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A decolonial feminist analysis of reincorporation:

Exploring women's and ARN's (Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization) experience in the FARC-EP reincorporation process in Colombia

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En dekolonial feministisk analys av återintegrering:
Undersökning av kvinnors och ARN:s (Myndigheten för återanpassning) erfarenheter i FARC-EP återintegreringsprocess i Colombia

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Abstract

These last decades, Colombia has experienced an increased violence and armed conflicts with several armed groups. One of these was the FARC-EP who was an organisation that fought for the farmers, poor and resisted the injustice structures. Their armed struggle with the Colombian government ended in 2016 after years of sitting together at the negotiation table. This resulted in the creation of a peace agreement that both parties had to follow to begin a new era of peace and start the reincorporation process. Moving forward to the present days, the country is now in a post-peace era where all the expectations have not been realized. Certain factors and events have caused difficulties and successes for the former FARC-EP members to be able to transition into civilian state. At the same time, the governmental institution ARN, have their role to facilitate this transition, and has as a result also affected their effectiveness in confronting these societal and political changes.

This thesis discusses the experiences of the reincorporation process in Colombia, specifically focused on former FARC-EP female members and ARN, to better understand how transition towards civil life works on a personal and institutional level. To critically analyse these experiences given the complex context, decolonial feminism is the framework for explanation in combination with semi-structured interviews and snowball sample, to interact with the realities. The discoveries present how violence in all its forms, have ties to both colonial and patriarchal norms, ending in straining the progress that individuals, collectives and institutions are working towards.

Preface

This study was facilitated through means from the SIDA scholarship for university students, which enabled the possibility of conducting a Minor Field Study in Colombia. The themes that this investigation discusses are linked to the Sustainable Development Goals from Agenda 2050 and the Swedish government's reform agenda *Development assistance for a new era - freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth* thematic priorities.

During the autumn of 2024 I interned at the organization Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy, where I had the opportunity to meet the ICLD Colombia mentor Lizbeth Guerrero Cuan, who encouraged me to apply for a Minor Field Study and further explore the subject of Colombia's history of armed conflict. The preparation and execution of the study would not have been possible to carry out in Colombia without Martin Fredriksson, my supervisor Karin Skill, Lizbeth Guerrero Cuan, Priscyll Antcil Avoine, UNVMC staff, ARN staff and every participant whom I interviewed.

I cherish every moment I got to speak with the participants of this study and the insights that could not have been experienced without your support and willingness to open up your past experiences and thoughts. I hope this work achieved in its intent to recognise the efforts of those that signed the peace accord hoping for a future where they themselves and their families could live.

Abbreviation

ARN	Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization/ Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización
AETCR	Former Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces / Antiguos Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación
ETCR	Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces / Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army / Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo
JEP	Special Jurisdiction for Peace / Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz
PRI	Programa de Reincorporación Integral
ZVTN	Transitional Local Zones for Normalisation / Zonas Veredales Transitorias de Normalización
UNVMC	United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia / Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Colombia.

1. Introduction

It is known that Sweden have been a longstanding advocate for peace in uncertain times. This can be explained by the purported “Peace damage” (Fredsskadad) among swedes, referring to the inability to understand how the world operates because of Sweden’s exemption from war in over 200 years. Whether this description is false or a fact of the swedes condition, there is a need to grasp what is happening in other parts of the world, other than Europe. War, catastrophes, armed conflicts are existing events. One of many countries that have been affected by the aforementioned is Colombia – a country that to many has more negative connotations than positive ones, certainly not plagued by “peace damage”. Decades of tumultuous conflicts, with multiple actors contributing to the ongoing situation in the post-peace era has generated a necessity to comprehend what is happening in Colombia.

This study explores the reincorporation of former female members from Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP), with a particular focus on the gendered experiences, examining the challenges they face within the institutional response, and the role of the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN). Understanding the specific needs and experiences of women in this reincorporation process is crucial to strive for a more inclusive and effective reincorporation strategy, especially in the context of Colombia’s ongoing peacebuilding efforts. The results of these efforts can be seen in the Peace Accord from 2016 that was signed between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP stipulating certain conditions to realize the accord's feasibility. The Colombian case of armed conflict can be an example for both the past and future generations in times where ongoing conflicts have sustained or emerged. (Landguiden, 2025; UCDP, 2023)

The FARC-EP is one of Latin America's most prominent and long-lived guerrilla movements. It was founded in 1966 during the “la Violencia”, a period in Colombia where there were political struggles between two main parties, Liberals and Conservatives. FARC-EP was formed as a reaction towards the exclusionary practices of political participation that the two main political parties shared. The organization's objective was to resist the then regime, end U.S. imperialism and attain socio-economic reform that, according to them, would result in a more equal society (UCDP, 2023; Garcia Perilla & Hernández Cetina, 2024, p. 4). Considering this, Colombia is a country characterized by deep divisions between urban and rural areas, as well as between rich landowners and farmers. The FARC-EP saw itself as a representative of Colombia's rural population and working class and used armed struggle as a method to achieve its goals. They controlled large areas of rural Colombia, where they established parallel systems of government and was able to rule their own justice courts. They used multiple methods to further their cause, such tactics included kidnappings, extorsions, protection money and ”collecting taxes" in their territories, to fund the organizations operations and put pressure on the government. Over the years, the FARC-EP also started funding its activities through their

participation in the coca economy, which further strengthened their financing but also made them a target for international anti-drug efforts (UCDP, 2023; Landguiden, 2025; Garcia Perilla & Hernández Cetina, 2024, pp. 5-6).

After several decades of conflict and attempts at peace negotiations, the FARC-EP and the Colombian government finally reached a historic peace agreement in 2016. In this agreement, the FARC-EP committed to lay down its arms and transition itself into a political party. Despite the formal end of their armed struggle, the reincorporation of FARC-EPs has been a complex process, especially in rural areas where the FARC-EP has previously had a strong influence (Landguiden, 2024). As of today, there are still fragmented factions from the former FARC-EP that still operate in various parts of the country and who are in an armed struggle with the Colombian government, due to the power vacuum that was left behind. However, what sets apart these factions, is that they do not comply to the 2016 peace accord. They are instead considered as dissidents from FARC-EP with distinctive new ideologies and objectives being in an ongoing armed conflict with the Colombian state (Garcia Perilla & Hernández Cetina, 2024, pp. 4,12-13).

To gain a better understanding on how the reincorporation process works in a post-peace era, this investigation intends to understand the institutional narrative from ARN and the peace signatories' expectations, to include both perspectives of those that are primary actors in the process. Decolonial feminism will be used as the theoretical lens to accomplish this and present both marginalised and privileged stances through the conducted field work in Colombia. The theory also reflects how I can conduct transparent research, considering my positionality as a researcher from the Global North. Finally, the decolonial feminist perspective provides a critical examination as to what seems to be part of western norm, for example gendered expectations, and urges that these should be questioned within Colombian society to grasp their origins and how individuals interact with them.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of my research is to investigate various experiences of this process in Colombia with a focus on the experiences of women involved in ARN's assignment, to understand how transit towards civil life works (in potentially gendered ways). This study also seeks to comprehend how ARN handles the reincorporation process, especially considering the specific needs women may have. The results will give an understanding of the lived experiences, current support systems that exist and critically analyse experiences of governmental reincorporation practices through decolonial feminist concepts such as coloniality of gender and coloniality of knowledge. As mentioned, through this course, the participants will not be limited to westernised categories but instead make their voices heard.

1.2 Research questions

The following research questions guides the work:

1. *In what ways do women perceive the reincorporation process to re-establish themselves in society?*
2. *In what manner does ARN practice reincorporation of women in reincorporation processes?*
3. *How do women in a reincorporation process experience coloniality of gender and coloniality of knowledge on their reincorporation in society?*

1.3 Limitations and delimitation

There have been several limitations and delimitations considered for this study. The conducted research took place on February 24th to April 27th in Colombia, specifically in the regions of Bogotá and Tolima. The choice of these specific region was not obvious, as I initially planned to conduct the investigation in the northern part of the country, specifically in the city of Valledupar, Cesar department. However, due to unforeseen local and geopolitical security concerns, I had to relocate my stay to Bogotá. Staying in Bogotá limited my fieldwork, particularly in terms of me personally not visiting conflict areas. However, the city's position did make it possible in the end for me to travel to the nearby department Tolima, where I did most of the in-person interviews and could thankfully conduct a field visit to the AETCR La Fila, Icononzo.

Furthermore, I took into consideration the Linköping University MFS Programme and Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs advises against visiting unsafe areas for Swedish citizens. Keeping this advice in mind, the study's scope has been limited to places where I had the possibility to visit women in their reincorporation process.

The study is focused on how ARN works with reincorporation at both local and regional levels. The individuals selected for the interviews are those that are part of the reincorporation process, meaning they follow the peace accords stipulations, as well as those working with women's reincorporation, specifically ARN staff. Following in-depth description on what it means to be part of the reincorporation process, will be explained in the next section.

1.4 Background

This section will give a thorough context on the instruments, policies and opportunities the individuals and collective in a reincorporation are expected to receive and practice.

1.4.3 What is the reincorporation process?

When the peace agreement was signed, the FARC-EP leaders and the national government did formally sign and began with the reincorporation process. The peace accord from 2016, affirms how the reincorporation process is meant for FARC-EP members to contribute an ending of the armed conflict and to be seen as a political actor who is for coexistence, reconciliation and social cohesion, with non-recurrence of the past actions. The process is meant to account for the interests and needs of the FARC-EP members and their families, by having a long-term vision for the civilian life and further strengthen the local democracy and the development of productive activity in the territories. In all its aspects, the reincorporation process will be carried out through an equity-based approach, with a special focus on women's rights (The National Government & FARC-EP, 2017, pp. 68-69) In the peace accord, it is stated that the reincorporation is framed as economic, social and political matters that are related to the individuals interest to have a lasting peace. For the political reincorporation, it means to create a functioning and legal political movement that fosters democracy and presents a political representation for the peace signatories, such as the political party COMUNES (Garcia Perilla & Hernández Cetina, 2024, p. 4) In the economic and social reincorporation, is there a set of guarantees such as: being provided with the basic income of 90% of the minimum wage considering they do not have another source of income, social programmes or plans for exercising the right to formal education, human development, environmental protection, health care, reunification of family and many more. (The National Government & FARC-EP, 2017, pp. 70-72; 77-78)

To be part of the population of the reincorporation process and their journey to civil life, ARN is the governmental institution that exists to accompany and facilitate this process (ARN, 2025a) ARN's objective is to serve the individuals in the different reintegration and reincorporation processes, while also taking an approach focused on territorial and community-based specificities, taking into account the country's multicultural diversity. By doing so, the institution will be able to carry on a sustainable work that strengthens reconciliation and coexistence within the territories. (ARN, 2025a) ARN has since the signing of the peace accord presented several policy documents to promote a policy that is in line with the population of the reincorporation process. One of these public policies, is the new strategy, called Programa de Reincorporación Integral (PRI), which aims to strengthen the capacity of individuals in the reincorporation process, their families, and their community to attain a dignified livelihood, contribute to peacebuilding and exercise their rights. This strategy was created in accordance with people in the reincorporation process and has more details on the importance of reincorporation processes on the individual, collective and territorial level. Furthermore, the use of this tool is to support the planification and monitoring of how individuals and collectives advance in their reincorporation process depending on their necessities, objectives, interests

and actions that they do from the PRI (ARN, 2024). To facilitate the use of this policy, it starts from four strategic lines: economic, social, political and collective:

