llama [nombre del barrio] y los pelados que van a los talleres saben que soy desmovilizado. Pero la gente no sabe. Eso es lo que yo quería, para empezar de cero.'*

wider family. However, the more anonymous the environment they live in, the easier it is to deny their identity, even to persons who are closely related.

Denial is a common strategy applied by many ex-combatants in a favourable environment. However, there is a small group that would not opt for this strategy, even if it were a possibility. Usually, these are proud ex-combatants who would never deny their earlier paramilitary affiliation, or people who want to publicly voice their regret as perpetrators of violence (see Emotional Legacies of War).

Avoidance

Avoidance basically consists of steering clear of other demobilised people in a passive way. As with denial, this strategy resembles its corresponding security strategy – isolation (see Security Threats). It responds however, to a different objective. Isolation is related to security problems, while avoidance is used to cope with stigmatisation. Avoidance is based on the assumption that being friends with other demobilised people can create or exacerbate stigmatisation.

Ex-combatants may choose this strategy when there is a presence of social control in the neighbourhood. *'They see you hanging around at the corner, and they're saying, "they're looking who they're going to rob or what are they planning?" They keep an eye on you. Therefore, it's better to stay isolated'* (Barrancabermeja)[294]. Avoiding 'the corner' and avoiding the company of other demobilised people indicates a change to the rest of the community. Community members often identify the demobilised population with illicit activities. *'[You have to avoid] at least the suspicious person who you know has a problem. Because you may be good, but if you hang around with a guy that gets into trouble and they see him hanging around with you, they'll judge you as well'* (Tierralta)[295]. Avoiding other demobilised people, especially the clearly 'bad' ones – the illegally active ones – may therefore be an effective strategy to reduce stigmatisation.

However, avoiding other demobilised people implies that ex-paramilitaries invoke the same stigmatisation as the rest of the community. This behaviour implicitly states that 'the other demobilised persons are bad'. Only a few interviewees were conscious of this contradictory behaviour and therefore do not opt for the avoidance strategy, which is for them hypocritical. *'I don't avoid them at all because in any case, I'm a demobilised person as well.*

[294] *'Lo ven a uno en la esquina parqueado, y van a decir: "están viendo a quien van a robar o ¿qué estarán planeando?". Entonces lo tienen a uno en la mira, entonces mejor uno estar retiradito.'*
[295] *'Por lo menos hay que evitar la persona que tiene algún comentario y usted sabe que hay una cuestión, si es que usted puede que sea un man sano, pero anda con un man que la embarra y lo ven andar con usted y lo califican mal también.'*

And if I catalogue them as bad persons and a bad example for society, the same way I'm cataloguing myself, then I'm not accepting myself either' (Barrancabermeja)[296].

Some demobilised interviewees stated that their best friends are former comrades. If so, the avoidance strategy is unfeasible. It is especially the nostalgic ex-fighters who stick to their network of comrades since they want to preserve as much of their former life as possible (see Emotional Legacies of War). Persisting networks of friends are more common in contexts with large numbers of demobilised persons who fought together such as in Medellín or Tierralta. In these contexts, avoidance and denial strategies are less available (see Security Threats). This may compel ex-combatants to use the strategy of interaction.

The reintegration programme may also create loyalties that go against the avoidance strategy. *'My friends are above all demobilised people. [People that I met] in the meetings, we were some 25 persons. These are my guys and my friends. Apart from that, [I have] nearly no friends'* (Bogotá)[297]. For lonely persons who have difficulty making contact with others, fellow participants may be their only possibility for social connection. The reintegration programme gives them the possibility to create a social network. But at the same time, it exposes them as members of the ex-combatant community, making the avoidance strategy impossible.

Despite the inconsistencies and difficulties of avoidance, this strategy has been applied by a considerable number of the interviewed persons. Frequently, it seems to be a complementary strategy to denial.

Distancing

Community members may express that prejudice, stigma and low social acceptance toward ex-combatants are justified because of the cruel activities of former paramilitary groups (e.g. 'they deserve it'). Here, however, I am expanding merely on the perspective of former combatants. Do they feel responsible for the creation of stigma or not? There are many demobilised people who refuse to be in any way responsible for it. If it is not their responsibility, it is also not up to them to resolve the problems arising from stigma. I call this passive psychological strategy 'distancing'. Distancing is a coping strategy based on the assumption that stigma is 'not my fault' and so the solution is 'not up to me'. Distancing may

[296] *'Yo no les saco el cuerpo a ellos para nada porque de igual manera yo tambien soy un desmovilizado y si yo mismo los catalogo como malas personas y mal ejemplo para la sociedad, así me estoy catalogando yo mismo, no me estoy aceptando yo tampoco.'*

[297] *'Mis amigos son más que todo desmovilizados. Gente que encontré en las reuniones, eramos como unos 25. Estos son mis parceros y mis amigos, de resto casi no, amigos afuera, casi no.'*

also be seen as a strategy to deal with frustration, especially if the aforementioned strategies have not produced any results.

Ex-combatants sometimes see themselves as having made a big sacrifice for the fatherland and thus, do not deserve to be stigmatised. *'You gave all for your country, and the country, the only thing it says is that you are a terrorist, a bloodthirsty person'* (Barrancabermeja)[298]. The distancing ex-combatants are often not full of regret, but rather proud of their decision to enter into the AUC and are nostalgic for their active time (see Emotional Legacies of War).

Those who apply distancing make others responsible for the creation of stigma – the society in general, the media or other ex-combatants. The interviewees repeatedly stated that the society is not ready for them, and this creates stigma. Also, they blamed the media, which supposedly report on them in a one-sided fashion. *'All this disinformation in the media. They are the guilty ones that they look at us as animals, killers or people without feelings. I was there and I didn't kill anybody, I'm not capable of killing anybody'* (Bogotá)[299].

A further form of distancing is to place the blame on other ex-combatants who behave inadequately after demobilisation. From this perspective, the failures of these demobilised are among the reasons for stigmatisation. *'There's a problem. There are many of us that are doing bad things and there are others that are not doing anything bad. But for the ones that cause problems, we all pay the price'* (Tierralta)[300]. From the perspective of the distancers, the solution to the problems arising from stigma should come from society, media or other ex-combatants – not from themselves.

Nonetheless, there is a minority group of ex-combatants who understand the resentments within society. They accept that they are somehow responsible for the damage caused and often feel sorry about it. *'You could say that we caused damage to the community, maybe a dead person, an affected family. So, this is what we're trying to repair a little bit'* (Medellín)[301]. Those who recognise the damage caused often feel war fatigue and regret toward their initial decision to enter the armed group (see Emotional Legacies of War). However, there are relatively few direct references in the interviews to the victims of paramilitary violence.

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[298] *'Usted ya dio todo por el país, y el país lo único que ha dicho es que usted es un terrorista, es un sanguinario.'*

[299] *'Toda esta malinformación que los medios toman. Ellos son los culpables de que a nosotros nos miran como animales, asesinos y sin sentimientos. Yo estuve allí y no maté a nadie, no soy capaz de matar a nadie.'*

[300] *'Hay un problemita y es que habemos muchos de nosotros que la hemos embarrado, pero habemos unos que no, pero por esos que la embarraron pagamos todos.'*

[301] *'Se puede decir que hicimos daño a la comunidad, que de pronto un muerto, que una familia afectada. Entonces eso es lo que estamos tratando de remediar un poco.'*

Both those who understand the stigma and those who distance themselves usually combine their view with other strategies explained earlier. The ‘understanders’ are more prone to using a proactive strategy such as interaction, whereas the ‘distancers’ may complement their strategy with denial or avoidance.

9.5. Policy implications

The potentially negative effects of stigmatisation on employment and physical security should encourage policy makers to put this complex topic on the agenda. The coping strategies presented here arise from problems with stigmatisation and must be taken into account in order to develop adequate policy measures.

Denial of being a demobilised person may turn out to be an unsustainable strategy but may work well in the short term. Perhaps it is preferable from a policy standpoint that ex-combatants use this strategy shortly after demobilisation, when emotions of vengeance, fear or envy are still fresh. Nevertheless, this strategy is made difficult by the intervention of the state that reveals the identity of ex-combatants.

Avoidance of other ex-combatants is not an efficient way to combat these problems, because this strategy reproduces stigma within the demobilised community. If they stigmatise fellow ex-combatants, how could society as a whole overcome prejudice? Furthermore, avoidance – like denial – is undermined by the reintegration programme. The programme brings ex-combatants together and makes avoidance basically impossible. The difficulty in compatibility between denial or avoidance and state activity may result in ex-combatants leaving the programme of reintegration. More individualised attention may enhance the possibility of applying the aforementioned passive strategies together with participation in the programme.

However, the best and most sustainable outcome has been identified with the strategy of interaction. Demobilised people, who by their own effort try to overcome stigma and integrate into society, are the most prone for social acceptance in the medium term. In fact, the adoption of this strategy may invert the negative effects of stigma into positive empowerment. Positive communitarian coexistence may also form a protective shield against returning to armed group activity. Demobilised persons surely do not want to lose what they achieved with their own effort. For example: *'The neighbourhood where I'm living, I sit down with everybody to chat, to play football. The life you're living now, the quietness, this makes you not fall back into those things, that old world'* (Barrancabermeja)[302]. Also, the growing number of interactions with community members may strengthen the social control that keeps ex-combatants away from illegal activities. These social protective shields cannot be constructed with a mere focus on passive strategies such as denial, avoidance and distancing.

The best result in dealing with stigma is achieved by personal initiative in the absence of state involvement. However, there is a second-best approach that provides ex-combatants with

[302] *'Con todos, la parte donde yo vivo con todo el mundo nos sentamos a hablar o jugamos fútbol. La vida que uno lleva ahorita, la tranquilidad, eso no permite que uno vuelva a caer en esas cosas, en ese viejo mundo.'*

incentives to interact with the community, and may convert those who use passive strategies like denial, avoidance or distancing into agents of interaction. Social service programmes like 'Ser Social' seem to have a positive impact, but the benefits may be too transitory. In the interviews, few demobilised people mentioned reconciliation support from the reintegration programme. For most, coping with stigma seems to be a personal process, which limits the potential influence of state intervention.

However, a disservice is done to ex-combatants when the complementary measures of DDR such as transitional justice and reconciliation activities are short or skipped over. In the absence of such macro-policies, stigmatisation finds fertile soil and demobilised people encounter more difficulties in coping. The higher the level of stigmatisation, the more frustrated ex-combatants become with social refusal, employment difficulties and physical insecurity. The result is a weakening of the social protective shield against recidivism. Therein lies the importance of stigma for DDR public policy.

