Online Appendices

It takes three to tango: contested authority, violence and rebel legitimacy in Colombia

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Online appendix I: Fieldwork, data and process tracing

This study's research design builds on process tracing as a method of data analysis and fieldwork as a method of data collection. Process tracing emphasises discovering and disentangling the various steps, the *in-between*, that lead up to an observed outcome. It collects and evaluates pieces of empirical evidence to test hypothesised causal mechanisms, that is, the elements making up the causal chain of how and why one initial set of qualities changes into another (Bennett and Checkel 2014, 7). This, in turn, means that process tracing remains dependent on other methods of data collection that gather causal process observations, which can then be analysed regarding the hypothesised mechanisms in question (Checkel 2021; Lyall 2014).

The study's data comes from immersive fieldwork, which I conducted for four months in Colombia in 2021 with my research assistant Laura Ramírez Rodríguez. The selection of my two cases followed a deductive strategy. Before fieldwork, I had developed my theory of legitimation to explain local variation in armed actors' legitimacy and thus looked for similar communities exposed to the FARC and the Colombian state during the conflict. Talking to various experts and contacts in Colombia, I settled on two communities that fit that bill: Santa Rosa and Buenavista. Notably, I did not yet know about the variation in outcome before visiting the two communities. This variation emerged as a coincidental finding and fed back into my theorisation at a later stage.

In the two communities, my assistant Laura and I interviewed community leaders active during my period of interest (1990-2010) about their past experiences of the FARC and other actors' governance. We also spoke with ex-combatants of the FARC in one demobilisation camp (*Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación*, ETCR) in the area to approximate the view of the armed actor. We conducted 43 interviews (12 of which were with women), and countless casual conversations spread more or less evenly across the three field sites. Given that some elements of the process date back a few decades, we generally focused on middle-aged and older residents who consciously lived through this time. The sample is biased towards men because more community leaders were men than women. I sought to reach out to female participants wherever possible but sometimes failed to gain access. However, having a female research assistant was an important means of gaining rapport with female participants and allowed me to reach people I would not have otherwise.

Having chosen the community as the unit of analysis, a critical reader may question how representative these interviews – and, by implication, my claims about each community's legitimation process – are for the community as a whole. I did not use the individual as the unit of analysis in my

questionnaires to avoid collecting politically sensitive data and keep participants secure in the volatile post-conflict context of the research. Thus, rather than aspiring to a random sample, I followed a strategy of 'selecting'. As Lee Ann Fujii has argued, projects focusing on 'situated meaning', on a normative system of beliefs, require the 'intentional and mindful selection of participants, based on criteria that the researcher identifies (either at the beginning or during research) as important to the research question' (Fujii 2015, 38). I aimed to find participants who were in a suitable position to talk about the normative belief system within each village representatively. This led me to focus specifically on interviewing community leaders, persons whose opinions were widely esteemed and who can thus be seen as representative of the wider community. To avoid biases, we consciously moved in different directions with our sampling, not relying on one gatekeeper alone but going through several with different political backgrounds, from different age groups and serving in different functions within the communities. With this strategy, I cannot measure the community's public opinion *as a whole*, but working under the assumption that leaders' views spread to the wider community, they can be seen as a largely representative sample.

The interviews were semi-structured. As such, each conversation followed a guide of predetermined questions based on the operationalisation of my theory, albeit I reserved the ability to give participants the space to develop their own narrative and change sequence if necessary. Moreover, in collaboration with my assistant, I continuously refined and updated the questions. Interviews lasted between one and four hours, with an average length of one hour and forty minutes. All interviews were carried out in Spanish, with both my assistant and I asking questions. Interviews were recorded (where participants consented) and consequently transcribed. When people did not want to be recorded, we took field notes during the interview. The interview guide is reproduced in English below.

Next to interviews, we also got to know our participants within each community on their terms and in their environment. We had casual conversations in coffee shops, during visits to their homes over coffee or dinner, or while helping them with everyday chores. This approach allowed me to more confidently make inferences about the normative beliefs of my participants by getting a feeling for the content and context of their everyday lives, their local histories and lived experiences (Kapiszewski, MacLean and Read 2015, 250; Gusterson 2008). More importantly, by immersing ourselves in the field and spending time with our participants, we could establish more trusting relationships to eventually move beyond superficial questions and engage in more sensitive topics. This approach ultimately benefited our interviews whenever we interviewed key participants again after spending some time in the field. As others have argued, it is possible to establish better

working relationships with participants through repeated inter-action, which makes data collection more ethical and helps elicit further information (Fujii 2015, 28).