- The economic reincorporation is set to improve the finances of the peace signatories and their families. The peace signatories therefore have the opportunity to take part of productive projects, that are initiatives for individuals or collectives to gain a sustainable financial income. (ARN, 2025b) Examples of these projects can be seen in business sectors like tourism, craftmanship, services, and distribution of coffee, honey and beer, from various parts of Colombia (ARN, 2025c) Each peace signatory are provided by the national government a one-time grant to initiate an individual or collective productive project. The total amount of the grant is 8 million COP, which is equivalent to 15 401 SEK (ARN, 2024, p. 20; FOREX, 2025).
- The social reincorporation is focused on building active citizens in which they also have access to their rights and their sole decision-making. To strengthen the capacity of these efforts, there needs to be support in education, health, psychosocial well-being, housing, and social protection. Further support could be the implementation of social programmes such as family reunification or accompanying those families of individuals in the reincorporation process who have deceased or disappeared (ARN, 2025b).
- The political reincorporation is explained as the advance of political participation and inclusion of the peace signatories. This does not only generate a public social transformation but also acknowledges the guarantee of exercising political and civil rights. The political participation of the peace signatories could for example be political candidatures or campaigns in local or national elections.
- Lastly, the collective reincorporation is meant to foster the coexistence, reconciliation, territorial peacebuilding and social cohesion, through dialogue to overcome stigmatization while preventing further damage to the collective efforts. As the affected territories of the armed conflict have residing peace signatories, it is crucial to have an understanding for each community's impact and needs from the conflict, as well as practices existing within the community to encourage peace reconciliation (ARN, 2025b).

1.4.2 ZVTN, ETCR and AETCR

In the peace accord, it was agreed among the main parties that Transitional Local Zones for Normalisation (ZVTN) were temporary and territorial-based zones were FARC-EP members could reside after disarmament (The National Government & FARC-EP, 2017, pp. 62-63). The closure of these temporary zones in 2017, descended in the Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation (ETCR) where another variant of these territorial zones were created to facilitate the transition of peace signatories to civilian life. In the ETCR zones, the state offers various types of training and support to help ex-combatants reintegrate into society. Around 24

ETCR zones were established for a two-year period, and they became centres for various programmes aimed at providing ex-combatants with vocational training, access to financial resources, and psychosocial support. In 2019 the zones were renamed Former Territorial Spaces for Training and Reincorporation (AETCR), but the structures and functions of the zones remained. The AETCRs serve as a permanent space for ex-combatants and their families. These zones serve the purpose of providing local institutions to the population who reside within them. The peace signatories that have managed to fulfil their initial phase of the reincorporation process, are free to move both inside and outside the AETCR zones (ARN, 2025d).

According to data published by ARN in April 2025, since the agreement was signed, there are currently 11 510 persons in the reincorporation process. However, not all peace signatories have chosen to stay in those ETCR or AETCR due to personal reasons. The current data, shows that 9681 people live outside of the AETCR, whereas 1607 live within the AETCR (ARN, 2025e) (ARN, 2025). Furthermore, the UNVMC reports that 82% of the peace signatories live outside of these areas and half of those live in urban areas such as Bogota, Cali etc, experiencing an urban reincorporation (Misión de Verificación de la ONU en Colombia, 2024).

1.4.4 The peace accord 2016, JEP and the total peace policy

During the year 2012, when peace talks had started between government representatives and FARC-EP leaders in efforts that could lead to peace negotiations. To ultimately decide if these efforts should be implemented or not, a referendum was held. The results were in favour for the No-side who were against the instillation of the peace agreement. However later that year, both parties of the final peace agreement, revised and submitted an updated version of the agreement to the congress, which resulted in it being passed through as the final peace accord as we know it today (Landguiden, 2025; The National Government & FARC-EP, 2017, pp. 1-2).

A result of the implementation of the peace accord in 2016 is the commencement of the justice component called the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP). This component is meant to prosecute those who committed severe crimes during the armed conflict. Moreover, it was created to give the victims of the armed conflict justice through the means of truth commissions and reparation of damages to promote a long-lasting peace. (JEP, 2024).

Further important events that occurred as part of Colombia’s continuing peace efforts, was Gustavo Petro winning the mandate of president following the 2022 elections. His victory has been seen as an expression of the country's new approach to peace efforts and implementation of the “Total Peace” policy (Landguiden, 2025). This policy is meant to move forward with ceasefires, negotiations and dialogue with armed groups to foster peacebuilding (Ministerio Interior, 2022). However, in the beginning of 2025, this optimism was put on a halt as the

president ended the negotiations with the largest guerilla National Liberation Army (ELN) as offensive attacks had erupted between ELN and the FARC dissidents in the Catatumbo region (International Crisis Group, 2025).

1.5 Theoretical lens

In this section, the theoretical lens will be presented and discussed as to its effective use. As previously mentioned, the chosen theory is decolonial feminism as it demonstrates the coloniality of people's experiences, both in society and in academia. Those that are deemed as ignorant or educated because of colonial and patriarchal structures that affect people's opportunities is in need to be viewed outside of the binary norms that is set (D.Mignolo & E.Walsh, 2018, pp. 39-41, 95).

The theory will build upon references from the anthology *Decolonial Feminism in Abya Yala* by Yuderkys Espinosa-Miñoso, Maria Lugones, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2021) to show several authors thoughts on how decolonial feminism can be of support to understand the result and analysis. Furthermore, the theory will identify colonial and postcolonial aspects of experiences, depending on the participant's social, economic or political situation. Also, it will show those that are seen as competent or not depending on their level of education and background. Additionally, the theory seeks to understand how marginalised voices have existing knowledge that challenges the ongoing colonial terms being subjected to (Hernández Morales, 2021, p. 98). There are several concepts that can be used to analyse marginalized experiences in society. The following concepts have been chosen to support my analysis for this study.

1.5.1 Coloniality of gender

Since the commencement of western conquest, there has been a mission to civilize the non-modern western societies. By the time those missions became successful and sustainable in their colonies, the idea of superiority grew as to those that are human and not. This superiority has resulted in numerous varieties of violence, one of these, coined by Maria Lugones (2021), calls this the *coloniality of gender*, referring to the violence that is being exercised and experienced in one's entire entity, dictated by western powers which do not exercise in equal manners to those that are marginalised. The violence can be seen as for example land dispossession, and degrading to community developments, because of the fuelled hatred by the west, seeping into becoming colonialism and capitalism, which has led to non-white women being subjected to hate. The concept also recognizes how Indigenous and Afro-descendent people being subjected to this systemic violence throughout history, has created a lasting damage for people's relations to themselves and their communities as part of the project.

The coloniality of gender has reduced people to be less than a human and instead to an animal, a maintaining dehumanisation to restrict agency and inventing sexualized stereotypes. Lugones (2021) explains how historically the oppression in the global south, has been by portraying the people as predatory animals and reinforced a gender system that cannot see "women" in the Global South as actual women part of the west. (Lugones, 2021, pp. 9-10; Espinosa-Miñoso, et al., 2021, pp. XIV-XV).

> "*It is a clear that given the coloniality of gender, non-white women, women indigenous to Abya Yala (American continent), and Afro-diasporic women are not women in the sense that white women are women"* (Espinosa-Miñoso, et al., 2021, p. XV)

Decolonial feminism marks how enslaved and colonized people are not seen as women and argues that we live under a so-called "Colonial/Modern gender system" (Espinosa-Miñoso, et al., 2021, p. XVI) who encompasses the modernity project with the colonial concepts that we use today (Curiel, 2021, pp. 48-49). Having accepted gender as a current belief, has diminished the resistance of this gender system and denied peoples humanity. Lugones (2021) states how "gender is a reality of social, economic and political organization, though the forms it takes are variable" (Lugones, 2021, p. 6) and rejects the idea of gender differences understood through biological and social reproduction.

As it is more difficult than it appears, the coloniality of gender can be seen in several forms, such as public policies. When creating new or updated policies, with the focus on gender equality, these documents are not norm breaking as to create an alternative understanding of what is human, since it perpetuates the current form of societal division into men and women. These policies declare their expectations of a woman and what it means for her to have agency, hence limiting the scope of the "woman's" real experience and sustaining current normative stereotypes. In the context of Third World countries, the public policies can be called as "*technologies of modern colonial gender*" (Rodríguez Moreno, 2021, p. 109) as it assumes "women" being able to follow a western normative idea that is based on colonial precedent. Another example is the *development device* being exercised by the Global North as part of recolonization, with the answer to solve the global south's problem on poverty. The device reproduces the gender system and creates a particular interpretation of how women are poor, illiterate, and victims, highlighting the formulation of what third world women are, that are in need to be emancipated through western belief systems. These two examples show how the work of homogenizing is an ongoing process, leaving out the potential diverse experience of a "woman" (Rodríguez Moreno, 2021, pp. 110-112).

1.5.2 Coloniality of knowledge

Seeing as knowledge itself is encompassed in the modern colonial sphere, decolonial feminism calls this the *coloniality of knowledge*, which goes against the positivist approach on the

observation of objectivity. Knowledge cannot be derived from western countries, who use universal concepts to be applied in the studied Global South as it suppresses local knowledge and practice domination over those that are presumed as fit to be researched. (Curiel, 2021, p. 49).

In addition, there have been several contributions to decolonial feminism and can be used to exemplify the concept coloniality of knowledge. One of such is from the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak, who has proposed the term *epistemic violence*, following on the notion of the effects when marginalised knowledge systems get silenced. The term is used as a critique for how women in the Global South are seen to have limited autonomy, who are merely victims. Thus, white researchers from the Global North fail to see the realities they are studying, reproducing the coloniality and exercising epistemic violence given their privileged position (Curiel, 2021, p. 46).

Another exemplification is the term *wasted knowledge* to visualize the consequences of coloniality (Hernández Morales, 2021, p. 84). What is determined as knowledge can only depend on what is categorised to be “the visible” and “the invisible”. For those that engage in “the visible” knowledge sphere, are those that associate with the current modern reason that has deemed what is legitimate. Whereas “the invisible” are the less significant subjects and deems the knowledge as modern waste. This modern waste lasts in times of resistance, as it cannot overcome the power structure of modernity, hence it encourages the assimilation of the subject to enjoy the fruits of citizenship, therefore validating the continuity of wasted knowledge. (Hernández Morales, 2021, pp. 83-85).