Stigma is attached to people who belong to a specific group. Evidently, in some DDR contexts, social acceptance is not a problem since the members of some demobilised groups are seen as liberators or heroes. This may be the case for the Kosovo Liberation Army or the Free Aceh Movement, for example. For those cases, stigmatisation is not a relevant issue. In the context of DDR with the AUC, social rejection is an issue due to the highly criminal character of the AUC. It is therefore crucial to bear in mind the society's perception of the demobilised armed group when designing policies that aim at social reintegration.

'You want to talk about my family? I have two children.
They don't live with me because I don't have any money.
With the self-defense group I had money, I earned money.
What kind of family can you support with 150'000 pesos [75 dollars a month]?
I'm not together with my family any more.' [303]
Demobilised person from Bogotá, January 2009

10. Handling a Disrupted Family Life

Having a stable family life is considered by most ex-combatants as one of their principal achievements. Based on the interviews conducted for the present study, I conclude that the family is the natural and most important social network for former combatants. However, the family lives of most ex-combatants were disrupted by their involvement in war.

When asked about what has been important to them after demobilisation, they refer in most cases to their families. What does family mean for them and how does it influence their lives? These are the principal questions addressed in this chapter.

[303] *'¿Quiere hablar de mi familia? Tengo dos niñas. No viven conmigo porque no tengo plata. En las autodefensas tenía dinero, ganaba dinero. ¿Qué familia se mantiene con 150'000 pesos? Ya no estoy con mi familia.'*

10.1. Related literature

The family is a key element of DDR, especially in the reintegration phase. Some scholars even widen the definition of reintegration to include family in the category of beneficiaries (Nilsson 2005). What is the role of the family in a DDR process? Generally speaking, the literature describes the family as playing a contradictory role. It provides a social network for ex-combatants while at the same time, exposes them to renewed violence.

The importance of the family as primary social network can be identified in different studies. Gomes Porto et al. (2007) found that for Angolan ex-fighters, only 4.5 per cent resettled in a place where they or their wives had no family ties at all. In addition, the overwhelming majority (93 per cent) claimed to be the head of household. For the Angolan case, the family is thus the common social milieu for reintegration. Humphreys and Weinstein (2004) come to a similar conclusion. Sierra Leonean ex-combatants spend most of their free time with family members (see also Pugel 2006). Family as the primary space of social reintegration may hold true, to some degree, for other cases as well. However, the importance of the family can also turn into a burden, as Schafer (2007, 169) describes in the case of Mozambique: '[The veterans] found themselves distinguished by having delayed the achievement of essential elements of masculinity and adulthood, such as marriage and reproduction.'

The family may facilitate reintegration in various ways. For instance, the level of acceptance from the community may be higher when ex-combatants rejoin family in native regions (Gomes Porto, Parsons, and Alden 2007). Family members may also help ex-combatants with job opportunities (Pugel 2006). In the case of Lebanon, especially fathers, brothers, uncles and cousins are 'the agents of their economic reintegration' (Karamé 2009, 510). Together with the female family members who play a central role in social reintegration, they form a 'security net' for the homecoming ex-combatants. Ex-combatants without this security net would be more prone to reengagement. This hypothesis finds support in a study of Hill et al. (2008), which shows that childless women are particularly prone to fight again.

On the flip side, the family may expose ex-combatants to renewed violence. Family protection is often mentioned as a reason for entry into armed groups in the first place (see for example Bøås and Hatløy 2008; Humphreys and Weinstein 2004; Pugel 2006; Villegas de Posada 2009). Bøås and Hatløy claim that the security of the family may also be amongst the most important reasons for *re*-engagement in illegal activities. The family as central social

network is hence not only a positive force keeping ex-combatants attached to civilian life, but may also function against reintegration.

Also, the family itself may become an environment for renewed violence. Women who remained at home have often gained autonomy during the absence of their husbands (de Watteville 2002). Different perspectives on family roles after the homecoming may necessitate a renegotiation of power, possibly resulting in domestic violence (Annan and Cutter 2009). In the case of Uganda, the divorce rate of returning ex-combatants was between 50 and 65 per cent, much higher than the average (de Watteville 2002) and likely the result of a difficult reunification.

Given the potential difficulties of family reintegration after demobilisation, the exclusive targeting of male ex-combatants may deepen fissures within the reunited family. Therefore, including women into the reception of financial assistance could have a positive impact on the well-being of the family (United Nations 2006a, chapter 2.30, 5.3), and reduce the misuse of reintegration benefits (de Watteville 2002). According to Douglas et al. (2004), for reintegration to be sustainable, male ex-combatants have to be recognised as part of a family unit, rather than as individuals.

For the Colombian case, the Foundation Ideas for Peace (Palou and Méndez 2010) finds that in 2007, 74 per cent of the demobilised persons (including individually and collectively demobilised ex-combatants – see Describing the Colombian Context) were heads of household, whereas before the recruitment into the illegal armed group, they represented just 28 per cent. Before recruitment, 70 per cent were single. In 2007, only 28 per cent remained single. Thus, a large number of demobilised people have a changed family role after leaving the armed group.

As in the general literature, the literature on the Colombian DDR process recognises the contradictory role of the family (Conpes 3554 2008; Theidon 2009). Although the family may have been the reason for joining an armed group and may expose ex-combatants to renewed violence[304], it offers a key incentive to remain committed to a civilian life. The national reintegration policy has an interest in solidifying this positive element that hinders ex-combatants from returning to illegality. Varela (2007) describes this family-centric policy: The psychosocial personnel of the ACR are urged to keep track of the family process. They see family as an 'institution' of reintegration that provides cohesion through emotional interdependencies.

[304] Baird (2009) finds in the case of Medellín that the absence of strong family ties or the lack of any significant male figure is the strongest predictor of involvement in violent activities within marginalised youths.

On the negative side, the family has been the reason for a considerable number of ex-combatants to join an armed group in the first place. In the aftermath of demobilisation, ex-combatants are exposed to renewed violence, since they may feel obliged to provide security for their families in a violent context. Having a gun at home 'just in case' (Theidon 2009) is an expression of this mentality.

The domestication of violence may be another effect of a previously militarised life in the context of the refound family (Barraza and Caicedo 2007; Caicedo 2005; Londoño Fernández and Ramírez Parra 2007). According to a small-scale enquiry of the University of Antioquia and Unifem, 7 out of 10 households with presence of ex-combatants in the northwestern regions of Medellín, Bajo Cauca and Urabá experience domestic violence (El Tiempo 2008a). The public policy of DDR aims to tackle this problem with targeted psychosocial assistance. However, Theidon (2009) criticises that the designated beneficiaries of the programme are mostly male demobilised combatants, which makes female family members depend on their income. This in turn, is a 'powerful disincentive for battered partners to report abuse' (Theidon 2009, 31).

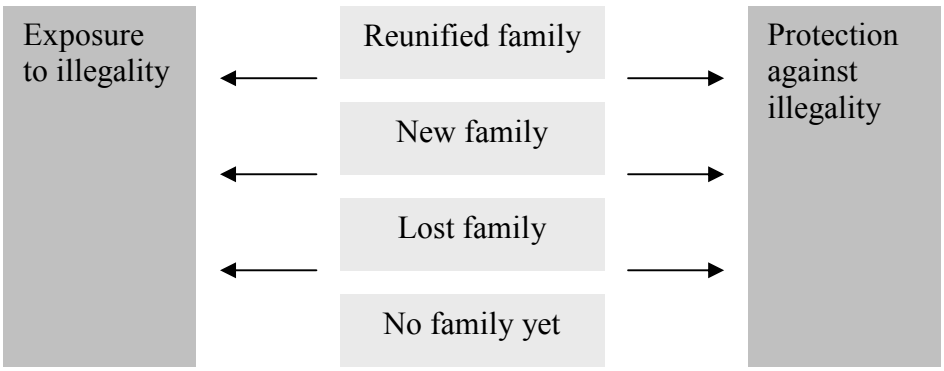
10.2. Overview

By family, the former paramilitaries usually mean the *close circle of parents, partners, siblings or sons and sometimes other closely related relatives like cousins, uncles or grandparents*. The family is clearly differentiated from the wider community they live in. It is a social circle characterised by high tolerance, confidence and mutual care. The protection of and loyalty to the family, in some respect are the foundations of their worldview. This in contrast to the community, which ex-combatants can perceive as a place of low acceptance with high levels of stigmatisation and distrust (see Stigma within the Community).

For most of the ex-combatants, participation in war resulted in a more or less harsh disruption in their family life. By disruption, I mean the frequent process of *being spatially or emotionally distant to family members during war activity*. This is less so the case for former urban paramilitaries who may have continued to live with their families. Interviewees from Medellín often referred to this modality. Also, there are likely differences between those who had a functioning family life during their engagement in the group and persons who never really had a family. Regardless of these differences, family disruption is a common trait expressed by most of the interviewed ex-combatants.

The following description of detailed findings is divided into two parts. First, I try to establish a typology of possible family situations for ex-combatants. Second, I refer to the 'overprotection dilemma' resulting from family life (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Handling a disrupted family life



With respect to the types of family situations, there are many kinds possible. Types depend on for example, the current age of the ex-combatants, their age of entry into the armed group, their engagement as urban or rural paramilitaries, and whether they were close or distant to their families during the active time. Young ex-combatants tend to go back to their parents, whereas older demobilised persons often have their own children. Urban ex-combatants

usually lived with their families during their active time, while rural ex-combatants were separated from their families for longer periods.

I distinguish between the following types: reunification, new family, lost family and no family yet. The most common situation is to rejoin the family left during their active time. Starting a new family after demobilisation is a second common result of disruption, especially among younger ex-combatants who are at the common age for beginning a family. Additional examples include those who lost their families as a result of paramilitary activity or demobilisation. There are also persons who never really had a family to begin with and who have no family yet. These categories are highly interlaced. Each type of mixture has been found. The same person may get back together with his parents, lose contact with his wife and children after demobilisation and start a new family. I try to divide and analyse such aspects without assuming that these are clearly identifiable structures and types.

The second part of the detailed findings section explores the role of the family after demobilisation. Most of the interviewed ex-combatants were able to re-establish a relationship with their families. They often mention this as the most important reason for not reengaging in illegality. This positive family role results from the assumption that a functioning family life and illegality are incompatible. On the one hand, they feel responsible for protecting their family members, especially their children. On the other hand, they receive economic support and advice from their family circle.