I complemented my fieldwork with a wide variety of textual sources. I studied written minutes, pamphlets, 'codes of conduct', websites, field manuals, and public speeches of the FARC to help me assess the conduct of their authority in the region of Sumapaz. I also used newspaper articles, specifically the archive of the large Colombian daily *El Tiempo* to double-check the claims of my participants and trace conflict dynamics in my case studies. Moreover, I drew on election data between 1990 and 2010 made available through Colombia's *Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil*. Finally, I considered a wealth of secondary literature about the region of Sumapaz, including published interviews with people from my case studies, to check the validity of my interview and observational data.

Next, I inserted these data into my process tracing analysis. Recently, methodological scholarship has put forward different forms of process tracing, primarily differing in how they evaluate causal process observations. Bennet and Checkel have proposed to draw on Van Evera's typology of necessary and sufficient conditions to evaluate hypothesised mechanisms (Bennett and Checkel 2014). Others have moved towards Bayesian analysis, assigning statistical probabilities to each piece of evidence (Fairfield and Charman 2022). While innovative, I forgo this Bayesian variant of process tracing because it requires mutually exclusive hypotheses (or mechanisms), which the mechanisms theorised in the article explicitly are not, making assigning Bayesian probabilities difficult (Zaks 2021; Bennett, Charman and Fairfield 2022, 298). Thus, I build on earlier formulations of process tracing using Van Evera tests (Bennett and Checkel 2014).

Van Evera (1997, 31–2) defines four tests for any empirical evidence varying along two dimensions: uniqueness, meaning that the evidence is sufficient to confirm a particular theory, and certainty, meaning that the evidence is necessary for a particular theory to be true. From these dimensions, Van Evera identifies four kinds of tests of increasing strength: a non-necessary, non-sufficient straw-in-the-wind test, which, if passed, affirms the hypothesis without confirming it, and which, if failed, weakens the hypothesis; a necessary, non-sufficient hoop test, which, if passed, affirms the hypothesis, and which, if failed, eliminates it; the sufficient non-necessary smoking-gun test, which, if passed, confirms the hypothesis, and which, if failed, weakens it; and the sufficient and necessary doubly decisive test, which, if passed, confirms the hypothesis, and which, if failed, eliminates it.

Notably, finding smoking-gun and doubly decisive pieces of evidence which exhaustively confirm a hypothesised mechanism is difficult when researching ideational mechanisms within the

context of civil war (Lyall 2014, 203). Not only is it notoriously difficult to find sufficient evidence for ideational processes such as socialisation, learning or comparison, given our inability to look into the heads of our participants – doubly so as these processes occur over extended periods (Krebs and Jackson 2007). Also, given the (post-)conflict context in which I conducted my fieldwork, I refrained from asking my participants direct questions about rebel support or other forms of allegiance in order not to endanger them (Cronin-Furman and Lake 2018), which yet again decreased my possibilities to find evidence classified as sufficient. For that reason, I focused the operationalisation of my mechanisms towards straw-in-the-wind and hoop tests. Again, this is not to say that other evidence would not be available in principle, but rather that I consciously focused on those two tests for ethical and security concerns (For a similar approach, see Bateson 2017, 637–638).

For each of my mechanisms, I sought to design two hoop tests and one straw-in-the-wind test. For intra-action, the first hoop test is socialisation attempts by the armed actor. A second hoop test is that the civilian community would cite beliefs about the conflict similar to the justifications employed by the armed actor. A straw-in-the-wind test is that civilians have experienced a 'subjective sense of changes in perspective' regarding the armed actor's justifications following such inter-actions.

For direct inter-action, the first hoop test is another armed actor putting pressure on the extant armed actor. A second hoop test is that the extant armed actor's justifications change following this pressure. A straw-in-the-wind test is that civilians would report a change in perception of this armed actor's justifications following such occurrences.

For indirect inter-action, the first hoop test is a (partial) takeover of a community by another armed actor. A second hoop test is that civilians frame evaluations of the extant armed actor relative to the new armed actor. A straw-in-the-wind test is that civilians indicate that they experienced a subjective sense of change in their perception of the extant armed actor's justifications in light of the new authority relation.

For strategic allegiance, the first hoop test is civilian support growing and waning in line with an armed actor's security provision. A second hoop test is civilians siding with the armed actor who is capable of providing other material benefits and services. A straw-in-the-wind test is that civilians frame their evaluations of the armed actor's violence as pragmatic or calculated rather than ideological or ideational.

For displacement, the first hoop test is whether mass displacement of civilians occurs. A second hoop test is that this displacement is selective and targets dominantly people with one set of political opinions or loyalties. A straw-in-the-wind test is that civilians report a change in the perceived community's political or normative orientation concerning the armed actor's violence following

the displacement.