1.5.3 Reflexivity

Critique regarding the relationship dynamic between those that are being studied, and the researcher is highly dependent on the researcher's position. Decolonial feminism affirms how one's privileged position can establish epistemic violence. Acknowledging this, the use of reflexivity, focuses on the researcher’s positionality in efforts of conducting ethical research, however from a decolonial feminist approach this is not enough and is therefore also asking that the researcher makes a “double turn” (Boer Cueva, et al., 2024, p. 10). This is defined as having the awareness of the relation between the structural power systems and my positionality, simultaneously taking accountability and being committed to the research which reflects on reciprocatory respect. In terms of this study, this will be presented through the field work, that will be self-critical and show the importance of nurturing the relationship with participants and myself, the researcher, who all have contributed to this research, while at the same time acknowledging the injustices and not reproducing coloniality. There is an intentional choice of being transparent about who I am as a researcher, as it also is an ethical decision in cultivating

knowledge through the theoretical lens and discomfort of confronting the realities. (Boer Cueva, et al., 2024, pp. 10-14,19; Curiel, 2021, pp. 53-54,56). This further questions as to under what circumstances the investigation takes place - further clarifications will be discussed in the subsequent part.

1.6 Methodology and material

This section will engage with the methodology and the epistemological framework that has been used for this investigation, in addition as to how the material was collected. There are two main methods used: semi-structured interviews and snowball sample. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how I prepared for the study and the decisions that were made as I conducted it.

Vignette: Reflections from the field work

In all the conducted interviews I felt a joy to have people wanting to participate in the investigation, especially welcoming me with open arms whether we met digitally or in real life. Although I did and still do feel pressure to present their realities as they have told them, especially because I do not want to misrepresent their experiences. There were several times were I felt that I did not really know what I was doing, since the method books on "How to conduct a semi-structured interview or a field work" does not exist, I had brought the books in hopes to be guided, but I was more confused and found it hopeless because I could not relate to all of the successful field work studies. So, then I decided, well I might as well use common sense in the hopes that it would prepare me. But honestly what I should have prepared myself for was not the methodology, research question, theory, but instead the intricacy of the Spanish language. I realised that in the interview with one of the participants, Dayana, that I had not adapted the interview question to be gender sensitive. I panicked, my spanish vocabulary that I have known my whole life was challenged, for good reasons, but I underwent millions of possibilities to have gender sensitive language that I had not learned or met.

1.6.1 Interpretivist approach

Interpretivism or interpretivist approach is an epistemology which is contrary to the positivist view and has a history of being influenced by various intellectual traditions, such as symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics and phenomenology. It assumes that epistemology can see the differences between the object of natural science and humans. To use the interpretivist approach, will there be a methodology which promotes these existing differences and includes social actors' (institutions and humans) subjective experiences to be interpreted as what these experiences imply, how they are interpreted by others, and what explains this perception (Bryman, et al., 2025, pp. 45-46). For the context of this thesis, the main social actors are identified as the women in the reincorporation process and the ARN who interact with each

other. Hence, in efforts to see the differences, the following methodological approach is selected to realize this.

1.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

For this study, semi-structured interview was selected as a method to collect the research data that will be analysed. The use of this qualitative research is due to the focus being on the personal experiences and remarks the interviewees' diverse background. The reasoning behind choosing semi-structured interviews was to allow the interviewees to recount their experiences and where my role is to maintain a fruitful discussion without directing the interview in a strict form. To also acknowledge overlooked questions, aspects and responses, I made certain to ask if the participants considered that I had forgotten to ask about something that is worth addressing. By considering these perspectives, the study could attain so-called *rich points* that were not detected beforehand, due to not enforcing structured interviews (Alm, 2019, pp.70-72).

I performed a total of thirteen semi-structured interviews, with ten interview participants who formally signed the peace accord, and the remaining three interview participants are working or have worked in the institution ARN. In preparation for these interviews, an interview guide was created based on the research questions, and had a set of open-ended questions, furthermore this interview guide was first written in English and later translated to Spanish (see Appendix A and B), for the participants to understand the interview questions. However, I am aware that more of the academic work in this field should be written and translated into Spanish to broaden its reach. The formulation of the questions aimed to enable different experience of the reincorporation process and the institutional response. All interviews were held in Spanish and were recorded with the participants consent, to transcribe and correctly translate their words. The interviews took place in person and online, considering the factors of accessibility to the region and the poor internet connection, therefore, out of the total six digital interviews, two were phone calls and the rest were video calls. This may have affected how they perceived and answered the questions. It is important to note that in the interviews that were conducted onsite at the AETCR La Fila, both ARN and UNVMC (United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia) personnel who helped me getting access to the area, were present during and after the interviews. As this was not something planned, I recognize how the weather conditions of heavy rain played a part in how the interviews were conducted, as they were all indoors in the participants' homes. I am also aware of how these circumstances could affect the participants' answers, on the other hand, I do agree that their presence eased participants' opening up and conveying their own stories, as well as facilitating my position as a researcher to receive a welcoming approach considering the short time limit for our field visit at the AETCR.

1.6.4 Recruiting participants through the snowball sample

To recruit interview participants for this study, I have used the snowball method to gain a diverse idea of women's different experiences. The snowball sample implies that the researcher recruits a specific and relevant group of individuals to the study, and lets participants refer to other potential participants who are of interest for the research study and interview them as well (Bryman, et al., 2025, pp. 468-469). Gradually, the number of participants will increase the more the researcher networks and interviews with people. This method can be effective when investigating specifically about certain groups that are difficult to reach, which applies for this study considering the stigmatization and uncertainties of openly speaking as a person in a reincorporation process, which the participant also recognized. However, there are some non-favourable turnouts when using the snowball sample, which Bryman (2025) discusses can be caused by the sensitive subjects that are not publicly discussed, which affect the outcome of the base group of your snowball sample (Bryman, et al., 2025, pp. 468-469).

In order to gain a diverse group of participants, with the support onsite from my contact person in Colombia Lizbeth Guerrero Cuan and professor Priscyll Antcil Avoine, I managed to come in contact with ARN personnel, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC) and their local UN office in Tolima, who from then on could facilitate the contact with women in reincorporation processes that live in different regions in Colombia, including a perspective of women living in rural or urban areas.

Prior to my visit to the AETCR La Fila, in Icononzo on the 23rd April, I was informed by the UN personnel that assisted my visit to the area, that there could be an occurrence of the population not wanting to participate in my study, as they may feel that their participation will not lead to anything (Krause, 2014, p. 65). Prior context for this specific AETCR, is that previous researchers and journalists have visited the area several times and interviewed the population but have failed to explain the gains of participating (this is central to not contribute to as I have a decolonial feminist lens). This phenomenon is what Monica Krause (2014) calls "assessment fatigue", meaning how participants do not see the value in participating since they have been asked many times before without their needs addressed. (Krause, 2014, pp. 53,65) Having this in mind, the UNVMC and ARN personnel helped me with gaining access to the AETCR La Fila and the women who had previously known about my interest in conducting a field study and my upcoming visit. Although, as I had received help in preparation for this field visit, on the 23rd of April, I want to point out how I have investigated the reincorporation process in Colombia and value the informal conversation that I have had to gain a thorough understanding. Nevertheless, Alm (2019) discusses how a researcher influences those they are studying, and Bryman (2025) discusses what different roles a researcher can hold (Alm, 2019, p. 66; Bryman, et al., 2025, p. 487).

In the beginning of selecting women who would want to be participants for this study, I had a few criteria as to their participation and since the study is focused on the reincorporation process, I was interested in women who had formally signed the peace accord and who still are in their reincorporation process. Neither age nor ethnicity have been main criteria, as I wanted to have a broad perspective of participants and not limit my range to a certain age group or geographical area.

1.6.5 Methodological considerations

Having demonstrated the decolonial feminist reasoning and the arguments on gender, this thesis will be using the term *Mujer* (Woman in Spanish) in terms of how ARN uses, and the former FARC-EP used the gender systems. However, I do acknowledge how some of the participants in this thesis can encounter the meaning of a woman in different ways, which challenges the normative gender system as we know it today.

I also want to highlight, the use of the Spanish language in my interviews is both an advantage and disadvantage as it is a heavily gendered language and therefore hinders interaction through a gender-neutral language. However, in recent years, a more diverse and rich development in language has been added, giving more opportunities to use gender neutral expressions. Keeping this in mind, the interview guides are not gender sensitive as it had not been predicted that one of the participants would identify as non-binary. In hindsight, the interview guide could have been more amplified to have a more including language for all of the participants.

Following as some participants have been recipients of threats and violence, thus square brackets [] will be handled in the quotation to censor specific locations that could be easily identified and linked to the participants, further risking the participants integrity. However, to acknowledge the geographical diversity this study has with participants representing either urban or rural areas, it will be known the region the participants are based in. The following method table presents this information:

Semi-structured interviews

Interview reference and region	*Role*	*Interview date*
Nelson (Bogotá)	Former ARN staff	2025-04-02 - Digital meeting
Meri (Putumayo)	Reincorporation process	2025-04-01 – Digital meeting

Hanna (Cauca)	Reincorporation process	2025-04-10 – Digital meeting
Tatiana (Cauca)	Reincorporation process	2025-04-14 – Digital meeting
Mabel (Cauca)	ARN - Subdirector for the territorial group	2025-04-21 – Digital meeting
Gloria (Tolima)	Reincorporation process	2025-04-21 – In person interview
Sandra (Tolima)	Reincorporation process	2025-04-22 – In person interview
Carolina S (Tolima)	Reincorporation process	2025-04-22 – In person interview
Jasmine (Tolima)	Reincorporation process	2025-04-23 – In person interview
Dayana (Tolima)	Reincorporation process	2025-04-23 – In person interview
Lizeth (Tolima)	Reincorporation process	2025-04-23 – In person interview
Juliette (Bogotá)	Reincorporation process	2025-04-24 – In person interview
Carolina G (Tolima)	ARN - Gender Liasion Officer	2025-05-16 – Digital meeting

1.7 Ethical considerations

This study is about testimonies from women who are in a reincorporation process after guerrilla warfare and armed violence and may share traumatic experiences, or those who work with women who are in the reincorporation process. Considering this, it is vital to adhere to ethical aspects in conducting the research. The Swedish Research Council guidelines and principles (Vetenskapsrådet, 2024) for research will be followed. In consideration of this, all participants have been presented with the purpose of the study and what their participation entails. They were further informed that their statements will be used with confidentiality without others involvement and that they are welcomed to refuse any corresponding question that they may not want to answer. Furthermore, every participant has been informed that they have the right to withdraw from the interview and the study until the thesis is published. To secure participants' involvement in the study, they have been asked to state if they prefer to be referred to with their full name or a pseudonym that they, or I, will assign to them. However, seeing

that the security situation has escalated this year, the peace signatories will not use their real names, but as for the ARN personnel who are not in the same position, their names will be disclosed. Having this in mind, neither Swedish nor European law on GDPR applies in Colombia, thus there will still be taken into consideration general research ethics principles to correctly process and protect the personal data that will voluntarily be shared, and therefore the importance to respect the individual's dignity is needed (Vetenskapsrådet, 2024, pp. 60-62).