This positive potential contrasts with mechanisms that are the result of 'overprotection', a term described below. Past motivations for entry into the armed group, such as vengeance and wanting to help the family in a situation of economic misery, were identified in the interviews. Today, a considerable number of demobilised people stated that they would reengage in illegal activities only if it was necessary to protect their family. Protection of the family, a primarily positive force, may hence lead to an elevated exposure to illegality in extreme circumstances. I call this contradictory role the 'overprotection dilemma'. It can be summarised by the following two opposing illustrative statements: 'I would *not* go back to illegality because of my family' versus 'I would *only* go back to illegality because of my family'. Being protective keeps ex-combatants away from illegality as long as they do not have to defend their family. This is an example of the contradictory role that a family plays, as found in the literature review of this chapter.

There are some limitations in this method regarding the investigation of family life. The focus on perceptions of former demobilised persons suppresses the crucial view of other

family members and involved people.[305] For example, it is impossible to ascertain the expectations of demobilisation for the family who remained at home, or how they organised their lives during the absence of their loved ones. Also, unpleasant topics such as domestic violence or other private issues are generally difficult to access with this method. The following findings sections should be read with these limitations in mind.

[305] Studies with a focus on the female view of reintegration and domestic violence include: Caicedo Delgado (2005), Londoño Fernández and Ramírez Parra (2007).

10.3. Types of family situations

Reunified family

I call the most frequent form of overcoming family disruption 'reunification' or 'getting back together'. These terms describe an ex-combatant who returns to the same family or part of it, either in the same location or another one. The term also alludes to a past of spatial separation that may have been either more or less extreme. A typical example of reunification is illustrated in the following quotation. *'I live in the same neighbourhood, the same house, with the same friends. Despite the long time in the AUC, the people that knew me and saw me grow up as a child, after I demobilised, they saw me come back home, to my family and received me the same way I left'* (Barrancabermeja)[306].

Reunification implies a previous disruption. During their absence, which in some cases spanned several years, the demobilised persons may have lost contact with their family and may have also lost emotional closeness. *'When you're there, you concentrate on yourself in this moment. I'm there and I have to safeguard myself, to save my skin, so that nothing happens to me. So much that you forget about your family, you don't remember them'* (Tierralta)[307]. Losing contact may have even provided the family with a form of protection. *'When you're in the group, you forget about your family, you disconnect yourself from your family to keep from causing them any harm. Because here, there's a law: if you do something wrong, your mother or father is dead'* (Medellín)[308]. Losing contact may have also been due to the fact that the armed group provided the ex-combatant with a substitution for family. This is likely as one of the functions of an armed group is to provide a social network (see Emotional Legacies of War). *'Our family were neither our sons nor anybody, but the group'* (Barrancabermeja)[309].

Some demobilised people have not been separated from family during their active time. This holds for urban paramilitaries who may have had a more continuous family life. In their case, an emotional disruption may have taken place during their paramilitary activity. *'I lived with the family but I had problems with them because I was part of the self-defense group. I*

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[306] *'Vivo en mi mismo barrio, en mi misma casa, con mis mismos amigos. A pesar de que es una cantidad de tiempo con las autodefensas, las personas que me conocieron y que me vieron crecer de niño, me vieron después de que me desmovilicé llegar nuevamente a mi casa, al seno de mi hogar, de mi familia y me recibieron en la misma forma en la que me fui.'*

[307] *'Cuando uno está allá, uno se concentra en ese momento en uno mismo. Yo estoy ahí y tengo que salvarme, cuidar mi pellejo, que no me pase nada, tanto, que la familia se le va, se le borra la imagen, no me acuerdo de mi familia.'*

[308] *'Cuando usted está en las filas se le olvida la familia, uno se aparta mucho de la familia por no hacerle daño. Porque aquí hay una ley: El que la cagó, se murió, sea su mamá, sea su papá.'*

[309] *'Nuestra familia no eran ni nuestros hijos ni nadie más, sino el grupo.'*

recuperated my family after I demobilised, all my family, cousins, brothers. [...] They distrusted me because I was in these subversive groups' (Medellín)[310].

Many ex-combatants, especially those who are young, find accomodation at their parents' place. Older ex-combatants tend to install themselves with the wives they met and children they bore, either before paramilitary activity or during their active time. Nonetheless, a general pattern is difficult to identify since there are many types of reunifications or unifications. For example, one ex-combatant described staying with a sister: *'I'm part of my family, I'm happy. I'm at the side of my sister, I live with them, I share everything with them'* (Tierralta)[311].

Reunification, however, may raise problems with regard to family acceptance. *'My girls were afraid of me. It was very difficult to hug my daughter'* (Medellín)[312]. These difficulties may be in part driven by the stigma present in the community (see Stigma within the Community). *'Many people talk, they say something to my mother. And I say to my mother "don't pay attention to this chitchat"'* (Tierralta)[313]. The problem of acceptance is mutual. The demobilised people must accept their new life as a member of a family, as well as their changed role. *'I have to be like a mother, a student, a daughter. No leadership, no communities any more. This was my personal decision'* (Barrancabermeja)[314].

The type of disruption surely influences reunification. The often long absence has for some interviewees, resulted in complex family situations. For example, they may have children in several different places, and this further complicates the conditions for reunification. Getting back together implies rejoining the family or part of it. However, the family they rejoin may look different than before, it may have transformed during their active time.

New family

Creating a new family with children after demobilisation is common among young ex-combatants. *'Before, I didn't have any children. Now I have sons and I adore them and I just think about them'* (Tierralta)[315]. A new family may change their perspective. It is often combined with reunification with parents and siblings. It may also be the consequence of

[310] *'Vivía con la familia pero mantenía problemas con ellos por lo que yo estaba metido en las autodefensas. Yo vine a recuperar mi familia después de que me desmovilicé, toda mi familia, primos, hermanos. [...] Me tenían mala fe por estar metido en estos grupos subversivos.'*
[311] *'Uno está al lado de la familia, está contento. Estoy al lado de mi hermana, vivo con ellos, comparto todo con ellos.'*
[312] *'Mis hijas me tenían miedo. Para abrazar una hija fue muy duro.'*
[313] *'Mucha gente se pone a hablar y dicen cosas a mi mamá y yo le digo a mi mamá: "no les pares bolas".'*
[314] *'Tengo que ser como una madre, una estudiante, una hija, no más líder, no más comunidades. Esa fue mi decisión personal.'*
[315] *'Yo antes no tenía hijos y ahora si tengo hijos y ellos son la adoración mía y yo pienso es en ellos.'*

losing a previous family, such as a wife and children, due to difficulties mentioned before. This is reflected in the following quote. *'I have two children. One eleven year-old girl lives in Medellín, and the five year-old boy is here in Barrancabermeja. The mothers are two different women and I abandoned both households. Now, I have a very stable household and I don't want to lose it'* (Barrancabermeja)[316]. This person is starting a new family after demobilisation, while the two women he referred to in the interview were relationships from his active time.

Relationships and the creation of a family may even guide the 'geographical' course of reintegration, and facilitate the overcoming of disorientation related to reunification. *'After five years in the business over there [with the paramilitaries], I was disoriented about the homecoming. [...] My girl told me, "let's go to Tierralta, my mom lives there, we can live there together, my whole family's there". I said "let's go then". [Now] we have a son and she's in her seventh month of pregnancy again'* (Tierralta)[317]. Some demobilised men met their current wives during their active time. *'We met when I was still in the self-defense group. And after we demobilised, we got married'* (Barrancabermeja)[318]. Creating a new family after demobilisation is a recurring desire of former combatants. Having children seems to be 'the right thing to do' for them, and may reflect the desire for a more balanced and quiet life. As a result, war fatigued ex-combatants are especially keen on having their own family as a way to break with their earlier life as a combatant (see Emotional Legacies of War).

Lost family

In some cases, there is a definitive disruption with the family either due to something that occurred during the active time with the paramilitaries, the demobilisation itself, or the post-demobilisation period.

Paramilitary activity may be viewed in a negative light by the family, creating stigma and rejection. *'With what I did, believe me, I completely lost my family, my brothers and sisters who loved me a lot. Ever since, I've been kind of isolated from my family because of it, and*

[316] *'Tengo dos hijos. Una niña está en Medellín de once años y el niño está aquí en Barranca de cinco años. Son dos mujeres diferentes que yo, esos dos hogares los abandoné. Y yo tengo un hogar ahora muy estable y no quiero perderlo.'*

[317] *'Ya con cinco años de estar en el trabajo por allá, yo desubicado para venir a la casa. [...] Dijo la mujer: "vamonos para Tierralta, que allá está mi mamá y allá vivimos, allá está toda la familia mía". Yo dije: "vamos pues". Ahora tenemos un hijo y va para siete meses de embarazo de otro.'*

[318] *'Nos conocimos cuando yo estaba dentro de las autodefensas y después de que nos desmovilizamos nos casamos y eso.'*

even more when they learned I had demobilised' (Barrancabermeja)[319]. Demobilisation may also translate into less income (see Economic Difficulties) or feeling exposed to security risks (see Security Threats). Therefore the family, either created during the active time or located in the same region, may disintegrate with demobilisation. *'After leaving the AUC, my family came to an end, I live alone'* (Bogotá)[320]. In some cases, reunification fails and the disruption becomes definitive. *'I wanted to stay close to my children, I had very good plans, I wanted to work and look after them, help them. But at some point, I got into problems with my ex-wife. I was this close to attacking her, hitting her. That happened more than once'* (Bogotá)[321].

As the interviewees prefer to talk about their functioning family life, problematic situations are rarely mentioned. Hence, the painful process of definitive disruptions may have been underrepresented in the interviews.

No family yet

For the sake of completeness, I introduce a further category of demobilised people. This group does not have any family at all and in fact, never had any solid family structures. This situation is not the effect of a disruption, but is rather a continuous state of affairs. For these ex-combatants, there was no family before engagement in the armed group, no family during the active time, and no family after demobilisation. Two former street children from Bogotá were among the interviewees that fall into this category. They joined the paramilitaries out of misery. *'Since I was a little boy I got used to live and to make decisions alone. I almost never see my family circle, for many years I haven't known anything about them'* (Bogotá)[322].

For each, his whole life has been characterised by a difficult family situation. It is striking that the only two ex-combatants originally from Bogotá are similar with respect to their situation of misery, and the lack of functioning family structures before they joined the paramilitaries.