Table AI below details all of the interviews conducted during my field research in Colombia in the autumn and winter of 2021. Full interview transcripts cannot be made available to guarantee the security of my participants.

Table AI: Overview of interviews

Pseudonym	**Role**	**Location**	**Date**
FARC01	Former FARC Commander	Bogotá	17.09.21
FARC02	Former FARC Commander	Bogotá	18.09.21
FARC03	Former FARC Combatant	ETCR	28.09.21
FARC04	Former FARC Combatant	ETCR	28.09.21
FARC05	Former FARC Combatant	ETCR	29.09.21
FARC06	Former FARC Combatant	ETCR	29.09.21
FARC07	Former FARC Combatant	ETCR	29.09.21
FARC08	Former FARC Combatant	ETCR	30.09.21
FARC09	Former FARC Combatant	ETCR	30.09.21
FARC10	Former FARC Combatant	ETCR	01.10.21
FARC11	Former FARC Combatant	Bogotá	04.10.21
FARC12	Former FARC Combatant	Bogotá	12.10.21
FARC13	Former FARC Combatant	Bogotá	13.10.21
FARC14	Former FARC Commander	Bogotá	19.10.21
FARC15	Former FARC Combatant	Bogotá	21.10.21
SANT01	Community leader	'Santa Rosa'	03.11.21
SANT02	Community leader	'Santa Rosa'	04.11.21
SANT02b	Community leader	'Santa Rosa'	15.11.21
SANT03	Merchant	'Santa Rosa'	06.11.21
SANT04	Worker	'Santa Rosa'	07.11.21
SANT05	Community leader	'Santa Rosa'	09.11.21
SANT06	Municipal Employee	'Santa Rosa'	09.11.21
SANT06b	Municipal Employee	'Santa Rosa'	18.11.21
SANT08	Municipal Employee	'Santa Rosa'	10.11.21
SANT09	Peasant	'Santa Rosa'	11.11.21
SANT10	Community leader	'Santa Rosa'	12.11.21

Table AI: Overview of interviews

Pseudonym	**Role**	**Location**	**Date**
SANT11	Community leader	'Santa Rosa'	13.11.21
SANT12	Community leader	'Santa Rosa'	16.11.21
SANT13	Peasant	'Santa Rosa'	16.11.21
SANT14	Community leader	'Santa Rosa'	17.11.21
SANT15	Inhabitant	'Santa Rosa'	18.11.21
BUEN01	Former Community Leader	'Santa Rosa'	10.11.21
BUEN02	Group of Five Community Leaders	'Buenavista'	25.11.21
BUEN03	Two Community Leaders	'Buenavista'	26.11.21
BUEN04	Community leader	'Buenavista'	28.11.21
BUEN05	Community leader	'Buenavista'	29.11.21
BUEN06	Peasant	'Buenavista'	30.11.21
BUEN07	Community leader	'Buenavista'	30.11.21
BUEN08	Worker	'Buenavista'	01.12.21
BUEN09	Community leader	'Buenavista'	01.12.21
BUEN10	Community leader	'Buenavista'	03.12.21
BUEN11	Community leader	'Buenavista'	03.12.21
BUEN12	Worker	'Buenavista'	03.12.21

Interview guide

Selected questions for Village Inhabitants

1. What was your first experience of the conflict?
2. How did you experience growing up here in this village?
3. How has public life changed since then in your village?
4. Which armed groups have controlled your village in the last two decades?
5. How has life in your community changed during these years?
6. In your village, how have you been organising public life? What institutions and procedures have you had in place?
7. What relation did your community have with the state historically?

8. Before the FARC controlled your village, how was public life in the village organised?
    (a) Which rules did regulate village life?
    (b) Which services and reforms were provided to the community? Which would you have liked?
    (c) Did you consider violence necessary to achieve your desired services?
    (d) How was political participation organised?

    Repeat 9–11 for both the FARC and the state
9. When the [armed actor] took over control in your village, what changed, what remained?
    (a) How did your community deal with the new arrangement?
    (b) Did you feel that the [armed actor] respected your village's values? Why (not?)
10. How did the [armed actor] behave in your community?
    (a) Was there violence or coercion against your community after the [armed actor] took over? Did it continue?
    (b) Did the [armed actor] try to talk and engage with you or the village leader(s)? Was there any form of communication between the village and the [armed actor]?
        i. If yes, what did they say? What were their main messages?
        ii. How were these messages taken up in your village? What did others say?
11. Did the [armed actor] provide services like schooling or clinics? Did it change your perception of the group?
12. Now, do you have any questions for me? Either about the interview or about my research?
13. Are you happy with how this interview went? Is it still okay for you if I use what you told me in my research?