Besides the Swedish research ethics, there is a need to take international research ethics guidelines into account, such as the Vancouver recommendations which state the importance of authorship. These recommendations are used to facilitate who is defined as an author, non-author contributors and contributors to understand each actor's responsibility in the scientific work that is being submitted. By following these recommendations, this investigation can demonstrate that contributors who provided great support to the research, should be credited as author and understand while also taking accountability to the implication this authorship has for the published research (ICMJE, 2025).

1.8 Previous Studies

This section will present previous research on FARC-EP, giving more insights on the different perspectives that have been used to analyse women's experiences pre- and post-signing the peace accord 2016. Some of the prior studies present indigenous women's experiences, which link to the decolonial feminist lens used in this study.

As aforementioned, the women who were part of the former FARC-EP have a dynamic experience. But having the same gender does not imply that the experiences and thought process are all universal. For example, a woman has been affected by the armed conflict in Colombia, while having a different perception than another woman who was part of a guerilla organization. Examples as such, are presented by Santamaria and Hernandez (2020) in their research, and how one of the participants, Juana from the Kankuamo indigenous group and former member of the FARC-EP, explains the stigmatization of indigenous female ex-combatants. There is a tendency where male local leaders in her community have expressed skepticism about female ex-combatants being reincorporated and that she and other women are not seen as indigenous women but as guerrilla soldiers. These local leaders' perceptions and expectations of women, who have previously established traditional gender roles within the ethnic group, are challenged by the armed conflict because it allowed the women to engage in their political leadership. Juana's experience was further challenged during her return into society because she had to assume a subordinate position in relation to her equal role she held during her time in FARC-EP. However, Juana's reincorporation process differed from the collective demobilization process that FARC-EP signed in the peace accord, as she used alternative opportunities and sought out other political organizations to support herself

(Santamaría & Hernández, 2020, pp. 125-127). Indigenous female reincorporation is an aspect that previous gender studies, in the Colombian context, often forget. As women's experiences differ, especially among indigenous women, the difficulties and restraints in reincorporation occur when re-entering into one's past life, as it differs from FARC-EP gender norms, considering the gender values which the indigenous communities have, and FARC-EP had. The acceptance of rejoining one's community, after having suffered from the armed conflict, is a difficult process as the collective may not be susceptible to change their attitude.

Within the study by Antcil Avoine (2024) there are several concepts presented to frame these experiences. Two of these are: *liminality* and *borderlands*, which describe women's position in their space of action experiencing their situation. Anticl-Avoine (2024) uses these concepts when interviewing women of peasant background, which is further seen in the results with an interview with Nelly, an ex-combatant, who expressed anxiety about the reincorporation process, and characterized it as a long drought wait for new developments. This contrasted with Nelly's time in the FARC-EP, where she believed her life had a purpose with clear tasks, aimed at creating change. In her current situation, this waiting is experienced as merely part of surviving in her civilian state (Anctil Avoine, 2024, pp. 1676-1677). The conclusion being made is that the liminality is explained in three ways to encompass its complexity from the Colombian context, which are: 1) Liminality is political for Fariana's (Term referring to female militants from FARC-EP) reincorporation because they are in an ongoing situation of both war and peace, 2) Spatio-temporal liminality occurs within the ETCR zones and challenges the women's political reincorporation, having anxiety as a common feeling, 3) Embodied liminality, where female ex-combatants from the FARC experience a split within themselves because their identity is in constant flux (borderlands identity), from being guerrilla soldiers to being reincorporated into a civilian state to which they have been promised (Anctil Avoine & Weber, 2025, pp. 1683-1684).

In view of Colombia's history, where former guerrilla members are at great risk of being stigmatized in society because they are associated as perpetrators, criminals, murderers, terrorists, etc. Lopera-Arbeláez (2023) uses Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and presents various testimonies from former female FARC members who believe that society opposes female guerrilla soldiers because there is a fear of those women who took up arms. This opposition can be regarded as the stigmatization, does not end when entering one's home, instead it continues within one's own family, where the woman's existence and presence are seen as a burden, in relation to their male counterparts who are seen as heroes within the community. For example, former FARC-EP member, Tatiana shares that when they go back to live with their loved ones, their inheritance and land rights are neglected. Also, the men who took up arms are seen to have a higher status and power, and thus become part of the family's pride, while a woman is received with contempt and shame, and thus remains confined to the private sphere, the home. Furthermore, there are two phenomena which hinder women's

opportunity to achieve equality, which are: 1. gender-based violence and 2. unpaid household and care work that risks economic insecurity (Lopera-Arbeláez, 2022, p. 7) The consequence of women becoming too confined to their homes, is the need from authorities such as ARN to be in support and provide opportunities that are close to the women. One suggestion from Lopera-Arbeláez (2023) is that ARN should implement a more peasant-oriented disposition to promote women's leadership in the long term in sustainable programs and in decision-making. However, it is further emphasized that when women are reincorporated and disarmed, a feminization occurs and gendered expectations in Colombian society are imposed, which are difficult to oppose, having women to forcefully readjust whether they want to or not (Lopera-Arbeláez, 2022, pp. 7-11).

Another aspect of the Colombian armed conflict which has been studied, is the rapid rise of childbirth in the groups most affected by the war, such as *farianas* (Anctil Avoine & Weber, 2025) This so-called baby boom, a consequence of the peace accord. With increased dialogue and negotiation, former FARC-EP members could see the opportunity of becoming parents and begin their life of parenthood which had been difficult during life in FARC-EP. Antcil Avoine (2025), explains that the signing of the peace accord gave women the opportunity to create families, but also the opportunity to get pregnant gave a new purpose for the post-signing period. Within this Colombian moment in time, babies being born became a sign to an upcoming future with new conditions that enable them to choose the possibility of becoming a parent. Babies even became a symbol of peace and its continuity for forthcoming generations. However, this has also allowed the perception of women engaging in motherhood, now becoming non-threatening whose role changed from an ex-combatant to a caring mother (Anctil Avoine & Weber, 2025, pp. 14-15). Regardless of the changed gender roles, the initiation of motherhood, can be an ingredient in strengthening the self-identity and communicates a plan for the upcoming future. Considering this, there are challenges for women in relation to their practice of political and socio-economic reincorporation. This can be seen in the ETCR, which showcases through the interviews conducted by Antcil Avoine (2025), and they confirmed how the post-conflict era expects women to continue on the household-work, taking care of their children in contrast to the men who work in the agricultural sector (Anctil Avoine & Weber, 2025, p. 15).

2. Results and analysis

This thesis focuses on women's experience and ARN's work in the reincorporation process in Colombia. In the following sections, the results of my analysis will be presented and will be divided into thematic experiences, including decolonial feminist concepts: Coloniality of gender and Coloniality of knowledge, and the supporting terms. By applying this theoretical lens, the results will provide insights into notions from coloniality of gender and coloniality of knowledge of the women in the reincorporation process and how the ARN staff exercise their

work. In total, testimonies that will be presented represent nine women and one non-binary who currently reside in either rural or urban areas, whereas there are three participants representing ARN's point of view, one man and two women.

2.1 Insecurity

There have been several participants who have voiced their concerns of insecurity as one of the main challenges that they confront with being in the reincorporation process. Some have shared how they have received threats which have led to displacement or recalling a sustaining fear internally. However, what these experiences show similarly is that they do not only affect the recipient of the threats, but instead their families which lead to more concerns of safety and the path towards peace. Gloria shares how the threats led to her and her family being displaced from 2022 and had to move to another department and could later return to Tolima department, subsequently this did not end the feeling of insecurity:

> *"We returned last year in September, again this year in March, on my daughter's birthday, once again we received threats from the same group. They already had our location, so once again we felt that insecurity, that fear, because believe me, being here [Tolima] hasn't been easy. /.../ As a peace signatory, I feel very unsafe due to the threats, sometimes you feel like you are being restricted. I want to move forward with this (Coffee cooperative), this is part of my dream. I always dreamed of becoming a good leader, you know, gathering with the community, support the children. So, when you're forced to move somewhere else, starting over again in another space. For you to say: "I'm going to be here for a year" and suddenly having to leave and begin again somewhere else, those dreams and projects become short."* (Gloria)

As seen, the threats received is a show of restriction of one's agency and mobility. Since, the threats affect both Gloria and her family, it can be interpreted as the coloniality of gender is pertaining and rules over women's opportunities to provide for her family and community. The insecure conditions show how the patriarchal norms are reigning because they do not allow Gloria to occupy space and exercise her own agency. Furthermore, being displaced gives the impression of not having the opportunity to reflect and plan towards the future since those pertaining to threats, which stem from colonial and patriarchal norms towards Gloria, prohibit aspirations and one's freedom. However, it can also be interpreted that Gloria's aspirations towards becoming a good leader, can be viewed as a resistance toward the current norms. Espinosa-Miñoso, Lugones & Maldonado-Torres (2021), describe how the violence of the coloniality of gender presents in destroying people's livelihood and oppressing their voices by using hatred, capitalism, and colonialism (Espinosa-Miñoso, et al., 2021, p. XIV). Regarding as to who was delivering these specific threats, it was not specified during our interview, however Gloria did mention how previous threats from 2021 were made by armed groups, who targeted them thinking the population of reincorporation did have a lot of income, considering that they receive aid from the government.

Similar experience of receiving threats, is shared by Jasmine, who lives in the AETCR La Fila, stated how she also had been receiving threats on various occasions, which did not give implications for herself but also her family. She describes one of the more recent threats as follows:

> *In September [date] last year, I received a video where they mentioned my pseudonym and my real name, telling me I had to present myself, but they didn't say where, to whom, nothing. They said that if I didn't show up, I would become a military target. Then I received a pamphlet in December in [name of the location]. I was there in January, traveling with my husband and children, and I got another pamphlet, I still have all of them. I almost don't like it when someone says"let's sit down and analyse this." I really don't like looking at those things because I feel like I'm reliving it all over again, and so I try to let it go unnoticed. And just recently, on February [date], I got another call around 9 at night, they told me again that they had called several times and I hadn't shown up. It is 9 pm and I'm with my daughter. /…/ I sleep peacefully when there are people around, but when I'm alone, I don't sleep. I stay alert, like we used to when we were in the jungle. You just can't be calm like that"* (Jasmine)

As to who the persecutors are in this case is not specified, however Jasmine did point out that she is not running from anyone from what she knows, the reasoning of whoever is sending these threats are difficult to understand. Being a peace signatory and living in an AETCR, does not guarantee any less insecurity for the recipient. It could be argued that the alertness that existed during her time in the FARC, has not fainted away in her civilian life and remains in the post-conflict time. The threats are tools for perpetrators to intimidate the reincorporated and sustain their control over them through the power structures that they can exert. What further challenges is that for Jasmine, being in the reincorporation process, her loved ones get affected by the threats, which further spreads the insecurity to the rest of the family. To intentionally avoid past events of receiving threats, that evokes discomfort, cements a fear that can be used to apprehend or weaken any further progress of the reincorporation. These two examples of threats, set an understanding of what Daniel & Cacho (2021), describes as feminicidal violence, an extension on the dehumanisation procuring forced displacements and disruption of life (Daniel & Cacho, 2021, pp. 136-137).