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[319] *'Con lo que yo hice creame que yo perdí a mi familia totalmente, o sea mis hermanos, mis hermanas que me querían mucho. Conmigo de ahí para acá, yo pasé a ser como aislado de la familia por eso, y más cuando supieron de que yo me había desmovilizado.'*

[320] *'Después de irme de allá, mi familia se acabó, vivo solo.'*

[321] *'Yo quería estar al pie de mis hijos, tenía planes muy buenos, quería trabajar, estar pendiente de ellos, ayudarlos. Pero llegó un momento cuando con mi exmujer encontramos problemas, ya hasta el punto que ya estaba yo para agredirla, pegarle, cascarla. Más de una vez pasó así.'*

[322] *'De peladito yo me acostumbré a vivir, a tomar decisiones solo. Mi nucleo familiar casi no lo frecuento, hace muchos años no sé nada de ellos.'*

10.4. Overprotection dilemma

Protection against illegality

When asked about what makes ex-combatants maintain a 'legal' way of life, the most common answer was 'because of my family' – either the reunified or the newly created family. Hence, the family is one of the most powerful protective shields against recidivism for the interviewed ex-paramilitaries. Those who are integrated into a family generally assume that reengaging in illegality would lead to a loss of the family. *'What do you get with that [being illegally active]? You get nothing. You lose your family again, your friends, your wife, your children, whatever you have'* (Barrancabermeja)[323]. Furthermore, receiving advice or economic support from family members increases the 'immunity' against returning to illegality. In the following paragraphs, I describe some of the potentially positive elements of family life.

The ex-combatants who created a new family with children often explained their earlier decision to enter the AUC as related to an absence of familial responsibility. *'I didn't have anybody to think about, I didn't have any obligations, I didn't have children. And now, I have a daughter, she gives me a lot of motivation not to go back there'* (Barrancabermeja)[324]. They feel responsible for the protection of their children.

Those who live with their reunified family feel similarly motivated. Recuperating their family was often accompanied by hard efforts. They do not want to jeopardise it again. *'I don't do it or wouldn't do it because of my family, because I got it back. And I think that if I go back again to the same thing of before, I'm going to lose my family again'* (Barrancabermeja)[325]. Some recognised after their homecoming that they made their families suffer a lot, especially their mothers. The prevention of additional suffering is a recurring explanation for the rejection of an armed life. *'My mom suffered a lot, so I said, when this opportunity came up, that I was going to take it and not make my family suffer any more'* (Tierralta)[326].

Those ex-combatants who are living with their family after demobilisation fear that if they re-engage in an illegal life, their children are going to be unprotected or exposed to maltreatment by potential stepfathers. *'If I go there and they kill me, what?, who's going to*

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[323] *'¿Qué saca uno con eso?, no saca nada. Pierde la familia otra vez, pierde las amistades, la mujer, los hijos, lo que tenga.'*

[324] *'No tenía en quien pensar, no tenía obligaciones, no tenía hijos. Y ahora ya tengo una hija, ella me da muchos motivos para que yo no vuelva allá.'*

[325] *'Yo no lo hago o no lo haría por mi familia, porque ya la recuperé. Y yo pienso que si vuelvo otra vez a lo mismo de antes, voy a perder a mi familia otra vez.'*

[326] *'Mi mamá sufrió mucho, entonces yo, cuando llegó esa oportunidad, dije que la iba a aprovechar y no le iba a dar más sufrimiento a mi familia.'*

take care of my girl? Most certainly, she's going to stay with a stepfather and he won't treat her the same way I do' (Medellín)[327]. It is not only the children who may suffer from losing their fathers, the family as a whole may become exposed to insecurity due to renewed engagement. *'The only thing that hinders me from going back is my family. I try to keep my family out of any problem. They know where my family lives. In the end, it's the family that pays the price'* (Bogotá)[328].

The perspective of having one's own family or beginning a new relationship reduces the temptation of going back. *'[I thought about going back] but because I wasn't sure about things. And my mother was always very afraid. This was in the beginning. Later I moved in with my girlfriend and I forgot a little about this idea'* (Tierralta)[329]. The example of an ex-combatant who reengaged in new armed groups in the south of Bolívar and in Medellín after his demobilisation, demonstrates the potential incompatibility between an illegal life and having a family. *'I came here to Bogotá with my girlfriend, she's got family here. I said to myself already that here in Bogotá, no working with this people any more. [...] Now, I have to be aware that I'm going to have a baby. I can't risk myself any more. They kill you'* (Bogotá)[330]. He reported that his illegal life stopped the moment he became aware of his future child.

There are demobilised people who perceive their family as an empowering force, a positive social network. *'It motivates you. Knowing that you're important for somebody, or that at least your children, your wife, your mother misses you. That's what has motivated me'* (Medellín)[331]. The family provides advice and economic support. Some work with their parents (*'I work with my dad, I go with him and earn some 10'000 to 12'000 pesos [5 to 6 dollars] a day.'* (Medellín)[332]), some receive accomodation from their parents, and some are given work equipment from their siblings (*'When my sister doesn't need her motor-bike, she gives it to me so I can work with it [as motor-bike taxi-driver].'* (Tierralta)[333]). Parents may also be seen as a 'backup' in times of economic hardship. *'I feel good because my mother*

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[327] *'Si me voy pa'llá y me matan, ¿qué?, ¿quién le va a dar las cosas a mi hija? Seguramente queda con un padrastro y el no la va a tratar igual que yo.'*
[328] *'A mí lo único que me impide irme es la familia. Trato que la familia no se meta en problemas, ya aquí saben donde vive mi familia y ella es la que paga los platos rotos.'*
[329] *'Pensé en volver otra vez pero porque no lo tenía bien claro, y mi mamá todo el tiempo muy asustada conmigo. Eso fue en el principio y ya después me metí a vivir con una pelada [novia] y se me quitó un poco más la idea.'*
[330] *'Me vine para aquí, para Bogotá con la pelada, aquí tiene la familia. Pero yo aquí en Bogotá ya dije, nada de trabajar con esta gente. [...] Ahorita tengo que concientizarme que viene una niña. Ya no puedo ir a dar boleta. A uno lo matan.'*
[331] *'A uno lo motiva, saber que es importante para alguién, o que hace falta por lo menos a sus hijos, a su mujer, su mamá. Eso es lo que me ha motivado.'*
[332] *'Con mi papá tengo trabajo, voy con él, me gano 10'000 o 12'000 pesos en el día.'*
[333] *'Cuando mi hermana no necesita su moto, ella me la da para que la trabaje.'*

lives here, and my mom has helped me every now and then with food and everything. She has supported me' (Bogotá)[334].

Furthermore, various interviewees claimed that they could more easily reject proposals to join new armed groups by indicating family reasons. *'When they propose this to you, you just tell them, "look, I have a child now and I have to fight for it", so they say, "OK, all right", and nothing happens to you'* (Tierralta)[335]. This is an indicator of the high value attached to family life, and one that is even at times, respected by members of new armed groups. Being perceived as a good family person may also help to reduce the stigmatisation present in community (see Stigma within the Community).

All the aforementioned elements convert the family into a valuable protective shield against illegal activities.

Exposure to illegality

As identified in the literature, the family may not only work as protection against illegality, it may also expose ex-combatants to an illegal life. The positive potential of the family is limited by a paradoxic mechanism I call the 'overprotection dilemma'. This dilemma can be expressed by the two opposing phrases 'I would *not* go back because of my family' and 'I would *only* go back for my family', both of which are based on the same intention to protect the family under every possible circumstance.

Looking back at the past motivations for joining an armed group may shed some light on this mechanism. One's relationship to the family has favoured entry in distinct ways. For example, taking revenge for wrong-doing against a family member is a common condition (see Emotional Legacies of War). *'I joined because they killed an uncle of mine. They killed him and I thought, "let's see if I can get something back"'* (Tierralta)[336]. Today, the same person promises his mother that he will not go back since he does not want to make her suffer ever again. Another example of a victimised father demonstrates that protection of family members is a reason for entry: *'The guerrilla wanted to take control of the neighbourhood where we were working. They told us that they'd do away with my family, then they killed two of my sons. That's why I joined the group'* (Medellín)[337].

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[334] *'Me siento bien porque aquí vive mi mamá y mi mamá es la que me ha ayudado a veces con la comida, con cualquier cosa. Entonces ella ha sido mi apoyo.'*

[335] *'Cuando a uno le llegan a proponer eso, uno pues dice: "no, vea yo tengo un hijo y tengo que luchar por él", entonces dicen que "¡ajá!, todo bien", y no le pasa nada a uno.'*

[336] *'Yo entré por el caso de un tío que me mataron. Lo mataron y yo: "voy a ver si recupero alguna vaina, alguna vaina".'*

[337] *'La guerrilla que había donde nosotros trabajábamos, quería apoderarse de este barrio. Nos dijeron que iban a acabar con mi familia. Entonces me mataron a dos hijos, por eso me metí a esto.'*

A miserable economic situation had led various ex-combatants to join the paramilitaries. It was not just their own miserable situation however, but often the economic situation of their family members that ultimately compelled them to join the armed group. *'Things became complicated for us. The little children needed something, clothes, food. They [the paramilitaries] came and promised me the moon, I fell for the illusion and joined. The only thing I said to my brother was, "I want to progress"'* (Tierralta)[338].

Apart from protecting the family through revenge or economic support, a lack of perceived protection or maltreatment by the family resulted in leaving the family circle. The paramilitaries were sometimes seen by adolescents as the only way out of a poor family life. *'I said to myself, either I am going to suffer with my father or I stay here [in the group]. So, I preferred to stay here. [...] Yesterday, you were a civilian and your father hit you, today you carry your own rifle'* (Bogotá)[339]. Having a brother or a cousin who entered the armed group often facilitated the decision to enter. *'You enter the group as a child. You grow up with this. You grow up side by side with this people and you get contaminated. I entered the organisation due to a brother'* (Barrancabermeja)[340].

Looking into the past may provide some hints on mechanisms that could be repeated today. Various ex-combatants state that they would go back in the case of extreme misery, either for themselves or their family (see Economic Difficulties) or to protect themselves and their families in the case of insecurity (see Security Threats). *'If I saw that here, there's nothing more, and I can't do anything else and me and my family, we're dying of hunger, if I had to go back, I would do it. Knowing that I'm committing an error again, I would do it'* (Tierralta)[341]. 'Doing it for the family' is a recurring statement which for demobilised persons, does not represent any contradiction. *'The day when me or my family are living in misery, any proposal may sound tempting'* (Barrancabermeja)[342].