Selected questions for FARC excombatants

1. What was your first experience of the conflict?
2. Where have you travelled over the course of the war?
3. How did the peace deal affect you?
4. To what extent were you engaged in governance provision during your active time?
    (a) What did these duties entail?
    (b) Were you engaged in governing specific communities for longer periods of time?
5. What relation did the villages you controlled have with the state historically?

6. When you controlled a village, how was public life in the village organised?
    (a) Which rules did regulate village life?
    (b) Which services and reforms were provided to the community? Which would you have liked?
    (c) In what way did you consider violence necessary to achieve your desired services?
    (d) How was political participation organised? Was there any?
7. Did you change existing procedures and modes of organisation in these villages?
8. How did you organise the interactions with the inhabitants in the villages you controlled?
    (a) Was there violence or coercion against or by civilians after you took over a village?
    (b) Did you try to talk with the inhabitants and village leader(s)? Was there any form of communication between controlled villages and the FARC?
        i. Generally speaking, what were your main messages?
        ii. How were these messages taken up in the village?
9. Were there instances where your front had to adapt to the needs or preferences of village inhabitants?
10. Now, do you have any questions for me? Either about the interview or about my research?
11. Are you happy with how this interview went? Is it still okay for you if I use what you told me in my research?

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Online appendix II: Ethics

This project was approved by the ethics committee of the European University Institute with the Project Code '20210528_Minatti' on 28 May 2021. I have implemented all the committee's recommendations in the following data-collection process.

Here, I want to discuss three major ethical challenges of my research project. Most fundamental for me as a researcher from the Global North doing fieldwork in the Global South is the question of exploitation for the purposes of my knowledge production. As the central endeavour of this study is to capture the norms of certain communities and to trace how governance providers influenced them, I am inadvertently in the business of creating knowledge about people 'over there' (Chisholm 2016). For this reason, I approached the peasant organisations of the two case study communities early on with my project. Subsequently, they vetted me, my assistant and my project in a community vote before I conducted my research. This ensured that my knowledge production was, to some extent, in the interest of my participants.

Much more practical is the question of informed consent. Standard approaches to conceptualising informed consent in the form of once-given, written consent were difficult to apply to fieldwork in violent contexts. In post-conflict settings, where the overall situation is highly dynamic, consent forms often offer very complex information to participants who are not necessarily used to paperwork and who are sceptical of signing institutional contracts (MacLean 2013). What is more, written signatures are hard to anonymise. They thus would have posed a considerable risk to participants as I would not have been able to hide such documents in case of confiscation (Wood 2006). For this reason, I recorded oral consent from participants and made digital anonymised annotations that consent was given. During the interview, I avoided posing sensitive questions. Where incriminating information was about to be discussed, I tried to change the subject. I emphasised during the interview that participants could refuse to answer whenever they wanted. After each interview, I gave participants time and space to reconsider their consent in light of what they had said to me during our talk.

Finally, I ensured data security by storing data on a password-protected server. What is more, I recorded interviews only with a special recorder (Olympus DS 9500) which encrypts the recorded data already in the field and makes it inaccessible without a master password. In terms of field notes, I created photographs as soon as possible and destroyed hard copies accordingly. With these precautions, I sought to make sure that accidental loss of materials or devices could not endanger participants as well as minimise the risk of a security breach in the case of confiscation or

control.

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Online appendix III: Evidence index

Evidence 1: Most-similar case study design

Buenavista and Santa Rosa qualify as a most-similar case study design insofar as they share five contextual factors important for wartime legitimation: they are similar in terms of collective memory, experiences of past violence, ideological outlook, experiences of governance and FARC presence.

First, both communities have their roots within the *hacienda del Sumapaz*, an enormous estate covering much of what is nowadays the region of Sumapaz. The oppression that had marked peasant life during that time was still vivid in people's collective memory as 'a very difficult situation of almost feudal conditions' (BUEN02, also BUEN06, SANT02, SANT04, SANT10). From the 1920s onward, the peasantry of the region, including the communities of Buenavista and Santa Rosa, started to organise themselves as a movement for a dignified peasant life. They sought to disintegrate the hacienda system and to achieve land tenure for themselves, and they did so with notable success (Varela Mora and Duque Ortiz 2011, 49).

Second, during Colombia's partisan conflict of the 1940s and 50s, *La Violencia*, violence flared up in both Buenavista and Santa Rosa as conservative armed groups would attack and kill liberal and communist peasants. This commonality is described in greater length below in section 2.