In addition to this security situation, the insecurity can be viewed as one of the consequences for the population of reincorporation process. However, as the result will present recurring insecurities in various forms, it acknowledges that the insecurity that is framed in threats has led to consequences for both the peace signatories and ARN.

> *"I believe that those expectations, those hopes that existed at the time, are now reflected in the fact that the situation in the territories are much more complex than before. We don't have sufficient guarantees, so those expectations have now turned into a permanent struggle for the fulfilment (of the peace accord), despite the fact that 476 peace signatories have been killed or disappeared. The governments, up until now, they haven't fulfilled (their part), while some of us have been displaced from our territories, from the ETCRs. We've been displaced, so believe me, that trust no longer exists, and it's very difficult for any organization today to want to sit*

> *down and talk about peace, because there are no guarantees for peace. However, what does stand out is that, in the midst of all these adversities, we continue to comply with the peace accord"* (Tatiana)

What can be seen in Tatiana's statement is that, in the beginning of the peace signing, there were expectations set as to how the reincorporation process would carry on out for those that chose to be part of the agreement. Having set these expectations, they have not been fully met as there is a continued violence towards the population of the reincorporation process, meaning that the reincorporation is not satisfactory as people have either been murdered or disappeared. Such crimes are examples of what the peace accord was supposed to apprehend, so that those that are in the process can have a transition into civilian life with longevity. Collecting some of the participants testimonies, it can be identified how some have been displaced or not, and how this displacement relates to the violence. Considering the precarious security situation, the peace efforts are obstructed by the intensified violence throughout the country, worsening the condition for any organisation to have a long-term vision to continued peacebuilding. However, having these conditions in mind, makes the only solution for those in the reincorporation process to comply what they destined themselves to become.

2.2 Gender mainstreaming in ARN's work

In conversation with Mabel, Territorial Subdirector in ARN, she explains the institution's substantial progress in addressing women's needs through gender mainstreaming. An example of this, according to Mabel, is how the majority of ARN personnel consists of women, which has given advantages for officials and functionaries within the institution to have dialogue and interact with the communities that they work with:

> *"In ARN, precisely because of the feminist commitment of the Director General, there are 19 territorial coordinators, but out of those 19, 16 are women and 3 are men. So, the ARN is fundamentally and predominantly made up of women, and in the leadership positions such as subdirectors, director general, programme director are mostly held by women /.../ So this was also reflected in the relationship with the leadership of the population in the reincorporation process, which I believe has allowed us to establish dialogue and build an institutional relationship where we incorporate these reflections on the mentality and role of women, as well as the political participation of women."* (Mabel)

In this example, the institutions practice gender to their advantage in order to advance their work and aim in supporting the reincorporation process. Having predominantly women in leadership roles challenges the patriarchal norms as it historically has been men in those positions, and therefore it could be seen as an institutional commitment from ARN's part to spotlight women's voices and recognize their existence. Still, if we were to use Hernández Morales (2021) suggestion on how the society is divided by "The invisible" and "The visible", these management structures within ARN, can be understood as part of what the colonial and

patriarchal norms allow them to be in their leadership roles (Hernández Morales, 2021, pp. 83-84). The institutional outset, operates and remains true to the disposition of the modern gender system, and can reproduce power structures that are counterproductive for the population of the reincorporation process (Espinosa-Miñoso, et al., 2021, p. XVI). Mabel's statement tells how gender is a central concept in the institutional work, through dialogue in the reincorporation process, women have been able to progress the reincorporation, which could be seen as women having a strategic role in comparison to men.

ARN's gender mainstreaming work could be further examined through a different experience which Carolina G, the Gender Liaison Officer for Tolima Territorial Group, tells how her role helps communities to get their rights ensured. Carolina G explains how she accompanies women in their path of following the reincorporation process. The following example reveals how Carolina Gs provides support and justice for those whose rights have been violated:

> *"In Colombia, there is a flaw, which is that women face barriers when trying to file complaints. And if we are from the rural areas, even more so, if we are Indigenous, even more, if we are Lesbians, even more, and if we have disabilities, even more, in other words, it always falls into affirmative action,*
>
> *There is a deeper vulnerability. So, when the female peace signatory arrives at the police station, what we do is tell them, "Madam officer, this is not a favour. We need to file a complaint and we need for you to give us some protection," and immediately they give us attention, because they were accompanied. Imagine if they were not accompanied?"* (Carolina G)

This example shows how there are patriarchal and colonial structures at play in Colombian society. Here the affirmative action, to apprehend systemic discrimination of marginalised groups, is not addressing systemic changes. ARN's presence is therefore important for those that are in need to be accompanied and receive opportunities without prejudicial structures that resent women to file a complaint. For the women in the reincorporation process to have a dignified path, ARN's role is an effective and strategic actor to resist the colonial and patriarchal norms that reign. But as it can also be seen how the presence of an institutional actor facilitates the obstacles rather than participating alone. Despite that, Lozano Lerma (2021) argues how the state, using Colombia as prime example, suffers from "symptomatic structural and systemic problems" (p. 167), which is corrupted through the means of global capital and seeped into state institutions interests (Lozano Lerma, 2021, pp. 166-167).

Returning to Mabel's mentioning of ARN being predominantly governed by women, Carolina G, also notes how women taking up place has strengthened the institutional progress to moving towards the institutional goal:

> *"I believe it's because we have powerful women. In fact, the director of the ARN is a feminist woman who fights for rights, considering how the Agency has previously been led by men, and then a woman, Alejandra Miller, took over and brought her commitment, her effort, and her fight for women. So little by little, there is more capacity-building, more effort. I would say, for*

> *example, we have territories like Tolima, many territories where out of 47 municipalities, 33 have peace signatories. And I do think there should be two or even three Gender Liaison Officials in order to have enough human talent to cover the many needs on both sides."* (Carolina G)

To give further context on Carolina G's statement, in our interview she mentioned that there is only one Gender Liaison Official in every department in the country who does the same work as Carolina G. However, as important as this role is, Carolina G's is the only one having this title in her department and is therefore suggesting that hiring more officials to be part of ARN's transformative progress and meet the needs. Through the decolonial feminist lens, both Mabel's and Carolina G's testimonies reveals how ARN, with a previous history of being under male leadership, have been less effective in comparison to the current leadership held by a woman, implementing a more gender mainstreaming path in their work for the reincorporation process. If we were to consider Rodríguez Moreno's (2021) standpoint, she problematizes how institutional practices are framed as feminist actions by emphasising how non-white women homogenize into needing to become a (western) woman. This view on coloniality of gender, challenges how it creates a detachment to Colombian colonial history and perpetuates the western idea of emancipation (p. 112). The risks of institutions using these practices, which operate as the technologies of modern colonial gender, sustain institutions' development device, by proclaiming women need to be emancipated to progress for a better life (Rodríguez Moreno, 2021, pp. 111-112). Lugones (2021) takes a further step and argues on the usage of gender, as she recalls it, cannot be used in the colonial imagination that presents itself, therefore the focus should instead shift as to why the non-human needs to be liberated (Espinosa-Miñoso, et al., 2021, p. 20).

2.3 Stigmatization

Based on the interviews, there have been several mentions of the stigmatization in Colombian society, that is a layered experience creating different versions of the stigma. The chosen statements concretize the differences among the women in the reincorporation process to understand in which circumstances they can exert their capabilities in a post-conflict era. Through conversations with Hanna, her testimony focuses on the return to home and how there are gender differences in the transition into civilian life:

> *"A man who arrives after many years away is more highly regarded and better received by the family. He has his place, his partner, or had his kids. It's understood that the man is always the one who is away and returns, and it's as if that will be forgiven. For us, women, no. When we arrive at our family, the first questions are: "Why did you leave?" and "Why didn't you raise your children?""* (Hanna)

The treatment can be seen as presenting a gendered power dynamic where men are welcomed whereas women are more stigmatised for their choice of leaving in the first place. The

stigmatisation is further intensified by the patriarchal norms that are situated on women for not conforming by entering motherhood. The example indicates that when returning home, the stigmatization is presented to oneself and starts before the reincorporation process even begins. Women's participation in militancy is deemed as unforgivable, whereas the man's participation is accepted because society works in his favour. The reason for joining FARC is never asked, creating epistemic violence by ignoring those experiences and understanding that is part of a peace signatory today (Curiel, 2021, p. 46). If we look upon another testimony, we meet Gloria, who sees her exposed position for being a woman, can bring more advantages in her current leadership role. She gives the example of being in a room with the majority being men, is not a worrying concern for her but rather a strength:

> "*If I go to a meeting, any meeting we're invited to, there might be 200 men and 3 women, but sometimes I think, in my case, that can actually be an advantage, because while I attend a meeting with 200 men and represent my organisation /.../ being a woman has led to have different expectations because of being a woman. /.../ But if they need to choose, say three representatives, I'm more than sure that men come to their minds first rather than women, even though women are much more capable*" (Gloria)

As Gloria sees her presence and participation as advantageous, the underrepresentation of women in these meetings shows that there is a gender structure regarding who is welcomed and not. Gloria being one of the few female participants, could also give an expectation of them being a generalised representation of all women, whether it is emphasized on the reincorporation process or because of being a woman in a leading position. Although it seems to be an advantage for Gloria, it is important to note how Gloria is certainly being stigmatised as there is a bias towards men, which favours women's participation less in those meetings. Also worth noting how the example of 200 men vs 3 women, visualises how the participating women are marginalised and expected to be a reasonable representation for all women. This can also be understood as those women who do not participate, are overlooked to be invited to participate, which Hernandez-Morales (2021) sees as an example of modernity waste (Hernández Morales, 2021, p. 84).

