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### Introduction

I am very excited to be here. For me this is a moment to pause and think about my own dissertation for a moment. I am in the second year of a PhD program in socio-cultural anthropology and have felt inundated in the readings for my courses. As this exploratory phase of my graduate studies is now giving way to my own research, I am faced with the challenge of delimiting my subject of study and formulating questions that will give an initial shape to my fieldwork. I have struck upon a program of the Colombian government that I find personally very interesting and sense that it is fertile ground for an ethnographic analysis, my challenge is to come to a clearer articulation as to why others might be interested, that is, what are the stakes of this incipient project?

Therefore I will spend the majority of my time describing the context for my project; I will then flush out why I think this is an important topic, what ideas I have in terms of research questions and methodology, and then invite you to think with me about my initial research questions and methodological perspective.

### The Context

The FARC, constituted in 1964, is a resolutely nationalist guerilla insurgency that can be described politically as Marxist-Leninist and militarily as Maoist. An anachronistic holdout from leftist insurgencies of the Cold War, the FARC has managed to survive, and in certain intervals and regions flourish, thanks to its ability to act as savvy capitalists, notably its taxation of the drug trade. The FARC has persisted despite multiple state and parastatal efforts to annihilate them militarily and to co-opt them into the political system through negotiations for peace. The current period, which is marked by the Uribe administration's

“democratic security” strategy (2002-2010), is marked by a military offensive against the FARC that has proven to be moderately successful. These successes, especially on the heels of the humiliating attempts to negotiate with the FARC by the previous administration have left president Uribe’s brand of authoritarianism extremely popular. Uribe’s “democratic security” strategy combines military escalation against the FARC with the Justice and Peace legislation that set the stage for the demobilization of both paramilitaries and insurgents. The paramilitary demobilization has been largely pacted between the regional paramilitary leadership and the government (the national leadership has recently dissolved after the mysterious disappearance of strongman Carlos Castaño in 2004). In exchange for admissions of atrocities paramilitary leaders have been offered amnesty and have received attenuated sentences. This process has been marked by a series of obstacles, from the burgeoning “para-politica” scandal which is continually developing as many high ranking politicians are prosecuted for colluding with the paramilitaries, to the sense that parliamentary leaders were getting off extremely easy for the human rights abuses they perpetrated as well as not offering anything close to full disclosure, to the fact that many of the rank and file paramilitaries have felt estranged by the process in which they have little to gain, to the point that they have regrouped, most prominently as the “black eagles.” While I find these paramilitary elements of Uribe’s “democratic security” strategy interesting subjects worthy of analysis, my interest is in the individual demobilization of insurgents. The Washington Post in a recent article stated, “The most serious problem the FARC is facing is not guerrilla deaths or the loss of territory, but mass desertion, according to political analysts, military officials and former guerrillas interviewed this month (March 2008).”

The demobilization of insurgents, in contrast to the paramilitary demobilization, is not part of any ad hoc post conflict reconciliation process, but rather is considered a tactical

means of counterinsurgency that is deployed in conjunction with military pressure. The Colombian state has always promoted the desertion of members of the FARC, however under president Uribe this effort has been invigorated and institutionalized. The resulting program, supported generously by the United States and other donor countries, is called The Program for Humanitarian Attention for the Demobilized or PAHD. The Ministry of Defense administers the two DDs in what policy and political science shorthand is DDR, demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration. After former combatants pass through the Ministry of Defense they are transferred to the High Advisory for Social and Economic Reintegration, which is an ad hoc bureaucracy created by the Presidency and linked to the Ministry of the Interior where they are offered two years of comprehensive welfare support for themselves and their immediate families in preparation for their integration into Colombian civic society.

### The Process

I would like to begin with a description of the process for individual insurgent demobilization in Colombia by speaking about the means by which the state hails the subjects it hopes to recreate. A multiplicity of methods and media are employed, the list includes: radio advertisements, television advertisements, the appropriation of cultural spaces by co-sponsoring events, staging theatre performances that proselytize for the demobilization program, distributing propagandist literature on any possible cultural occasion, other “psychological operations” such as sending clowns into areas where FARC militias are active to draw together crowds where pro-demobilization messages can be disseminated, and providing free medical clinics that serve a similar function. The decisions to use this multiplicity of means to spread the word about the demobilization program and

its benefits are guided by presumptions that the FARC members are rational choice actors, that psychological operations can be enhanced by drawing on marketing tactics, and that a language of humanitarianism and the promise of comprehensive welfare will help both allure FARC combatants and win supporters in the wider public sphere in Colombia and abroad.

Once a FARC member decides to turn himself in, at great risk to his life and that of his family, he goes to a local police station or military base. There he is held for a period not to exceed thirty days and is cross examined and used by military intelligence teams to glean information that will be of immediate use in offensive and defensive operations. After that period he is transferred with his immediate family to a city, most frequently Bogotá, where he goes through a three month certification process to insure he is neither a spy for the FARC nor a regular civilian trying to access the welfare benefits. Once he receives his “Certificate on behalf of the Operative Committee for Disarmament” or CODA he can begin the reintegration process that begins with the issuing of an identity document since many of the former FARC members have been forced to destroy their previous identity documents. As they begin the reintegration process they register with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, and start to receive the most pressing needs they face for acclimation to civilian life, a stipend, health access, and educational access for their children and/or themselves. Later psychological support and skills training is offered. The duration of this support during the reintegration process is two years from receiving the CODA certificate.