Third, both communities had a strong communist tradition dating back to the 1920s. Thus, the communities had strong local organisations of the communist party (SANT02, SANT04, SANT06, SANT14, BUEN03, BUEN08). Throughout the 1990s, 'the *Unión Patriotica* and the Communist Party dominated elections' of mayors and councillors in Santa Rosa (SANT02). In Buenavista, equally, many community leaders had been members of the community party (Baquero Monroy 2022, 80). By the 1980s, the leftist *Unión Patriotica* became increasingly popular within the community, and many inhabitants joined the party (Morales Acosta 2017, 53). As one participant remembered, 'we have been [Communist] party members for a long time' (BUEN07). While both communities certainly also exhibited different political ideologies, most importantly a liberal one, communism constituted the clear majority.

Fourth, after *La Violencia*, both communities developed strong peasant organisations that helped the local peasants in their land quarrels, particularly in ensuring land tenure to the peasant community (BUEN02, BUEN07, SANT10, SANT12). When land politics were increasingly liberalised in the 1980s, the organisation again pursued various legal pathways to ensure land tenure to the peasants and avoid land concentration (BUEN03). As a result, the concentration of land in both communities (and the wider region of Sumapaz) has historically been much lower than nationally

(Gómez 2022, 109).

Fifth, the FARC insurgency has directly controlled both communities, starting around the same time and for a similar duration. For Santa Rosa, the FARC were the sole armed actor as of 1993 following a violent takeover. One community leader remembered, 'the police left and here [in the town] was no presence of the military forces. Then, all this was controlled by the guerrillas. They were the authority' (SANT12). In Buenavista, the FARC took control of the village in 1991 (Comisión de la Verdad 2022, 43; Gómez 2022, 112). The FARC fronts stationed within each community overlapped as well: Within the area of Buenavista, the FARC fronts that were primarily active were the 51st, the 52nd and the 55th front, while in Santa Rosa, the 52nd and the 55th fronts were in charge (Comisión de la Verdad 2022). By 2004, the FARC came increasingly under military pressure in both communities and lost control over the area, limiting their presence to sporadic attacks (Baquero Monroy 2022).

That being said, there is, of course, one marked difference between the two communities: their size. Buenavista is a small village which only houses around a hundred inhabitants. In comparison, Santa Rosa is a town of about a thousand inhabitants, including a municipal administration with the mayor's office. However, although Santa Rosa was larger and more urbanised than Buenavista, my analysis did not reveal an urban-rural divide. Community leaders within the town of Santa Rosa identified as peasants (and often possessed their own farms outside the town). Beliefs about peasant autonomy were dominant in both communities, as were the traditional peasant demands for land reform.

Evidence 2: Communities' beliefs about violence around 1990

In this section, I present additional evidence for my assertion that around 1990, both Santa Rosa and Buenavista did share a history of violent self-defence that coined their collective memory, although both communities had since turned to 'civil resistance' as a means to achieve reforms.

La Violencia, a civil war between 1948 and 1960, was intense in the region of Sumapaz. Under the leadership of a local peasant leader called Juan de la Cruz Varela, peasants throughout the region organised themselves and formed self-defence groups guided by either the Liberal or the Communist party (Morales Acosta 2017, 48). This armed resistance shaped the two communities' collective memory. Varela, Colombia's 'first guerrillero', was much revered in both communities at the time of fieldwork (BUEN02, BUEN03, BUEN04, SANT01, SANT02, SANT04). One leader in Buenavista invoked Varela's legacy when discussing local politics, noting that 'we are the third generation of peasants here and of course heirs of a conflict that developed in the 1950s' (BUEN03). A former mayor in Santa Rosa recounted about the communist newspaper *Voz Proletaria*, a popular

outlet in the region around 1990, 'there was a lot of talk about the issue of justice [...] there was also talk of the armed struggle as one of the means [to achieve them]' (SANT01). Yet another community leader in Buenavista noted that 'we continue to fight in order not to lose the legacy that our ancestors left us: Sumapaz here has been dominated by a fight for land [...] we are still here fighting' (BUEN07).