The received stigmatization has not been a linear experience, as some of the participants stated how their time in the FARC-EP in comparison to their reincorporation experience is far more different. Sandra shared her story of being accepted into FARC-EP despite the commanders knowing her background, and how those memories are being disdained through today's perceptions of *Farianas*:

> *"I am part of a diverse population. My commanders knew that about me, and they always respected it /.../ But in my case, it was actually a beautiful experience. I don't regret what I lived through. I don't regret having paid for my cause and for the cause of the organization. Spending so many years in prison was a hard experience, but it was something I did with a lot of love. There are many ways to fight battles, and for me, that was the path I had to take. So I*

> *accepted it from the moment I was detained, and wherever I went, I held high the name of FARC. I'm grateful that I wasn't discriminated against or judged, I was accepted for who I was. As my commander told me, "What matters to me is your work!". That was something very positive for my life. Of course, not everything is sunshine and roses, there were ups and downs, but I'm proud to be a fariana, proud to carry revolution in my veins, and proud of who I was and what I lived through."* (Sandra)

Through Sandra's statement, we can see how her opposition towards feeling regret is a form of showing resistance against the presumption that she should deny her past. This could also be seen as Sandra defying the coloniality of gender through her not abiding to the traditional norm of what a woman should be, rather than that she now presents herself as a proud *Fariana*, which can also be viewed as a form of resistance from her part on not wanting to reduce her past experiences. If she would have stayed silent on her background and past, it could be seen as a form of wasted knowledge as the collected experience may be seen as something to be frowned upon (Hernández Morales, 2021, p. 84). Additionally, Sandra's mentioning of not feeling any sort of stigmatisation within the FARC, brings me to Dayana's testimony, who lives in the AETCR La Fila. They identify themselves as non-binary and explained their experience on enrollment and acceptance into FARC-EP contrast towards the reincorporation process:

> "*So, when I joined, I joined wanting to be a boy. But when I got to camp, I was immediately given instructions and explained the life of a guerillera (female soldier). So there was no space for a woman wanting to be a boy, so, I had to be feminine one way or another.*" (Dayana)

Dayana's experience shows how their identity is being limited and erased, the example of being perceived as a *Guerillera* (female soldier) and not *Guerillero* (male soldier), presents the idea of how the coloniality of gender existing and being imposed, conformed and performed on Dayana's body, to set boundaries on the gender diversity. Dayana's testimonies share a unique experience which previous studies of Lopera-Arbeláez (2023) forget to mention, regarding feminization experience before the reincorporation process even began, specifically focusing on those that did not identify with the binary gender norms but were perceived as women (Lopera-Arbeláez, 2022, p. 11). When it is mentioned on the feminization of the former FARC-EP members, it refers to how women in their start of transition to civilian life must conform to the societal gendered expectation. But as seen in Dayana's case, feminisation started when joining the FARC-EP, not the opposite way as it is argued (Lopera-Arbeláez, 2022, p. 11). Moreover, can this feminisation be further deciphered in the pursuit of survival in the FARC-EP, whereas one must accept the colonial gender order. This also leads to how the coloniality of gender has only allowed the marginalised to suppress their sexualities, which can be further viewed as to how FARC-EP engaged with this, Dayana explains:

> *"What happened was that within the FARC, we either didn't have or couldn't say, ' I want to be lesbian, and I'm going to be a lesbian in the FARC.' That wasn't possible because, for a movement with such strict discipline, being gay or lesbian was considered a disgrace"* (Dayana)

Voicing one's sexuality was not the norm in FARC, neither was it an opportunity that was given. The strict discipline that is mentioned can be seen as a heteronormativity that exuded in the organisation and therefore not allowing people to have the freedom of expressing themselves. Dayana further differentiates this treatment in how it was then in comparison with today for being in a reincorporation process:

> *"Let's say the differences between FARC and here, well, the difference is here because there, there was no space. So, everyone hid their identity, their gender, and stayed silent. But out here it's different, because when someone said, 'I want to be gay', everyone started signalling or rejecting them, the same reincorporated individuals have taken upon themselves to bully others."* (Dayana)

To be open with one's sexuality or gender in FARC-EP was not an option, however by erasing those spaces for people that did not fit in the colonial/modern gender system, you yourself did not become targeted. Whereas, transgressing into civilian life, has brought new challenges, to now be free in expressing oneself, to be "visible", does not guarantee to not be treated differently and receive prejudice (Hernández Morales, 2021, p. 101). Having presented these testimonies, we can see that even though there exist a societal stigmatization towards the women in reincorporation process, this stigmatization did not disappear during their time in FARC-EP, it could rather be looked how the stigmatization outlived those morals and discipline to proceed in the post-peace era.

Juliette, part of the reincorporation process, shared how there exists a misrepresentation of having been in the FARC, and acts as a victimisation. Regardless, Juliette has further hope in which can be demonstrated as:

> *"That we first be recognized as political actors, as peacebuilders. I mean, it offends us, and on top of that, it victimizes us by seeing us as sexual objects who spent 20 or more years in the forces only to please men. So yes, we would like to somehow manage to undo that imagery. We understand that there are causes and more powerful forces driving that policy, the media…"* (Juliette)

As the woman in a reincorporation process is being framed as having been exploited, the thought of wanting to be seen as a political actor can be interpreted as a form of resistance (Hernández Morales, 2021, p. 84). Juliette's experience is like all the prior mentioned experiences as to how the stigmatization has restricted them to get political recognition, considering that they were part of an organisation that did have political motives behind their actions. Also, Juliette's statement is a further example as to how the women in the reincorporation process are not seen as part of the solution towards peace, even though they themselves decided to sign the peace accord. The concepts of epistemic violence and wasted knowledge can be seen as part of this stigmatization, an attempt of Juliette, Hanna, Gloria, Sandra and Dayana reducing their capabilities to be seen as victims with no free agency (Curiel, 2021, p. 46; Hernández Morales, 2021, pp. 83-85) . Carolina G notes how the stigmatization is

one of the main challenges that the institution faces. Especially being a governmental institution that relies on each administration's policies, political stances and commitments to the reincorporation process.

> *"New processes of stigmatization, there are a lot of stigmatisation processes from the communities, the society, the right-wing governments, stigmatization of their process as women and as people who were part of the FARC. That is the main challenge. It is very painful to uphold them and ourselves to be recognized as legitimate rights holders in a society that still punishes those affected by the armed conflict /.../ The guarantee of rights, equality of rights or equal job opportunities don't exist, you don't get hired because you are a peace signatory, even though you owe nothing to the state, but you are still a peace signatory who were a guerilla soldier. That is the main challenge, and although we continue to gain space, many doors are still closed to us because of stigmatization."* (Carolina G)

Based on Carolina G statement, the institution's capacity to action is deemed by the stigmatisation that upholds these colonial and patriarchal structures. For ARN, to attain a more proactive development as an institution and aiding the population of the reincorporation process, the societal and political commitment is part of the institutions in being able to exercise public authority. As ARN's work has progressed throughout the years, the peace signatories are continually seen as part of their past, even though they have atoned for their involvement with FARC-EP.

2.4 The perceived support

In this chapter, I will discuss the efforts by ARN to strengthen the capacities of the women undergoing reincorporation, and more specifically, the opinion of these efforts among the women and ARN itself. Tatiana, from the Cauca department, and who voiced her frustration on the current path that the reincorporation process and the support that exist:

> *"The PRI policy is not satisfactory. It is rather imposing because it does not reflect the feelings of the entire exercise carried out by the signing population to set clear objectives regarding reincorporation. Therefore, the offer and its fulfillment until 2031, we think, will be very, if not entirely insufficient for the true reincorporated person to say that they can achieve a dignified reincorporation. /.../ The communities no longer want more socializations, no longer want more talks, no longer want more diplomas, no longer want more workshops, because look at what has been spent during 9 years of reincorporation."* (Tatiana)

Through this statement we can see how Tatiana expresses disappointment with the reincorporation progress since the peace accord was signed. Tatiana mentions how the PRI policy is not enough nor consulted to its full extent with the reincorporated, which can be seen as a coloniality of knowledge in terms of how ARN, with their use of the development device, has more say in decision-making for the reincorporation process. This can be further seen as epistemic violence, where the reincorporated is silenced and obliged to follow the institution's

position, which leads to wasted knowledge, since it undermines the population's own understanding of their reincorporation process (Hernández Morales, 2021, p. 84). In contrast to Tatiana's statement, Mabel mentioned how there is an acknowledgement of the existing disappointment and distrust but that the circumstances have progressed for the better through the work of the current Petro administration:

> *"Here in the south of the country, we have a saying:"Siempre hace falta el sentado para el peso."(There is always something missing to finish it). It's like there will always be something small missing to complete the whole, in this case, there will always be something missing for the population to feel fully satisfied, to say things have been done. We come from a history in this country of distrust, a distrust that has been generated among the population towards the state, towards state institutions, and obviously, the people in the reincorporation process distrust the state even more, distrust the institutions, and in this case distrusts the ARN as the main institution that accompanies them in their reincorporation process. When we looked at 2023, the relationship between the population in the reincorporation and the ARN was not the best because it was marked by an increased level of distrust. But things have gradually been changing in some way. This administration has wanted to build public policy together and implement it jointly to the people and with the people*." (Mabel)

This underlining distrust that has been part of Colombian history as well as FARC's past, gives the impression that it is a structural issue on societal level. The distrust that Mabel mentions that the reincorporated population may feel, could stem from when FARC and the Colombian state was at war with each other for a long period of time, and how the state has dictated the rules before and after the peace signing. Now in a post-conflict era, mistrust between the two groups, highlights how there is an issue with ARN's policymaking and the realities of the peace signatories. Also, the quote "Siempre hace falta el sentado para el peso.", reflects on how ARN's efforts are meagre and not consistent with the reincorporated needs, can be interpreted as ARN are failing to validate the reincorporated lived experiences which reinforces epistemic violence, or ARN admitting that there will always be people within the reincorporation process who are going to be disappointed regardless of the institutions performance. By being aware of the institution's progress and challenges, from a decolonial feminist standpoint, having realised the key areas where the institution must improve, is a valid effort and continuation of the institutional work. What further strengthens the sentiment of ARN's progressive stance in recent years is the interview with Lizeth, whom I met in the AETCR La Fila, shared her experience of the ARN's development and how it has affected her reincorporation:

> "*What happens is that, over the last few years, there has been much more support for women's training, much more because before, everything kind of went unnoticed, unnoticed in the sense that it was a macro-level approach, it was both men and women, and training opportunities or what was achieved were practically same for everyone. But in the past two or three years, that has really changed. Things have improved a lot. Women's associations, for example, have received more support than the men's, partly because of the ongoing issue of inequality, which has always been very marked. I believe, maybe it's thanks to the administration or the*

management of the ARN in recent times, but they've really pushed the theme of gender, and that has become a driving force, I think, for all of us women who have been participating in different activities" (Lizeth)

Through Lizeth's statement there, it can be seen how ARN's work has been received and the gender differences among the reincorporated. It appears the current administration's efforts have been seen as progressive but also acknowledged the previous administration's faults and exercising of epistemic violence as to have a generalised approach with everyone in the reincorporation process, did not empower the population into their transition into civilian state. When implying epistemic violence, it could be interpreted as how the previous government did not have a more progressive stance in comparison to nowadays. Also the mentioning of how the previous year's support has used a macro-level approach to guide the population of the reincorporation, shows how previous administrations have used technologies of modern colonial gender, based on the western ideas, which further tells the colonial structure that institution ARN, by the help of the state, prolongs the usage. As Lizeth's statement presents a positive outlook of the current administration's efforts, Nelson, a former ARN personnel (2018-2022) and who also worked for the European Union as the Technical Group Coordinator in Colombia (2022-2024), shared his reflection on whether how he thinks ARN's efforts have been perceived:

"I think that, generally speaking, the women feel that it has been insufficient, in terms of the opportunity, accompaniment and the government's responses issued for their specific needs. I believe there are still significant gaps, and women perceive that. Especially, I think in terms of something very important, economic autonomy. Many women, we work with several women last year, who always brought up that they receive a monthly allowance, 90% of the minimum wage, because of being former combatants. But their economic autonomy heavily depends on that government payment, because in many cases they haven't been able to develop a stable productive activity or employment that provides more consistent and sustainable income. So, I would think yes, they still perceive that the government's efforts, both in the past and now, have not been strong or effective enough in terms of economic development for their needs. They're also thinking about the future of their families, their children, because as you've seen, the security situation in the region is very difficult. That impacts the progress of the reincorporation process and the state response. So yes, I think there's a general sense that much remains to be done for women." (Nelson)

Nelson's statement can be interpreted as how he has interacted with women that have expressed their opinions on the governmental stance, while also how he himself have been able to reflect on ARN's work. As Nelson is aware of his prior position in ARN, he remains to give constructive critique towards the institution he worked for while also giving an example of the complex realities that some women may experience in their reincorporation. Similar sentiments are reflected by Lizeth on how the PRI could be improved to better focus on women's needs.