In addition, other family members may be engaged in criminal activities and expose the demobilised persons to further illegality. *'I have four children. Unfortunately, one of them killed a guy in these days. I've never taught him that, I've never inculcated that in him, I've*

[338] *'Se nos complicaron las cosas. Ya con los hijos pequeños, necesitaban una cosa, vestido, donde comer. [...] Llegaron y me pintaron todo bonito, caí en el engaño y me fui. Lo único que dije a mi hermano fue: "yo quiero salir adelante".'*
[339] *'Me dije: "o me voy a sufrir con mi papá o estoy acá". Entonces, prefiero estar acá. [...] Ayer era un civil, su papá le pegaba, hoy ya está con su fusil.'*
[340] *'Uno entra de la niñez. Usted se crió con eso, usted se cría al lado de esta gente y se contagia. Yo entré a la organización por un hermano.'*
[341] *'Si yo veo que ya aquí no hay nada y no puedo hacer más nada y me estoy muriendo del hambre con mi familia, si me toca volver, lo haría, sabiendo que estoy cometiendo nuevamente un error, lo haría.'*
[342] *'El día que yo esté mal, la familia mal, cualquier propuesta puede sonar.'*

never told him what I was' (Medellín)[343]. When family members are illegally active, the way back in is shorter. This is due to the high level of protection that family members are willing to provide for their siblings and children, as evidenced by the examples of past experiences. One interviewee even stated that some of his relatives are still members of a paramilitary group. His mother is supposedly a nurse of the Frente Cacique Pipintá,[344] which did not demobilise together with the AUC.

Apart from the overprotection dilemma, the family itself may be a centre of violence – domestic violence. Various ex-combatants are thankful for the psychological assistance provided by the ACR, which helped them to treat their family members 'the right way' – without violence (see Pact with the State). Some demobilised persons have never lived a conventional family life and therefore, have difficulty behaving toward their family members in an appropriate way, either after their homecoming or in the context of a new family situation. The emotional distance to the ex-combatant's children and wife especially, may result in domestic violence. This topic was rarely touched upon in the interviews. However, there were some allusions to it. *'They gave us psychologists because many of us came back with problems, abusing our children, our wives. We've turned around a 100 per cent. It's not tough mentally anymore, no more abusing our wives, now we've learned how to talk to people'* (Tierralta)[345]. Although it is unclear if this specific person maltreated his wife, this quotation shows that demobilised people may normalise domestic violence.

[343] *'Yo tengo cuatro hijos y uno de ellos en estos días desgraciadamente mató a un pelado. Nunca le enseñé esto, nunca le inculqué eso, nunca le dije lo que yo era.'*

[344] The commander of this dissident paramilitary group and 100 of its men have tried to enter the process of justice and peace since mid-2007 after the arrest of some of its most important leaders (Verdadabierta.com 2009).

[345] *'Nos pusieron psicólogos porque hay muchos que salieron con problemas de allá, maltratan a los hijos, a la mujer. Nosotros hemos tenido un cambio al cien por ciento. Ya no es difícil mentalmente, ya no se maltrata a la mujer, ya uno aprendió a hablar con la gente.'*

10.5. Policy implications

How much can a DDR programme influence the family sphere? It is difficult to deduce policy implications for an issue that is so private by nature. Also, the variety of different family paths and conditions of family life make it challenging to generate policy recommendations.

Generally speaking, it *would* be very helpful if DDR programmes *could* exploit and solidify the positive potential of families while restraining its negative potential for exposing ex-combatants to illegality. I formulate this in a hypothetical way since influencing this sphere may imply a much larger task: namely to change the mentality with respect to family protection. An improved security system, which protects families confronted with violence, may be a step in this direction. However, the context of DDR processes is often characterised by high levels of violence and a high level of acceptance for private protection (see Security Threats). Therefore, the negative potential of family life must be acknowledged by DDR workers and result in activities that limit this possibility by showing the negative effects of overprotection and creating trust in state institutions.

Besides the overprotection dilemma, problems related to domestic violence must be taken seriously. As highlighted by Theidon (2009), the dependence of an entire family on one benefit receiver may force them to tolerate poor behaviour or even maltreatment at the hands of the ex-combatant. Not linking the benefits only to the ex-combatant, but also to their partner or other family members may help in overcoming this problem.

Assuming that the family may be an important anchor for former combatants, those who do not count on a stable family in the aftermath of demobilisation may feel less committed to civilian life. For the group of demobilised people who have never had a family, nothing changed after their demobilisation. Without an alternative social network, they may feel more inclined to go back to illegality than other ex-combatants. The same may be true for people who have lost their families due to their paramilitary activity or during the reintegration period.

Although the sample constructed for this study is not representative, it is striking that more than half of the interviewed persons living in Bogotá do not report having a stable family structure. This is unlike the other three locations where the absolute majority is integrated into some type of family life. This may be due to the fact that single people are more open for relocation, be it for security reasons (see Security Threats), to search for jobs (see Ecnonomic Difficulties) or because of low community acceptance (see Stigma within the Community). The capital city Bogotá provides a comparatively secure, economically promising and

anonymous environmnent for ex-combatants. However, a large city is a difficult environment for establishing stable social networks. The reintegration programme could stimulate the process of social reintegration in large cities to avoid social 'ghettos' – where former combatants make friends only amongst other ex-combatants due to a lack of other contacts.

In the other interview locations, family structures seem to be more intact since the ex-combatants have always remained in the same zone (Medellín and partly Barrancabermeja) or because they came back to their native region (Tierralta and partly Barrancabermeja). In these cases, a stronger focus on strengthening family life may be opportune. Hence, adapting psychosocial assistance to address prevalent local needs may increase the effectiveness of the programme.

Part Three: Pulling Things Together

'We're just the same as anybody else.
As you can have feelings and fall in love with a girl,
the same can happen to us.'[346]
Demobilised person from Barrancabermeja, March 2009

11. Concluding Remarks

After my first night in Colombia, I was awoken by a small group of protesters chanting: *'Uribe paraco, el pueblo está berraco.'* A friend explained to me that they were protesting against the negotiation process between the government of Álvaro Uribe and the paramilitary groups. The slangy chant means something like 'Uribe, you paramilitary, we the people are pissed off'. Although this sentence did not express a majority position, it is an example of the passionate debates that paramilitarism has provoked until today.

This sparked my initial interest in the Colombian DDR process with the AUC. Soon after, I noticed that the perspective of former combatants was underexplored in the general literature on DDR, especially concerning their lives as distinct from reintegration programmes. It appeared crucial to me that before designing policy, we must have a deeper understanding of how ex-combatants live, think and behave. Hence, the purpose of this study was to add empirically grounded content to this underexplored topic. The present dissertation introduces a bottom-up approach that enhances the understanding of former combatants and DDR. It contributes to the development of the academic literature on DDR and to an enrichment of background knowledge for policy makers, in Colombia and elsewhere.

In the following concluding remarks, I begin with a short recapitulation of the main findings. Second, I explore some of the concepts that should have surfaced according to existing literature, but were nearly absent in the data. Third, I assemble some of the most important policy implications. Finally, I explore future avenues for research in the field of DDR based on the present dissertation.

[346] *'Uno es igual que cualquiera, que otra persona. Así como usted tiene sentimientos de enamorarse de una mujer, uno también puede.'*

11.1. Recapitulation

In the present study, I explored the following general research question: *What are the central themes in the lives of former combatants?* The short answer is: Emotional legacies of war, security threats, economic difficulties, a pact with the state, stigma within the community and a disrupted family life. However, these central themes are filled with content, with an inner life. These must be explored in order to grasp their significance. This led me to develop various subquestions to ask of the data.

The first subquestion was: *What are the ex-combatants' emotional legacies of war?* The emotional legacies of war are a result of their active time as paramilitaries. Ex-combatants look back at their motivations for joining the armed group and experiences during the war in different ways. Some see their motivations as legitimate, while others reject their own decisions as illegitimate. Some ex-paramilitaries perceive their experiences as positive, while others tend to emphasise the negative elements of their participation in war. These perceptions are mixed with diverse feelings that I call emotional legacies: pride, regret, resentment, nostalgia and war fatigue. The emotional legacies are part of how the ex-combatants currently understand themselves and also influence their behaviour today. Many former combatants measure and assess their current civilian life against their former life. Feeling better now or longing for the past time are common results of this comparison.

In a second subquestion, I asked the data: *What strategies do former paramilitaries apply to overcome challenging security situations?* Few demobilised persons stated that they feel completely secure. Ex-combatants are often exposed to security threats or at least perceive that they are. They apply different strategies to overcome security problems. Preventive strategies include anonymity (for example: 'nobody has to know that I am a demobilised person'), good citizenship ('if I am a good citizen, nothing will happen to me') and isolation ('if I isolate myself from other demobilised persons, I stay away from trouble'). Those who feel imminently threatened apply emergency strategies. Asking state institutions for protection is rather hypothetical, since very few ex-combatants resort to this strategy in the case of emergency. Relocating to another place or self-protection are more common strategies. One self-protection strategy with negative repercussions is when ex-combatants look for protection in an armed group. The common goal of all strategies mentioned above is to increase one's level of security.

What strategies do ex-paramilitaries apply to overcome challenging economic situations? The integration of ex-combatants into the formal economy is complicated. They often perceive themselves as not able or skilled enough to obtain employment. According to the

interviewed ex-combatants, the main reasons for their exclusion from the workplace are low education skills and employers who are prejudiced or stigmatise them. Thus, some try to directly confront stigma by interacting with the community. They also attend the educational offerings of the reintegration programme, with the aim of attaining long-term financial independence. A few ex-combatants utilise their existing skills and know-how and find employment in the security field. Others try to work independently or reengage in illegal activities. The economic support offered by the reintegration programme leads some to become dependent on state assistance. The objective of these strategies is to gain a stable livelihood.

How do they relate to the state? Demobilised persons seem to have a specific relationship to state institutions. The act of demobilisation is often seen as a type of pact with the state that implies varying obligations on both sides. From the ex-combatant's side, I distinguish between three levels of commitment. The demobilised persons with low levels of commitment agree to comply with the minimal requirement – not reengaging in illegal activities – if the state lives up to their high expectations. The highly committed ex-combatants perceive a high level of obligation on their own side, since the state has given them the welcomed opportunity to return to civilian life. The intermediate type sees an equal amount of obligations on both sides. The perception of the pact is not static but influenced by a variety of interactions. Positive interactions, kept promises and feared sanctions increase the level of commitment among ex-combatants towards the pact. Negative interactions, unkept promises and an absent state tend to produce a contrary effect – less commitment to the pact.

How do they relate to their communities? With regard to the community, the demobilised persons highlighted whether or not they feel stigmatised by community members. They often see themselves confronted with prejudices based on resentment (for example: 'they were killers'), fear ('they are dangerous') or envy ('they receive benefits from the state, we don't'). Ex-combatants employ different strategies and interactions with the community to increase their social inclusion. Some ex-combatants try to establish contacts with community members in different scenarios, for example through sports events or neighbourhood politics. Others behave rather passively: Some deny being demobilised persons and try to live anonymously; others avoid their fellow ex-combatants so as not to be identified with them; a last group simply state that they do not deserve to be stigmatised because they did nothing wrong, but on the contrary helped civilians in their role as paramilitaries. These strategies result in either more or less acceptance within the community.