Despite these historical experiences, most community leaders in both Santa Rosa and Buenavista saw for themselves civil resistance rather than armed struggle as a path to political reform. The insistence of Juan de la Cruz Varela on civil resistance following a peace deal in the late 1950s certainly bears testimony to that. 'In '57 was the delivery of weapons by Juan de la Cruz. After that, he made the change from an approach of arms to one of organisations, and agrarian unions were created,' one participant reminded us (BUEN02). Varela had thought that peasant organisations should seek rapprochement with state institutions, mobilise the peasantry and publicly denounce state aggression. And 'people trusted his guidance' (SANT02). Indeed, the communities returned to civil means and founded various peasant unions, which soon developed into a self-governmental institution with grassroots democratic procedures (Comisión de la Verdad 2022, 11). As one *campesino* from the area reports, Varela 'brought together all his communities, directed them not to allow any provocation by the government, not to fire a single shot at anyone [...] and instead carry out mass mobilisations' (Varela Mora and Duque Ortiz 2011, 189). In other words, by 1990, Buenavista and Santa Rosa were both shaped by a collective history of seeing violence as a rightful means of political action as well as a commitment to peaceful politics.

Evidence 3: FARC justifications of violence around 1990

In this section, I present additional evidence for my assertion that around 1990, the FARC in the region of Sumapaz justified their violence as defensive and necessary in light of state inaction to address social problems such as land distribution and other inequalities (FARC06, FARC10). This notion of self-defence goes back to the origins of the FARC, which formed out of fugitive peasant self-defence groups after the military operation *Marquetalia* (Beltrán Villegas 2015, 140; see also Peña 2014, 50) The FARC drew on these origins to underline their link with the liberal self-defence groups of the 1940s and 1950s while also highlighting the necessity to continue the armed struggle to counter injustice perpetrated by the state (Peña 2014, 44ff). 'The army forced us to fight', one ex-combatant noted (FARC01). Long-time FARC leader Manuel Marulanda highlighted the attack against Marquetalia, stating that 'our guerrillas did arise as a response to aggression against the peasantry and later because we defended the cause of the exploited' (Quoted in Alfonso 2017, 70).

As one former FARC member summarised, 'our answer was, "there's a bullet coming, so have a bullet." [...] We didn't rise up. We responded to an assault' (FARC01).

In turn, this allowed them to justify the exercise of violence insofar as the peasantry would gain from violence a bettering in social and material conditions without - crucially - having any other pathway to pursue it. As one ex-combatant summarised,

> when we started the process in arms, I think it was a necessity or an obligation, *we were forced by the peasantry* because the attitude of the government and the oligarchy at that time towards the peasantry was disproportionately destructive (FARC02).

Another FARC ex-combatant noted that 'the guerrillas were born out of the population [...] The first thing we were taught was that we were the people's army, okay? *From the people and for the people*' (FARC10). Yet another ex-combatant noted that 'we were not fighting against the civilian population, we were fighting against an army that was constituted to *repress a part of the population that was using arms, namely us*' (FARC13).

In sum, the FARC justified their violence in that it was conducted out of self-defence and for the benefit of 'the people'.

Evidence 4: Variation in FARC legitimacy

In this section, I give additional evidence for the variation in the outcome, the FARC's legitimacy, between my two cases of Buenavista and Santa Rosa both around 1990 (the FARC are legitimate in both cases) and 2010 (the FARC are still legitimate in Buenavista, but no longer in Santa Rosa).

Around 1990, both Santa Rosa and Buenavista thought the FARC to be legitimate, as highlighted in acts of material and symbolic support at the time. In Buenavista, the FARC's governance was seen as helpful, and the rebels' violent struggle was an important catalyst for change (Baquero Monroy 2022, 230). As one community leader in Buenavista told me, 'the people were helping [the FARC]. At the time, people still trusted them that change could be achieved in Colombia' (BUEN11). Another community leader active in Buenavista at the time confirmed this when reflecting on the early 1990s, saying that 'the guerrilla wasn't harmful to the peasants, no, the guerrilla was, let's say, accommodating the needs of the peasants' (BUEN02). Indeed, this corresponds to high levels of support at the time and a subjective expression of the guerrilla movement as a guarantor for social order and the necessities of daily life (Pérez 2012, 184). Albeit an imperfect proxy, this trend is corroborated by election results from 1991, when more than two-thirds of the community voted for the leftist candidate (76%) of the Colombian Communist Party. Similarly, in 1994, the candidate

campaigning on a platform supported by both the Communist Party and the *Union Patriotica* won over 90% (RDEC 1991, 1994).

Equally, in Santa Rosa, the community was supporting the FARC (Baquero Monroy 2022, 230). Indeed, by the late 80s, the FARC were quite popular, as one community leader remembers:

> the FARC in the '80s enjoyed extraordinary public prestige. You marched in the streets of Fusagasugá [departmental capital of within the region of Sumapaz] or this town here at a demonstration [and heard]: 'Long live Commander Manuel Marulanda Vélez' (SANT02).