"One thing that would help us a lot is if there were specific themes, specific productive projects, for economic support aimed at productive projects for women in reincorporation, but

> *individually, not collectively. Because if they are collective, we end up doing the same thing, we put everything into one pot, we work here, we do things there, and if it gets defunded, we're left (with nothing)"* (Lizeth)

Lizeth's sentiment suggests how there could be an understanding of the current productive projects, to be too broad and not precise enough. The collective productive projects for Lizeth are now not successful and a solution to this could therefore be to focus on the individual, to meet their needs. One risk mentioned regarding the failure of the collective productive is that if the participants were to put all their money on a productive project, that results in not generating enough income for the group, then by the time those investments have been spent and there is no sustainable income source, those productive projects fail. Lizeth's suggestion could therefore be seen as a further understanding on how it is not guaranteed that all these productive projects are to be successful.

2.5 Women's opportunities within reincorporation

Another topic that has been mentioned, is however the capacity strengthening workshops that are provided are being taken advantage of or not. Jasmine shares her experience of how it is not about the time management but how it relates to the monthly allowance.

> "Well, many times some of us have time, and other times we don't, because often we're working in the fields. And you think, "If I go to this workshop, who's going to provide for me?" Because many times, what the government gives us isn't enough. So, we have to find other ways to make ends meet. We can't just sit and wait for everything to be handed to us, so we have to work. But let's say, if they notify on time, then we do participate" (Jasmine)

Here, Jasmine's statement shows how even though the monthly allowance is meant to provide an economic and social reincorporation for the peace signatories, it is being challenged because it is lacking. Considering how the monthly allowance is to the population of reincorporation and its families, the monthly allowance does have implications on women's perception whether it is worth participating or not in these workshops. This could be further discussed as to how one's own situation varies depending on if opportunities to participate exist. Not every woman in this study has kids and will therefore have a different view as to the hardships that may presents, but for those that do have kids, Hanna states:

> "*I think it's a matter of education, but it's a reciprocal education. Let me tell you, there are almost always these kinds of workshops in which many women leaders, all kinds of women, are brought to these workshops. There's talk about the possibility of having that equality between men and women, but men don't attend those workshops. And it turns out that the women who go out have to ask a man for permission to do so. So, if there isn't that knowledge and reciprocity in those kinds of teachings, I don't think it's very useful because if a woman is going to leave her house, she has to ask her partner's permission to attend a meeting where they're going to*

talk about empowerment. But that empowerment doesn't exist because she can no longer say, "I'm leaving" or "You stay with the children"." (Hanna)

Institutional efforts that are being made, for example from ARN, shows how some female leaders who wish to participate in these workshops, are restricted from the home, where the man can exercise his control over the woman's mobility. Further it can be understood that gendered empowerment differs from person to person but that it is a structural problem that affects in the public and private sphere, while also being sustained through the non-participation of men in these workshops regarding gender equality. However, if comparing to another experience, for example the opportunity to participate in an interview, Carolina S shares her example of difficulties being eased through co-parenting:

> *"For example, right now I'm here, calm and present, but only because my husband picked up our children from daycare and school. If he weren't around, I wouldn't be here, right? /.../ He's off today, so he said, "Don't worry, I've got this, I'll help." Thank God, he supports me so much, especially when it comes to my dreams. He tells me "Go ahead love, keep going, whatever you want, we'll make it happen" And I thank God I have a husband who supports me, because many women don't. Many have husbands, but it seems they don't agree with them continuing down on the same path"* (Carolina S)

Comparing these experiences shows how in both situations, having different family dynamics, still affect the woman's mobility to freely engage in places and positions one would have wished to do. However, it also presents how those that are in a relationship, some have the unconditional support from their partner which facilitates their daily routine, whereas those that have a partner that prefer women to being confined to their homes have more difficulties to engage in those activities that they wished for. To have a partner that helps rather than forces traditional gender norms, gives a sense of security to be able to freely access spaces.

In one of the interviews I did, I conducted a combined interview because of the opportunity to speak with both Sandra and Carolina S, from the Tolima region and who are in the reincorporation process. They shared various experiences that they have experienced before and after the peace accord implementation, specifically on the notion regarding if the there is any specific support for being a woman in reincorporation process:

> *There are women who are in front of gender equality who say to us: "Pongase las pilas"(Get your act together) /.../ They often tell us: "Look, as women you have a lot of benefits, lots of support, look there's a lot of support," but well, if we don't look for ways to want to benefit from all that support that there is, because that depends on ourselves too, because well, if we say we don't care about that, they can no longer tell us "Come on, you have to do this." But as women, we have many, many benefits, many benefits for many things, that perhaps we have not supported it is a very different thing, but well, as a gender, yes, we have a lot of support.* (Carolina S)

This could be interpreted as how institutions who provide the support and expect that there will be participation is a perception that every reincorporated would like to take advantage of the support that exists, however as not everyone wants to engage with every support system, there cannot be a generalisation that they want to be helped. However, as an answer to women's need for support, Sandra exemplifies as to how the given support is not being taken of advantage:

> *"There are women's associations being formed, where economic support arrives for different types of collectives and projects. But like my colleague says, we have to find ways to take advantage of those opportunities, and we haven't done that /.../ The need is there, and the support is there, but we haven't taken advantage of it. That's the thing, the need is lost/real but we're not taking advantage of it."* (Sandra)

Sandra's statement opens as to how there is an issue between the institution ARN and the women, as to how it can be resolved is difficult to decipher as all women have different perspectives of the reincorporation process. To add another perspectives on women's opportunities, we meet Meri, who has had a different journey in the reincorporation process than most of the participants in this study, since she is not receiving the monthly allowance from the state because of her earnings exceed the fixed amount to receive financial aid, and is pursuing a further higher education while also working at the same time for a governmental agency called Unidad de Implementación del Acuerdo de Paz. Considering this, Meri shares her opinion on which actor she thinks needs to take accountability for these opportunities:

> *"It is not about compliance, and it is not the state's duty to give us everything either. You know that over all these years, there is a Victims' Unit (Governmental agency), there is a population of victims, an Afro-descendant population, an Indigenous population, all of whom ask for the same needs that the peace signatories also request. And when we arrived here (Putumayo) 8 years ago, the government said, "No, all that land is for the peace signatories." How do you think the victims will feel? How will the Indigenous peoples feel? They will say, "Look, these people arrived last and got everything, while we who have been fighting for 30, 40, 50 years have nothing." And that is where the stigmatization also begins, "For them it exists, for us there is none." These are things that do not favor the peace signatories either. So, from one's way of thinking, I think things should come from both sides. It's not just about placing all responsibility on the state, but we also have to do our part."* (Meri)

As Meri's opinion is different from the rest of the participants, her experience tells how there needs to be a shared responsibility to engage in the institutional response. Meri mentions how Colombia's diversified population, where one of the more marginalised groups, the afro-descendants and the indigenous people, is not being fairly treated as the population of the reincorporation process. Historically, the Afro-descendants and Indigenous people are a group who are at present living under the colonial and patriarchal structures, to sanction them into conforming to western ideals. In this quote, the government has failed to take their responsibility but likewise has the peace signatories not considered the support systems that are existing for them but that are excluded to other marginalised groups. The structural inequality that is created, fuels the stigmatization of the peace signatory and weakens the

achievements that the institutions have accomplished. Nevertheless, when concluding on the future hopes for the reincorporation process, several participants shared their thoughts on the matter:

> *"That we should first be recognized as political actors, such as peace builders. I mean, it offends us, and of top of that, it victimizes us, that we are seen as sexual objects who spent 20 or more years in the ranks only to please men. So yes, we would like that imaginary be dismantled. We understand that there are reasons behind this, and there are more powerful forces driving that narrative, like the media"* (Juliette)

This presents an understanding of how women in the reincorporation are not seen as capable to have self-agency and is instead made equal to a victim of the armed conflict. To be seen as a victim during and after the signing of the peace accord, shows how these perceptions of peace signatories damage their abilities to be acknowledged and viewed as individuals and as collective, trying to reconcile and coexist in a society that cannot be self-aware of what challenges it creates. As Juliette remarks, there are powerful forces that have disregarded of how for example women in the reincorporation see themselves. This shift of narrative could also be regarded as an eroding of democracy, whilst also generating polarization among society.

3. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to visibilize women in the reincorporation process and ARN's work to understand how their lived experiences in connection with decolonial feminism thoughts. It also pursued the potential needs of the women and how it is perceived and executed by the institution. This study followed three research questions to reach this objective: 1. *In what ways do women perceive the reincorporation efforts to re-establish themselves in society?* 2. *In what manner does ARN practice reincorporation of women in reincorporation processes?* 3. *How do women in a reincorporation process experience coloniality of gender and coloniality of knowledge on their reincorporation in society?*

The result demonstrates how women have different experiences depending on certain factors that either empower or restrict their progress into civilian life. Whereas for ARN, their implementation of actions towards the women to facilitate their needs is through accompanying them on their path in reincorporation, however as to how effective the accompaniment is, depends on the governmental support and institutional commitment within the ARN leadership. Furthermore, the result shows the implications of the colonial and patriarchal norms reigning in Colombian society, which are significant aspects to be considered as it influences the interplay between people and institutions. Moreover, the results can also be understood by the cross-border violence, that the participants have shared, meaning that women who either live in a rural or urban context, will still be receiving violence in its all forms. Additionally, concerning these existing norms, it also presents how women in the reincorporation process

are stigmatised through their pasts as former combatants of the FARC-EP and the current modern gender system, providing further understanding as to how these societal expectations exist within ARN as well.