How do they relate to their families? The relationship of ex-combatants to their families is difficult to categorise. A disruption during war-time seems to be the only commonality. There exists a wide range of family structures. Some ex-combatants go back to the same family they left. Others build new families with partners they met during their active time or afterwards. For some, participation in war or demobilisation led to a definitive disruption, and they end up alone. Still others have never had a family and have a difficult time establishing one. Despite the differences in family structures, it is seen as the most important anchor against recidivism. Somewhat paradoxically, the family can also become the impetus for reengaging in illegal activities, leading to what I call an 'overprotection dilemma': 'I would *not* go back to illegality because of my family' versus 'I would *only* go back to illegality because of my family'.

Apart from the general research question and the subquestions, I proposed a 'crucial underlying question': *Why do some ex-combatants reengage in illegal activities and others not?* Almost all interviewees spontaneously referred to this topic. Hence, it emerged both from the interviews and from the researcher's general interest. Reengagement in illegal activities is not a central theme in its own right. However, the topic of reengagement relates to all central themes: With respect to emotional legacies, a nostalgic and proud ex-combatant may be more prone to reengagement than a regretting, war fatigued former paramilitary; being exposed to security threats may lead ex-combatants to look for protection in an illegal organisation, which is not the case for those who feel safe; the financial attraction of illegal activities may be stronger for a former paramilitary who has difficulties in the legal labour market, than for a demobilised person with a stable job; those who perceive the state as not keeping its promises may feel less obliged to honour the minimal requirement of the pact, which is living a legal life; feeling stigmatised may produce frustration and reduce the potential for the community to act as a social protective shield; finally, an unstable family life exposed to insecurity and economic misery may make ex-combatants vulnerable to offers of illegal organisations.

The above-mentioned examples show that all the central themes play a remarkable role in the explanation of reengagement into illegal activities. In individual cases, one theme may upset the balance in the decision to return to illegality. Yet on an aggregate level, all the central themes produce more or less favourable conditions for recidivism. It is hence inadequate to explain this phenomenon by making reference to only one theme or another. A detailed exploration of all the central themes in the lives of ex-paramilitaries contributes to the overall understanding of reengagement in illegal activities.

11.2. Missing topics

In what follows, I describe some of the topics that could have been expected to surface based on the existing literature, but did not. For example, political participation does not seem to be an important topic for ex-paramilitaries. Only one former mid-level combatant explicitly complained about the marginalised political status of former paramilitaries. The generally low level of political interest expressed by the interviewees may be due to the low importance of ideological matters for the paramilitary forces. In other cases, such as the M-19 in Colombia, the FMLN in El Salvador, the GAM in Aceh, the Maoists in Nepal, or the KLA in Kosovo to mention just a few, the political dimension seems more important at the rank-and-file level. However, as related to political inclusion, various ex-paramilitaries interviewed for this study called for stronger involvement in the development of reintegration policy.

War trauma is probably one of the first things people associate with former combatants. However, clearly identifiable symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at least for a non-psychologist, are rather rare in the data. Some interviewees refer to drug and alcohol problems. It is unclear however if such addiction is directly related to war experiences or rather, have persisted since before or during the active paramilitary time. Only a few ex-combatants refer to episodes where they re-experience traumatic events. As such, PTSD may be one motive for radically breaking with the war past. This is a common feature of ex-combatants who exhibit war fatigue, which is one dimension of the emotional legacies of war. It is possible that ex-combatants with clear symptoms of PTSD did not want to participate in the interviews in order to avoid a potential confrontation with their past. This may have led to an underrepresentation of this phenomenon in the present study. Related to this topic, surprisingly few of the ex-combatants refer to victims of the paramilitaries' activities and almost never mention the actual victims of their own violent acts. This is likely related to the strategy of 'trying to forget' about war memories, something that is encountered in former abductees in Uganda (Annan, Brier, and Aryemo 2009).

Juridical benefits are another element that was expected to hold importance for ex-combatants. However, few interviewees referred to it. It is possible that this topic would have been more important for ex-combatants in other stages of their process, for example for those who are soon to be demobilised or who did so recently. The interviewees for this study demobilised at least two years before the interview. Since then, juridical benefits may have become something less important to them. After the end of data collection, the public debate on the principle of opportunity in November 2010 (see Footnote 44) may have reactivated this topic.

When speaking with experts in the field, they sometimes mention religiosity or spirituality as crucial themes in the lives of former combatants. With few exceptions, this element has not turned out to be important. Ex-combatants refer to God repeatedly, but rather as a manner or habit of speaking (for example: ‘God willing’ or ‘thank God’). Relatively few have described the church or evangelical organisations concretely.

The other critical issues discussed in the existing literature (see Introducing DDR), have mostly been addressed by the interviewees. However, acknowledging their perceptions, strategies and interactions provides policy makers with a deeper background knowledge.

11.3. Policy implications

There is no simple recipe for DDR policy. This is not only a consequence of the variation in DDR contexts (see Berdal and Ucko 2009; Muggah 2009), but also the wide variety of individual former combatants. The 62 former paramilitaries interviewed for this study do not have much in common. Choosing 62 interviewees among the total poor Colombian population may have produced a similar variety in terms of beliefs, behaviour and wishes. The general categories encountered should thus not give the impression that the 62 interviewees are a homogeneous group – far from it. The heterogeneous character of ex-combatants is the first reality that policy makers should take into account.

The individual level approach chosen for this study demonstrates that many of the central themes in the lives of former combatants over-reach the domain of DDR. The emotional legacies of war should be addressed by policy makers but in reality, would be difficult to influence. In the security domain, DDR depends on a wider policy framework. This includes the security forces of the state and development activities that tackle general security problems in the aftermath of demobilisation. When it comes to security, DDR efforts can contribute to the building of trust toward state institutions. However, if ex-combatants continue to see public authorities as corrupt and abusive, which is often the case in Colombia, they might look for security on their own.

Reintegration programmes can make a strong contribution to the economic situation of demobilised people. However, the success of economic reintegration depends ultimately on the employment supply that a post-demobilisation economy can generate. When it comes to the pact with the state, the DDR programme has an important role to play. Nonetheless, in the case of Colombian DDR, the expectations of ex-combatants were high due to promises made by their commanders and state officials before and during their demobilisation. This complicated the reintegration efforts from the beginning.

Ex-combatants often feel stigmatised by the receiving communities. Community-based reintegration is one of the current slogans to address this issue and make DDR more just. However, if it is not accompanied by effective transitional justice measures, community reintegration may fall short of achieving social acceptance for ex-combatants. Although reintegration workers insist on the importance of family for ex-combatants, much more than psychosocial help is not possible in this area. Threats to the physical integrity of ex-combatants' families may expose them to violence. Changing the mentality of overprotection and vengeance is beyond the reach of DDR programmes.

The importance given to DDR in the past few years – both with the first international conference on DDR in Cartagena and a large number of writings – must be reassessed. DDR is just one piece of a whole set of peacebuilding activities. Likewise, peacebuilding should not be built around DDR. The post-demobilisation period starts off on the wrong foot if the former perpetrators of violence attract a great deal of attention, while victims of violence remain marginalised. This undermines the legitimacy of DDR efforts. Also, DDR does not have the potential to be a central peacebuilding policy since it basically addresses the needs of a specific kind of persons, and cannot deal with the unhealthy structures of war affected societies. Let us not ask too much of a DDR process, otherwise it will not be able to deliver.

Even though there is not agreement on the criteria to measure the success of DDR processes, it seems intuitive that rising levels of insecurity and high numbers of reengaging ex-combatants are indicators of failure. Hence, the priority of DDR policies must be to address these challenges. Based on these findings, it is possible to make an 'informed guess' about some of the characteristics that may lead ex-combatants to recidivism. An ideal type of a 'high-risk' demobilised paramilitary is nostalgic of his war experiences, proud in his decision to join the armed group, feels threatened in terms of security, distrusts state institutions and does not feel obliged to commit to the pact with the state. He or she is frustrated with the economic situation or depends on the help offered by the programme, feels stigmatised and excluded by the community, and does not rely on a functioning and healthy family life absent from external threats. The more of these properties apply to one ex-combatant, the higher the risk of reengagement. Hence, it is necessary to work on all of these fronts.

In the following paragraphs, I do not repeat the implications for each central theme with respect to reengagement. Rather, I refer to strictly programme-relevant implications – sometimes in general terms, sometimes with the actual example of the ACR programme in Colombia.

With respect to economic reintegration, a reintegration programme may face a crucial dilemma. While the objective of economic reintegration is self-reliance, the financial support offered by the programme may make ex-combatants depend on it. For various interviewees, receiving economic benefits is an incentive not to search for an independent source of income. They may somehow reproduce a behavioural pattern of dependency – before, they depended on the AUC, now they depend on the ACR. The data further suggests that working ex-combatants who try to make a living on their own feel punished by the programme. Whenever they do not manage to attend the ACR activities, their monthly stipend is reduced. This works

against the spirit of economic reintegration. Every step towards financial independence should be rewarded rather than punished. If this is sufficiently acknowledged, an important disincentive for independent work could be eliminated.

Considering the social reintegration of former combatants, DDR programmes may have some drawbacks. Many interviewees prefer not to be known as demobilised persons and often try to avoid other ex-combatants, so as to not be identified with them. This is not only a strategy to overcome stigma but according to the interviewees, also serves as a preventive strategy against potential security threats. However, the programme necessarily reveals the identity of demobilised persons, as they must participate in reintegration activities at ACR service centres in order to obtain benefits. Also, the programme requires socialisation with other ex-combatants on a regular basis in psychosocial workshops. It is probable that some ex-combatants left the programme since they did not want to be known as demobilised persons and did not want to socialise with their former companions. By extending the benefits to other community members, the development of 'social ghettos' for former combatants may be avoided. Furthermore, it may make ex-combatants less clearly identifiable.

As an additional element of social reintegration, ex-combatants may be used as 'agents for the non-repetition of violence'. Some ex-combatants stated that on their own initiative, they give advice to teenagers in their neighbourhoods, encouraging them not to engage with criminal gangs or armed groups. Such demobilised persons could be systematically appointed to violence reduction programmes such as prevention of youth recruitment (Conpes 3673 2010) – a 'second generation' approach that complements classical DDR efforts (Kingma and Muggah 2009). There are at least two positive side-effects from this type of initiative: first, ex-combatants in charge of such important tasks feel socially empowered, providing a powerful protective shield against recidivism. Second, community members may be convinced of the constructive role of former combatants for their communities, and reassess their prejudices against the category of 'demobilised people'.