A younger inhabitant argued that 'when elders talked about the guerrillas, they saw it as something that had been born to defend the peasantry, that was trying to enforce the rights of the peasantry' (SANT11). One worker living in the village at the time noted that he 'observed a certain camaraderie, like brotherhood, like a family that we are all part of [...] So the FARC asked many of the citizens, who were willing and available, for help for some simple things' (SANT04). Another community leader remembers that '[People] received [the FARC] well because they created a kind of presence to convince the community but without being arbitrary, so people paid attention to them' (SANT05). Again, this interview evidence is mirrored in election results at the time. In 1990, 68% voted for the leftist, FARC-sympathetic *Union Patriotica* (CEDAE 2024).

By the late 2000s, the FARC still enjoyed sympathy and support in Buenavista. One community leader summarised his support for the FARC's violent struggle, arguing that the FARC fought 'for an ideal. They demanded a just cause' (BUEN06). Another lamented the better, and most crucially, the safer times under FARC rule, saying 'nowadays people complain about the lack of the guerrillas [...] They controlled cattle theft. They controlled robberies. This was a very safe area here. These days no longer exist' (BUEN08). Comparing this interview evidence with voting data, we see that by 2006, 96% voted for the leftist party POLO, a political alliance of leftist parties including politicians of the Communist Party and the *Unión Patriotica* (RNEC 2006). In 2010, this number was equally high at 86% (RNEC 2010). In that sense, the election results confirm the continuous leftist (and thus, at least in terms of political demands, FARC sympathetic) position of the communities.

Conversely, in Santa Rosa, the FARC had lost support. As one community leader reflects about that time, '[The FARC] had won society and with those [later] attitudes they lost it again because we civilians could not tolerate [their actions]' (SANT05). Another community leader explicitly highlighted that the proposals of the FARC still resonated with them but that they felt that the rebels had 'lost their ideals' (SANT03). Yet another *campesino* noted that 'unfortunately, the ideological differences emerged because of the way they acted, because they thought only of power

and made many mistakes, thus changing people's ideas that they [the FARC] were right' (SANT10). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the FARC's governance within Santa Rosa 'generated enmity and antipathy against the FARC-EP and the gradual acceptance of the state military forces' (Baquero Monroy 2022, 254). Looking at voting behaviour, in stark contrast to Buenavista, only 20% of voters supported the leftist party POLO in 2006 and 28% in 2010. Instead, a majority now voted for the centrist Liberal party and parties close to it (CEDAE 2024; RNEC 2010), confirming the interview evidence suggesting a shift away from Santa Rosa's earlier leftist, FARC-sympathetic positions.

Evidence 5: Intra-actional legitimation

5.1 Hoop: Socialisation attempts.

In the early 1990s, when the FARC started to take control of Buenavista and Santa Rosa, they communicated their justifications via various means. They held meetings with the local population to communicate their values and agenda. Talks would also regularly happen in schools, where the FARC could present themselves, explain their goals and aspirations to the people and communicate core rules to the community (SANT04, BUEN02). One leader in Santa Rosa remembered that 'they would call us from time to time and invite us to meetings with them, although they would not directly participate in the [JAC] meetings' (SANT09). Another recounts that 'I met the guerrilla in [a village] once. They came there, and they got the whole community together, everybody. They had a meeting there near the school where they presented themselves as guerrillas and that [...] they would be around from now on' (SANT12). In Buenavista, another leader noted that the FARC 'got to the meetings and said things [...] they would hold a speech' (BUEN01).

Moreover, the FARC used leaflets, as evidenced by one leader who noted that the FARC 'left documents in the schools where they talked about the decisions of their conferences, of their plenary sessions, and of some meetings they held about how to live together' (BUEN01). The rebels also organised communal work days during which they interacted with the communities (SANT01, SANT10, BUEN02, BUEN04, also Casa Editorial El Tiempo 2000a).

5.2 Straw-in-the-Wind: Civilian perception change ensues.

In both communities, we see evidence of FARC socialisation attempts being successful. Inhabitants remembered 'an enthusiasm, an incentive to belong to the guerrilla' at the time (BUEN07). One peasant noted that at one such meeting, he felt it did encourage and convince many of the attendees: 'I did realise that many people were motivated by the speech [of the FARC] - many. And that's why

they ended up somehow [feeling] very close to the FARC' (SANT04). Another inhabitant remembers with their speeches, the FARC 'indoctrinated many young people and boys' (SANT10).