3.1 Liminality and borderlands

The results reveal that concern for the well-being of oneself and family members correlates with the insecurities and stigmatization. Considering how some of the participants have received threats, is a reminder of the vulnerability that persists, as it also cements a liminality that is difficult to fend off. According to Antcil Avoine (2024), liminality can be used as framing of experiences of the peace signatories, as it presents the feeling of waiting and having anxiety for one's situation to improve (Anctil Avoine, 2024, p. 1670). This represents various of the women's testimonies in this study, where the continued threats have embodied liminalities and created borderlands identities, a hybridity label as both a perpetrator and victim of the armed conflict, which further restrains their progress toward the expected civilian state and go forth with their future. Furthermore, to be proud of one's experience in the FARC-EP, is a common sentiment that even shows in the previous study, hence its relevance. Antcil Avoine (2024) mentions how this creates a contradiction in the presumption that the female former combatants should be feeling regret for participating in militancy and how it exists a liminal struggle of being denied one's identity, yet not unequivocally agree to become the norm (Anctil Avoine, 2024, p. 1680). What is also evident, is how the liminality is supposed to be a temporal phase of transition, whereas the results present borderlands where women are judged based on societal dichotomies and struggling to break from these spaces.

3.2 Stigma and mistrust

A striking similarity that the previous study and the result of this study share is the theme of stigma and mistrust. Whether it is stigmatization coming from the family, former combatants, media or governmental institutions, they all share testimonies of women expressing stigmatization being done on them. For instance, Antcil Avoine (2024) and Santamaría & Hernández (2020), mentions the mistrust that exists within the population of the reincorporation process and their communities (Santamaría & Hernández, 2020, pp. 125-127; Lopera-Arbeláez, 2022, pp. 13-14). This issue has been discussed by specific participants, but it is worth noting that all of the participants in this study did point out this problem. Even so, these selected testimonies, offers a discrepancy in the institutional mistrust and societal mistrust in relation to ARN and peace signatories. Similar testimonies of women from diverse backgrounds, is presented by both Santamaría & Hernández (2020) and Lopera-Arbeláez (2023) present who are being stigmatised in their return to their communities, in which women are looked down upon whereas men are cherished for their involvement in FARC-EP, further

complicating their transition to civil society (Santamaría & Hernández, 2020, pp. 125-127; Lopera-Arbeláez, 2022, pp. 13-14). Furthermore, with the help of Lopera-Arbeláez (2023) use of the capability approach, the results of this study can be framed through another perspective, where for example men's reincorporation leads to the gains of certain capabilities to exercise their freedom and achievements, whereas women's capabilities are reduced to exert the opportunities and confined to their homes doing household work, thereby causing the inability to develop one's capabilities (Lopera-Arbeláez, 2022, p. 13). Additional discussions by Lopera-Arbaeláez (2023), is the author's view on how ARN should give more close-related support with peasant approach towards women (Lopera-Arbeláez, 2022, p. 15), however Antcil Avoine & Weber (2025) describes how in the research there are some exceptions from women who has claimed it is not always determined by institutional commitment for their participation in productive project, but rather in their own will in wanting to participate (Anctil Avoine & Weber, 2025, p. 10). Here, the result of this study can both correlate and diverge from the previous study as some have voiced not wanting to participate in productive projects, while others have claimed for a more amplified focus by ARN to perform. Regardless of whether the previous studies mention this as an exception, the result of this study makes it not an exception but an occurring sentiment, showing resistance among some of the women in the reincorporation process. On another note, Antcil Avoine & Weber (2025) also vouched for further studies in examples showing the realities of ex-combatant's family dynamic in the reincorporation (Anctil Avoine & Weber, 2025, p. 20). This is noteworthy as the results present such examples of families having a sharing household where the woman can engage in her agency outside of her home.

What could be argued with this study, and what sets it apart from previous studies article's is that it visibilizes the LGBTQIA+ community within the former FARC-EP and the population of the reincorporation. As it was mentioned in the section of method and material, this study got the opportunity to interview a participant that is non-binary and who shared similar but distinct experiences. It can be easily forgotten that as this study's aim is to bring the marginalised voices to the center, it is an example of what future research could do. When we refer to the "female" ex-combatant, it invisible the gender fluidity which existed within FARC-EP. It is prominent to know these experiences that tend to go unheard of, since the same stigmatization that occurred, prevails today. There is the claim that for example Lopera-Arbeláez (2023) does: "The feminisation of female FARC-EP starts as soon as they lay down their arms" (p. 11), is being challenged by the experiences the results show. It demonstrates how the feminization remained constant and did not appear because of the disarmament after the peace accord and the commence of the reincorporation process, it could rather be argued how the feminization is part of the coloniality of gender and coloniality of knowledge, since these concepts challenge the narrative of who is being exposed to the feminization.

3.3 Research reflexivity

The number of participants who have contributed to a rich understanding of differentiated experiences and how there exist discrepancies with those that are part of the reincorporation process. However, there can be some weak points identified as it could be recommended for future bachelor thesis writing, to decrease the number of participants as it somewhat contradicts the essence of the theory, meaning not everyone who has been part of the study is equally presented due to the limited number of pages. Also, even though there was a field visit conducted and interviews being held, it can be identified that if these in-person interviews would have taken place in more difficult conflict areas such as Cauca, Norte de Santander and Nariño, the results would have been different as well as the understanding of the armed struggles that are currently ongoing. It also risks silencing those that are living in the most difficult areas, therefore there needs to be a continued show of interest of those that have not been heard and are waiting to be heard. Visiting the Tolima department did illustrate a rather calm environment which has not been as impacted by the recent months of increased violence, and therefore did give a rather skewed view of the realities that are occurring. Another identified flaw is not having prepared a more gender-sensitive interview guide that could be amplified for every participant. Noticing this can be a positive outcome for this academic field, to not reinforce epistemic violence and wasted knowledge that us researchers in the Global North risk performing. As this research did not have the capacity of doing a thorough examination of each participant's stories, a consequence could be seen as violating the realities of the participant's lived experiences, thus I acknowledge this problem as the theoretical lens explicitly states the importance of not silencing marginalised voices. An example worth mentioning is the right to land and housing that could have been more thoroughly explored. All these identified risks can be problematized and challenge this thesis's relevance. In addition, one can find solutions to prevent future silencing, therefore one proposal to bring into light is further inclusion of psychosocial support, which previous studies and participants of the study also have been advocating for.

For this thesis concluding remarks, seeing as it has gone eight years and soon to be nine years since the start of the reincorporation process, the promise of transitioning into civilian life has both been met with success and challenges which perpetuates into the future of the post-peace era. As the armed conflicts within Colombia continue, the heightened insecurity stains the hope that so many of the advocates of the reincorporation process had hoped for. By visibilizing coloniality and its complexities in the societal structures' it allows the detection of the interconnectedness that are bound to influence both the individual and institutions.

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Appendix A - Interview guide towards ARN

Guía de entrevista – versión en español

Preguntas hacia la personal de ARN

1. ¿Cómo apoya ARN a las mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación según tu experiencia? ¿En qué crees que deberían ser reintegradas las mujeres?
2. ¿Cómo describirías el apoyo que brindas o brindaste a las mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación?
3. ¿Cómo diseñaste e implementaste actividades de reincorporación que aborden las necesidades de las mujeres?
4. ¿Qué aspectos toma en cuenta ARN al trabajar con mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación?
5. ¿Qué actividades fomentan el ARN para las mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación?
6. ¿Cuál ha sido tu experiencia, trabajando dentro de ARN, en cuanto a cómo la comunidad percibe a estas mujeres en relación con los hombres?
7. ¿Cómo crees que las mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación perciben los esfuerzos realizados por la ARN para atender sus necesidades específicas?
8. ¿Cuál es el principal desafío relacionado con el género que enfrenta ARN al trabajar con mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación?
9. Según tu experiencia, ¿hay algo que ARN podría hacer para mejorar la inclusión de diferentes mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación?
10. ¿Qué logros y desafíos has reconocido hasta ahora en este proceso de reincorporación?
11. ¿Qué desafíos enfrenta ARN al aplicar un enfoque de género y diferencial en los programas de reincorporación? ¿Cómo se abordan esos desafíos?
12. ¿Hay algo importante que no te he preguntado, pero qué crees que es relevante sobre la reincorporación de las mujeres?

Interview guide - English version

Questions for ARN (National and Regional Level Officials)

1. How does ARN support women in the reincorporation process according to your experience? What do you think that women should be reintegrated into?
2. How would you describe the support you provide for women in the reincorporation process?
3. How do you design and implement reincorporation activities that address women's needs?
4. What aspects does ARN take into account when working with women in the reintegration process?
5. What activities does ARN encourage for women in the reintegration process?
6. What is your experience, working within ARN, of how these women are perceived by the community, in relation to men?
7. How do you think women in the reincorporation process perceive the efforts made by the ARN to address their specific needs?
8. What is the main gender-related challenges that ARN faces when working with women in the reincorporation process?
9. According to your experience, is there anything that ARN could do to improve the inclusion of different women in the reincorporation process?
10. What achievements and challenges have you recognized so far in this process of reincorporation?
11. What challenges do ARN face when applying a gender-differentiated (ethnic) approach in reincorporation programs? How are these challenges addressed?
12. Is there something important I have missed to ask you about regarding reincorporation of women?

Appendix B - Interview guide towards women in reincorporation process

Guía de entrevista – versión en español

Preguntas hacia las mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación

1. ¿Cuáles eran tus expectativas al iniciar el proceso de reincorporación? ¿Qué pensaste cuando firmaste el acuerdo final?
2. ¿Puedes describir cómo fue ser mujer en la organización guerrillera?
3. ¿Cómo has vivido el proceso de reincorporación como mujer? ¿Tienes alguna experiencia de diferencias entre cómo se trata a los hombres y a las mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación?
4. ¿Qué actividades has realizado como parte del proceso de reincorporación?
5. ¿Qué tipo de apoyo has recibido durante el proceso de reincorporación?
6. ¿Has recibido algún apoyo específico como mujer en el proceso de reincorporación? Si es así, ¿cómo ha sido este apoyo?
7. ¿Existen necesidades particulares de las mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación?
8. ¿Qué desafíos específicos crees que enfrentan las mujeres en este proceso?
9. ¿Puedes describir cómo te trata la comunidad donde vives como mujer que ha estado en las FARC? ¿Crees que te perciben de la misma manera que a los hombres que han estado en las FARC? ¿Crees que las mujeres son tratadas de manera diferente entre sí?
10. ¿Qué esperas para el futuro de las mujeres en el proceso de reincorporación?
11. ¿Crees que he dejado de mencionar algo importante sobre la reincorporación de las mujeres?

Interview guide - English version

Questions for women in the reincorporation process of the FARC-EP

1. What were your expectations when starting your reincorporation process? What did you think about when you signed the final agreement?
2. Can you describe what it was like to be a woman in the guerrilla organization?
3. How have you experienced the reincorporation process as a woman? Have you any experiences of differences between how men and women are treated in the reintegration process?
4. What activities have you engaged in as part of the reintegration process?
5. What type of support have you received during the reincorporation process?
6. Have you received any specific support as woman in the reincorporation process? If so, what has this support been like?
7. Are there particular needs of women in the reincorporation process?
8. What specific challenges do you think women face in this process?
9. Can you describe how the community where you live treats you as a woman who has been in the FARC? Do you think they perceive you the same way as men who have been in FARC? Do you think that different women are treated differently?
10. What do you hope for the future for women in the reincorporation process?
11. Do you think I have missed something important about reincorporation of women?