On a larger scale, stigmatisation within communities may also be the result of perceived weaknesses in transitional justice initiatives. Victims who claim to have no rights might say: 'At least don't take away my right to be angry with the perpetrators of violence!' Making compromises in terms of transitional justice may thus be a disservice for the social reintegration of former combatants (Sriram and Herman 2009). The victims' rights to justice, reparation, truth and above all non-reoccurence of violence must be respected. Otherwise, the DDR benefits are seen as unfair, and DDR as a whole loses legitimacy – which is the case in Colombia.

DDR programmes have the potential to reestablish confidence in state institutions. Programmes target people who by their very involvement in illegal armed groups, question the essence of the state – its monopoly of force. A reintegration programme signifies for some ex-combatants, their first positive contact with a state institution. The potential of these programmes in terms of confidence building – or let us even say state-building – is thus enormous. An invaluable opportunity is lost by not exploiting its potential. How can the full potential be tapped? Ex-combatants often regard the state as something distant, an entity soaked in corruption and mis-governance. Some symbolic gestures may work against these dominant opinions. For example, some former AUC members feel excluded from the development of the reintegration policy. Creating fora, letting them express their opinions in participative events, or even supporting their representation on a national and local level may convert them into active citizens. In this way, the ACR may cease to be 'something distant that does not live up to my expectations' and may be perceived rather as an 'institution in which I can participate'.

In the ACR service centres visited for this study, there were almost no demobilised persons among the staff. If even the reintegration programme avoids hiring ex-combatants, who else should employ them? By awarding well-performing ex-combatants with a job in the reintegration programme, confidence would be bestowed to the ex-combatant in question as well as the demobilised community as a whole. Otherwise, the ACR may set a poor example for private companies that are urged to employ ex-combatants. Local reintegration programmes in Bogotá and Medellín have shown that it is possible to include demobilised people within their staff.

Some interviewees claimed that the ACR is as corrupt as any state institution. In the media, they hear about huge sums of money dedicated to the reintegration programme and in the end, 'just a little money' eventually reaches them. Since they are in constant contact with the ACR, it should be relatively easy to avoid miscommunications with respect to expenditures. The reintegration programme could be an example of radical budget transparency.

With reference to the different interview sites, some distinctions can be made. To give an example, Bogotá and Tierralta mark the extreme ends of the spectrum in many respects: Demobilised people in Bogotá benefit from a comparatively calm security situation and a dynamic labour market. On the other hand, they often lack social networks in their communities and are distant from their families. For demobilised people in Tierralta, it is the exact opposite: there is high insecurity, almost no formal employment, but close ties to community and family. Although it is a bit speculative, these two contrasting locations

indicate that the hard side of reintegration (security, economics, institutions etc.) seems to be more decisive for the reintegration success on an individual level than the soft side (social networks). I understand success here as a low level of reengagement in illegal activities. As the numbers of arrests and murders suggest, the case of Tierralta is less successful in terms of reintegration than Bogotá. Consistent with this observation, the oft-mentioned advantages of reintegration processes in rural areas do not apply to the Colombian context. This may be due to the ongoing conflict that poses challenges especially in the countryside.

Various ex-combatants claimed that before entering the paramilitaries they were regular soldiers. Their military education made them attractive to illegal armed groups. Some were fascinated by military life and wanted to continue with their lifestyle after resigning from military service. Often, they were expelled from the military as the consequence of an infraction. Due to their military know-how, they are a potential security threat after their discharge. Hence, the government should pay increased attention to them. The Colombian context of persistent violence shows that reintegration programmes are not only necessary for former illegal combatants but also for former regular soldiers. This is moreso after the enlargement of the public authorities in the past few years.

Generally speaking, the practical use of the aforementioned policy implications is limited by the pointed focus of the present research. The empirical grounds are the voices of ex-combatants, and I largely ignore other potentially important actors in the domain of DDR. This limitation leads to future avenues for research.

11.4. Future research

This dissertation is an exploratory attempt to balance the current focus of DDR literature, which is usually policy-driven, with the individual perspectives of former combatants. It focuses on the central themes in the lives of former paramilitaries in Colombia. However, by targeting one object, one must leave aside other potential objects of study – these may provide the areas of focus for future research.

The present study has a strong geographical limitation. Although we can learn something from the example of Colombian ex-paramilitaries, the findings are ultimately context-dependent. Hence, it would be opportune to replicate this study in other geographical contexts, with members of different types of armed groups undergoing demobilisation processes. Also, a comparative study of ex-combatants in different geographical contexts may be useful for establishing a core of generalisable categories. To date, there have been no comparative studies on DDR that focus on demobilised individuals. Comparative approaches have solely targeted elements of DDR policy (for example Caramés and Sanz 2009).

This study targets ex-combatants exclusively. As I mentioned in various findings chapters, the inclusion of additional sources would give a more complete picture. For example, future research may include family members of the ex-combatants, friends, members of the community, victims of the ex-combatants' actions, local authorities, reintegration workers etc. Also, participant observation in neighbourhoods of ex-combatants may help to systematically complement and explain the assertions of ex-combatants. For example, a more inclusive approach was applied in a study about war veterans in Mozambique (Schafer 2007).

Although I refer to specific characteristics of ex-combatants at times, the present dissertation views the former combatants in a somewhat generic way. Future research may balance this shortcoming by targeting specific groups. What are the differences between men and women? How does age influence the preferences of ex-combatants? What differences exist between ex-combatants from rural and urban contexts? What are the predilections of recently demobilised persons versus long-term ex-combatants? At present, there are some studies that specifically focus on child ex-soldiers with an individual level perspective (for example Annan, Brier, and Aryemo 2009; Wessells 2007).

In the present study, I focus on concepts, not on numbers. In the future, the central themes and respective subcategories may be operationalised and measured. For example: How many ex-combatants use anonymity, good citizenship, isolation, state protection, relocation or self-protection as a strategy when confronted with a security threat? Not only might the subcategories and central themes be measured by frequencies, exploratory research such as

carried out here, may be used for developing quantitatively testable hypotheses. A large number of hypotheses can be established based on the findings of this study.

Quantitative methods may also be applied to test the aforementioned high-risk profile of a demobilised person. A questionnaire applying the categories established in this research may be used with ex-combatants who actually reengaged in illegal activities and are currently imprisoned, as well as with 'successful' cases of demobilised persons. This questionnaire could be designed around the central themes and subcategories. An experimental comparison between 'reengagers' and 'non-reengagers' may show which significant factors explain reengagement in illegal activities. A similar research design may be used for comparing reengagers in different geographical contexts and reengagers of different modalities (small-scale delinquents, members of criminal groups, mercenaries, reengagers in political violence etc.).

Regarding reengagement in illegal activities, a conceptual integration of existing explanations on different levels may also be useful. The interplay between individual motivations addressed in the present study (see also for example Bøås and Hatløy 2008; Richard Hill, Gwendolyn Taylor, and Temin 2008), group-level dynamics (for example Nilsson 2008) and structural factors (for example Walter 2004) may explain the phenomenon in a novel way.

* * *

In one of my interviews, I met with a particularly lively former combatant in his mid-thirties. After serving in the regular armed forces, he entered the paramilitaries and soon reached a mid-ranking position. For many years, war was his life and he loved it. According to his statements, he demobilised against his will and was reluctant to become a civilian in the early stages after surrendering his weapon. When he first reunited with his family, his children rejected him and he was considering going back to some illegal armed group. However, as time passed, he recognised his responsibility as the head of household and regained the trust of his children. He claimed that with the help of the psychologists from the reintegration programme, he became a caring father who worked hard for his beloved. To his neighbours, he was just a calm family man. Nobody knew that he was a demobilised person.

Almost one year after the interview, I read in a newspaper that he was arrested. As it turned out, he had been responsible for a massacre against civilians eight years earlier, when he was a member of the AUC. In the face of justice, there was no question: He has to pay for this atrocity.

He *was*, however, a successful case of reintegration.

Appendices

Annex I: General and DDR-related indicators of Colombia and interview sites

	Colombia	Bogotá	Medellín	Barranca	Tierralta	Date	Source
General indicators							
Demography: Inhabitants (Number of which in rural area)	44977757 (11079661)	7259597 (15899)	2816853 (35768)	191334 (18950)	86506 (49530)	2009	DANE
Education: Analphabetism	15.15%	9,73%	12,56%	11.59%	29.25%	2005	DANE
Security: Homicide rate per 100000 inhabitants	35.36	16.89	50.50	51.22	41.62	2009	Dijin
Vulnerability: Risk of a humanitarian situation[347]	N.A.	N.A.	0.00	0.65	0.99	2008	OCHA/University Santo Tomas
Infrastructure: Sewerage coverage	73.06%	97.92%	96.61%	82.00%	19.97%	2005	DANE
DDR-related indicators							
Total demobilised persons	50300	5393	4467	970	807	31.12.2009	ACR
Total active demobilised[348]	34004	3888	4461	689	764	31.12.2009	ACR
Collectively demobilised[349]	31671	1187	3555	877	800	31.12.2009	ACR

[347] The indicator of 'risk of a humanitarian situation' involves a large number of conflict, social, institutional response and economic sub-indicators developed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) of the UN and the University Santo Tomás (Sander Rangel and Villaveces 2009). It calculates the risk of a humanitarian emergency, with 1 being the highest and 0 the lowest risk.
[348] Active demobilised: The active demobilised persons are those who attended at least one reintegration activity offered by the ACR in the preceding three months.
[349] Collectively demobilised: The former members of the AUC who participated in a collective demobilisation between 2003 and 2006, but not the former members of the AUC or guerrilla groups who demobilised individually.

Active collectively demobilised	20267	835	3590	609	758	31.12.2009	ACR
	Colombia	**Bogotá**	**Medellín**	**Barranca**	**Tierralta**	**Date**	**Source**
Total high-school graduates	3933	765	133	121	73	31.9.2009	ACR
Collectiv. dem. high-school graduates	2516	160	85	106	71	31.9.2009	ACR
Total deceased dem. (after demobilisation)	2234	74	320	31	38	2003-31.2.2010	ACR
Deceased collectively demobilised	1966	25	306	29	38	2003-31.2.2010	ACR
Violent deaths collectively dem.	1365	22	274	29	17	2003-31.2.2010	ACR
Total arrested demobilised	1707	57	700	106	132	2003-31.2.2010	ACR
Arrested collectively dem.	1303	32	679	97	132	2003-31.2.2010	ACR
(of which Bacrim[350]-related)	(342)	(9)	(31)	(7)	(48)		

[350] Bacrim, according to official institutions, are the criminal groups ('Bandas Criminales') that emerged after the demobilisation of the AUC. We call them generically newly armed groups (see Describing the Colombian Context).