It is critical to note that in all but the most sensitive of stages, that is military intelligence gathering and the certification of the demobilized, the Colombia government has

chosen to work closely with contractors to craft and implement their marketing strategies, and administer their reintegration programs.

### Why is this Topic Important?

First, and perhaps foremost, there is a glaring absence of anthropological perspectives in the literature on DDR. With the exception of Hoffman's article (2005), which was written around a fieldwork event, there has been no anthropological writing about DDR. At the same time DDR appears to be a topic that calls out for an ethnographic approach. It is a topic that is not easily approximated through quantitative methods and model based analysis. Discerning how different actors feel and understand the transformative process they are undergoing or administering requires time and trust.

Second, the case of Colombia is experimental and exceptional compared to the DDR processes that have been carried out thus far in places such as West Africa and Aceh, in the sense that it is not occurring in post-conflict moment, but rather as Theidon has labeled it, a period of "pre-post conflict" (2006). Third, the PAHD program mobilizes a language of humanitarianism that is highly interconnected with the State's military apparatus, an example of what Duffield (2001) has argued is the interconnection of humanitarianism and militarism in the "new wars" (2001:13). Fourth, the PAHD program complicates conceptions of neoliberalism that conclude that late-capitalism and violence are mutually constitutive *and* that neoliberalism signals the retreat of the state, since the PAHD program is an instantiation of the former but not the latter. Fifth, the PAHD program is a microcosm of a pressing historical problem, the Colombian State's inability to *cumplir* or fulfill its basic end of the contract to govern fairly. Corruption among elites, clientelism, and other exclusionary practices have marred the image of the Colombian state as honest and trustworthy. This

view of the state is reinforced in the FARC's "revolutionary education" and does not disappear when FARC combatants demobilize. In the twenty-first century, and with the assistance of foreign governments, the State must *prove* itself capable of fulfilling its promises. Therefore, the PAHD program must strike a delicate balance between creating an alluring image in its marketing and psychological operations to allure members of the FARC, and creating an image that will not breed disappointment. The staff is cognizant of this challenge and knows that it is urgent as many ex-combatants are in touch with their former comrades, and use the metaphor of tourism, "a happy tourist brings more tourists," yet another example on the extent to which market logic permeates the PAHD program.

### My Approach and Methodology

I intend to follow the lives of approximately six actors in this individual insurgent DDR process over the course of two years. Profiles of some of the people I intend forge relationships with and focus on include:

- > three demobilized FARC members in different stages of the process, and hopefully of different ranks, ages, genders and FARC units which are delineated mostly geographically.
- > one American advisor who helps to assess and assist the PAHD program
- > one member of the communications team of the PAHD who is in charge of coordinating focus groups, contracting public relations and publicity firms for marketing campaigns, and managing relations with the press
- > one senior government official in the Ministry of Defense or the Presidency involved in contributing to the ideological and administrative framework of the PAHD

By tracking these individuals over time, both within and beyond their contact with the PAHD program, I hope that their experiences will shed light on my research questions.

### Preliminary Observations and Initial Research Questions

Since both the administrators of the PAHD program and the demobilized are fixated on *cumplimiento* or fulfillment, how does each individual actor define fulfillment? This question will be critical in finding out where perspectives misalign. By identifying the disjuncture between the imagined and the actual new sets of questions will emerge. This line of questioning, about conceptions of the social contract will suggest how competing understandings of the state are negotiated and projected in the wider public sphere. The PAHD program, trying to be many things to many people, is highly ambivalent about what kind of social contract it represents. On one level it appears as a microcosm of a generous welfare state, however only under the strict condition that after two years the demobilized subjects will become docile political subjects of the State and economically productive citizens. The transitional welfare state appears to be a means to a primarily military end. That docility and productivity are taken as the goals of reintegration intimates that neoliberalism is not far afield. This suggestion gains depth when the operative structure of the PAHD program is taken into account. While definitively nationalist and centrally controlled by government bureaucracies, the PAHD relies heavily on contractors to develop, package and disseminate their message, and to administer many reintegration components of the program. This move toward contractors is at the expense of NGOs. While the contractual process is similar to the wider humanitarian industry, there appears to be an effort to cut out NGOs. As funding priorities have shifted from “the displaced” to “the

demobilized” many NGOs have been thinned out through budgetary hardball, and the State has laid claim to the discourse of humanitarianism. If we are to understand the PAHD program within a “neo-liberal” frame we need to adjust that frame to account for the fact that the role of the State is expanding in this case. In 2007, nearly 2,500 rebels abandoned the FARC to join the PAHD program according to the government. At such a scale, the stresses on the ad hoc bureaucracies developed to administer the demobilization program are significant. But the Uribe administration, which has shifted between distrust and disdain of NGOs, has decided to lean heavily on private companies to carry out reintegration programs. The humanitarian state and the neoliberal state curiously cohabitate. How can I begin to understand this close juxtaposition of outsourcing, counterinsurgency, and humanitarianism? How will I analytically parse the competing interests and the competing agendas at work in these close juxtapositions? Beyond a faith in ethnographic methods, particularly tracing the lived experiences of both demobilized subjects and the administrators of the demobilization and reintegration programs, what tools can I bring to the task of transcending rational choice theory as the lens through which to view the process of Demilitarization, Demobilization, and Reintegration.