Annex II: Characteristics of interviewed ex-combatants

Date of interview	No.	Place[351]	Age group[352]	Gender[353]	Former faction or group	Date of demob.	Former rank[354]	Place of reinte.[355]	Partner relation[356]	No. of children	Job[357]	Reinte-grated[358]
Selected with the logistical help of the ACR												
21.01.2009	1	Bog	A2	1	Centauros	03.09.2005	0	0	0	2	0	0
21.01.2009	2	Bog	A2	1	Vencedores de Arauca	23.12.2005	0	0	1	3	1	1
22.01.2009	3	Bog	A1	1	Héroes del Llano y Guaviare	11.04.2006	0	2	0	0	0	-
22.01.2009	4	Bog	A3	1	Córdoba	18.01.2005	1	0	0	2	2	1
23.01.2009	5	Bog	A3	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	0	0	1	1	1
23.01.2009	6	Bog	A3	1	Centauros	03.09.2005	1	2	0	0	0	1
27.01.2009	7	Bog	A3	1	Cundinamarca	09.12.2004	0	0	0	1	1	1
27.01.2009	8	Bog	A2	1	Héroes del Llano y Guaviare	11.04.2006	0	0	0	2	0	-
27.01.2009	9	Bog	A3	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	2	1	2	1	1

[351] Bog = Bogotá, Med = Medellín, Bar = Barrancabermeja, Tie = Tierralta
[352] A1 = younger than 26 years old at the moment of interview, A2 = between 26 and 40 years old, A3 = over 40 years old.
[353] 0 = female, 1 = male
[354] 0 = rank and file, 1 = mid-ranking (self-reported and ACR)
[355] 0 = other place than before engagement in armed group and during active time, 1 = same place as during active time, 2 = same place as before engagement in armed group (self-reported)
[356] 0 = single, 1 = stable relationship (self-reported)
[357] 0 = no job, 1 = informal job, 2 = stable job (self-reported)
[358] 0 = not reintegrated, 1 = reintegrated (self-reported)

Date of interview	No.	Place	Age group	Gender	Former faction or group	Date of demob.	Former rank	Place of reinte.	Partner relation	No. of children	Job	Reinte-grated
27.01.2009	10	Bog	A2	1	Héroes del Llano y Guaviare	11.04.2006	0	2	0	0	0	1
24.02.2009	11	Med	A1	1	Héroes de Granada	10.08.2005	0	2	1	3	0	1
24.02.2009	12	Med	A1	1	Héroes de Granada	10.08.2005	0	1	1	3	1	1
25.02.2009	13	Med	A2	1	Cacique Nutibara	16.12.2003	1	1	1	6	2	1
25.02.2009	14	Med	A2	1	Héroes de Granada	10.08.2005	0	1	1	2	0	-
25.02.2009	15	Med	A2	1	Calima	18.12.2004	1	0	1	3	0	1
25.02.2009	16	Med	A1	1	Magdalena Medio	07.02.2006	0	0	1	1	0	1
26.02.2009	17	Med	A3	1	Héroes de Granada	10.08.2005	0	1	0	0	0	1
26.02.2009	18	Med	A3	1	Héroes de Granada	10.08.2005	0	1	1	2	1	1
26.02.2009	19	Med	A3	1	Héroes de Granada	10.08.2005	1	1	1	2	1	1
26.02.2009	20	Med	A3	1	Héroes de Granada	10.08.2005	1	1	1	4	1	1
17.03.2009	21	Bar	A1	1	BCB Sur	21.01.2006	1	1	1	2	2	0
17.03.2009	22	Bar	A1	1	Puerto Boyacá	28.01.2006	0	2	0	0	2	1
17.03.2009	23	Bar	A1	0	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	1	0	1	0	1
17.03.2009	24	Bar	A1	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	2	0	0	2	1
17.03.2009	25	Bar	A1	0	Puerto Boyacá	28.01.2006	1	1	1	0	0	1
17.03.2009	26	Bar	A1	1	Catatumbo	10.12.2004	0	0	0	0	2	-
18.03.2009	27	Bar	A2	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	2	1	2	0	1

Date of interview	No.	Place	Age group	Gender	Former faction or group	Date of demob.	Former rank	Place of reinte.	Partner relation	No. of children	Job	Reinte-grated
18.03.2009	28	Bar	A2	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	2	0	2	-	1
18.03.2009	29	Bar	A2	0	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	1	1	1	2	0	0
18.03.2009	30	Bar	A2	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	1	2	0	0	0	1
18.03.2009	31	Bar	A1	0	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	1	0	1	0	1
18.03.2009	32	Bar	A2	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	1	1	4	0	1
19.03.2009	33	Bar	A3	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	2	1	2	1	1
19.03.2009	34	Bar	A2	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	2	1	3	1	1
19.03.2009	35	Bar	A2	0	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	1	0	3	2	1
28.04.2009	36	Tie	A1	1	Mineros	01.10.2006	0	2	1	1	0	-
28.04.2009	37	Tie	A2	0	Mineros	01.10.2006	0	2	0	2	0	1
28.04.2009	38	Tie	A2	1	Córdoba	18.01.2005	0	2	-	1	0	1
28.04.2009	39	Tie	A1	1	Córdoba	18.01.2005	0	2	0	0	1	1
28.04.2009	40	Tie	A1	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	2	1	1	1	-
28.04.2009	41	Tie	A1	1	Catatumbo	10.12.2004	0	2	1	2	1	-
28.04.2009	42	Tie	A1	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	2	1	1	1	1
29.04.2009	43	Tie	A2	1	Héroes de Tolová	15.06.2005	0	2	0	1	1	1
29.04.2009	44	Tie	A1	1	Mineros	01.10.2006	0	2	1	2	0	1
29.04.2009	45	Tie	A2	1	Norte	10.03.2006	0	2	1	1	1	1
29.04.2009	46	Tie	A3	1	Norte	10.03.2006	0	2	0	0	1	1

Date of interview	No.	Place	Age group	Gender	Former faction or group	Date of demob.	Former rank	Place of reinte.	Partner relation	No. of children	Job	Reinte-grated
29.04.2009	47	Tie	A1	1	Héroes de Tolová	15.06.2005	0	2	0	0	1	1
29.04.2009	48	Tie	A2	1	Córdoba	18.01.2005	0	0	0	0	1	1
30.04.2009	49	Tie	A1	0	Mineros	01.10.2006	0	2	0	2	0	1
30.04.2009	50	Tie	A1	0	Norte	10.03.2006	0	2	0	2	2	1
30.04.2009	51	Tie	A3	1	Córdoba	18.01.2005	0	2	0	0	1	1
30.04.2009	52	Tie	A3	0	Córdoba	18.01.2005	0	0	0	1	1	-
30.04.2009	53	Tie	A3	1	Vencedores de Arauca	23.12.2005	0	2	1	1	0	1
30.04.2009	54	Tie	A3	1	Mineros	01.10.2006	0	2	1	2	1	1
Selected without institutional channels												
23.01.2009	1	Bog	A2	1	AUC	individual (2003)	1	0	-	-	2	1
03.09.2009	2	Bog	A2	1	AUC	individual (2004)	1	2	-	1	0	
03.09.2009	3	Bog	A2	1	Mineros	01.10.2006	0	0	-	-	1	1
22.10.2009	4	Bog	A2	1	Norte	10.03.2006	1	0	0	4	2	1
22.10.2009	5	n.a.	A3	1	Norte	10.03.2006	1	0	-	-	2	1
28.10.2009	6	Bog	A2	1	BCB Sur	31.01.2006	0	0	1	1	1	

Date of interview	No.	Place	Age group	Gender	Former faction or group	Date of demob.	Former rank	Place of reinte.	Partner relation	No. of children	Job	Reinte-grated
28.10.2009	7	Bog	A2	1	Mineros	01.10.2006	0	0	1	1	0	
15.04.2010	8	Bog	A2	1	Bananero	individual (2004)	0	0	0	0	2	
Former guerrilla members selected through ACR and other channels												
26.01.2009	1	Bog	A2	1	FARC	individual (no year)	1	0	-	-		
26.01.2009	2	Bog	A3	1	FARC	Individual (no year)	0	0	-	-		
26.05.2009	3	Bog	A3	1	M-19	individual (1984)	0	0	0	-	1	1
03.09.2009	4	Bog	A2	0	ELN	individual (2002)	0	0	-	-	-	1
22.10.2009	5	Bog	A2	1	ELN	Individual (no year)		0	-	-	2	
15.04.2010	6	Bog	A2	1	FARC	individual (2004)	1	0	1	2	2	

Annex III: Confidentiality agreement (Spanish)

Tesis doctoral de Enzo Nussio
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Consentimiento informado

El Entrevistado autoriza a Enzo Nussio (investigador de la Universidad de St.Gallen) y su equipo investigativo para utilizar el contenido de la entrevista realizada el ../.../.... (fecha de entrevista) en desarrollo de su tesis de doctorado. Enzo Nussio y su equipo investigativo se comprometen con el entrevistado a usar el contenido de dicha entrevista de manera anónima y unicamente para propósitos académicos.

Como muestra de consentimiento y compromiso, ambas partes firman el presente documento.

Entrevistado

Firma y fecha

Investigador

Firma y fecha

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Curriculum Vitae

2010-	Researcher at the Latin American and International History Department at the University of St. Gallen for the project 'Recipes for Modernity' of Prof. Dr. Corinne A. Pernet.
2009-	Lecturer at the Political Science Department at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá for the seminar 'Processes of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in the World' (2009-II and 2010-I) and the lecture 'Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods' (2010-II and 2011-I).
2009-2011	Researcher for the 'Toledo Centre for Peace' in two occasions for studies about 'Demobilised People: Victims of and Threats to Insecurity' (April to June 2009) and 'Demobilised People and their Impact on Urban Insecurity' (September 2010 to January 2011).
2007-2011	Doctoral studies in International Affairs and Governance at the University of St. Gallen (advisors Prof. Dr. Yvette Sánchez and Prof. Dr. Christoph Frei) to obtain the title 'Doctor of Social Sciences'.
2005-2008	Journalist for different Swiss print media (CASH daily, Handelszeitung, Basellandschaftliche Zeitung).
2000-2005	Studies in History (major), Philosophy (minor) and Communications (minor) at the University of Basel to obtain the title 'Licentiatus Philosophiae' (equivalent to Master of Arts).
1993-2000	High School in Chur (Graubünden).
1987-1993	Primary School in Domat/Ems (Graubünden).