Moreover, we see many young people joining the guerrilla, and, as far as participants were concerned, they did so largely voluntarily. 'Many people went to the guerrillas [...] I know many who left voluntarily, [the FARC] at no time forced any, neither men nor women,' one leader in Santa Rosa noted (SANT01). Another leader there told us that 'the vast majority of the young people who left for the guerrilla were not forced, but left on their own free will' (SANT10). Equally, in Buenavista, one leader noted that 'We don't understand why people say that the FARC recruits children. At that time, they didn't recruit them. They invited [people], and people left, but they didn't [forcibly] recruit them' (BUEN10). A woman in Santa Rosa largely affirmed this, saying that 'I don't know if some of those who left [for the FARC] were forced to leave, but no... at least in my village, they never said that if there are two young people, then one has to go to the guerrilla, no, never' (SANT12).

5.3 Straw-in-the-Wind: Civilians reproduce FARC narratives.

Community members in both Buenavista and Santa Rosa took up the FARC's narrative about their armed struggle. In Santa Rosa, one inhabitant remarked that the FARC 'couldn't do anything else to show the government that it needed reform' (SANT08). Another peasant equally used this narrative when reflecting on how the FARC emerged, arguing that 'the groups organised for the defence of the peasantry began to consolidate, to take the name of subversive movements, of revolutionaries' (SANT04). In Buenavista, one inhabitant noted that the FARC 'told us that we had to defend our land. Today, some of us are still trying today to defend our region, defend our territory' (BUEN08). Another leader there remembered that 'we treated the FARC comrades with the respect they deserved [...] because it deserves a lot of merits to decide to dedicate your life to a process of struggle, to decide to abandon your family, your interests, well... they deserved this recognition' (BUEN03). Yet another participant echoed the FARC's justification of their violence being about necessary self-defence, saying that 'the guerrillas took up arms because of state persecution when all they did was demand rights and guarantees to be able to farm the land and have the right to the land' (BUEN06). One leader in Buenavista echoed the 'foundational myth' of the FARC of their violence being a measure of self-defence when saying that

> in Marquetalia, [the state] didn't go to dialogue with [the FARC], which was what they were asking for, to dialogue and reach agreements. They sent planes, and their operations led to bombings there and in other territories. Now, wherever you go, one responds to violence with violence. These peasants could not let themselves be killed without doing

anything. They had to organise themselves (BUEN02).

And a former mayor of Santa Rosa remembered:

> I always thought that these armed forces [of the FARC] were in favour of the people. That was what you saw: they were always very close to the peasants, they taught the peasants sometimes things: how to have livestock, how to do some crops, how to do community work, how to say we are going to fix a road, and we fix it among all, how to make a bridge, how to work communally (SANT01).

Evidence 6: Direct inter-actional legitimation

6.1 Hoop: Other armed actor pressures FARC.

From the mid-1990s onward, the conflict between the FARC and the army got increasingly heated within Sumapaz (El Tiempo 1994, 2001; Semana 2000). Through concerted efforts of the state to retake the territory, the FARC were increasingly fighting in a contested space (Baquero Monroy 2022, 253). As Benavides (2018, 7) argues, the advent of the state in the late 1990s in the area 'represented a dramatic change in the way of life of the population'.

6.2 Hoop: FARC behaviour toward civilians changes.

In the wake of the more precarious military situation in Sumapaz in the second half of the 1990s, the FARC introduced two marked changes to their authority relations in both Santa Rosa and Buenavista.

First, they introduced a militiamen system by arming local young civilian men to ensure a foothold should guerrillas be unable to reach the locality. Contrary to FARC guerrillas, militiamen did not go through a training course – neither politically nor militarily – which inhabitants criticised starkly. 'They set up a strategy that they called the militiamen, who were civilians who lent themselves to carry messages, to fetch things, to threaten, to intimidate, to extort and perhaps also to kill and kidnap,' one leader said (SANT14). Another leader in Santa Rosa mentioned that 'one of the worst mistakes the guerrillas made in their desire to seize power by arms was to have assembled a group of militiamen without any political training, but only military training' (SANT10). Yet another complained that 'they extorted or even killed simply because of gossip or something. If someone told them that a person was an army informant, they killed him without justification' (SANT12). Similarly, in Buenavista, one community leader noted that 'being part of that structure [of the FARC] went to the heads [of the militiamen], as we peasants say, and they committed outrageous violations of discipline, things that hurt the community' (BUEN02). Another inhabitant remembered that 'on

many occasions they used [their position] for personal gain. That was one of the big mistakes of the militias' (BUEN08). The militiamen, an elderly inhabitant summarised, 'were a failure of the guerrilla' (BUEN04).

Second, the FARC became more violent against civilians, which was also reported in the media at the time (Casa Editorial El Tiempo 2000b, 2002). 'There were denouncements [...] there were violent deaths on both sides: because of the government, through its elite corps of assassins, and then because of the FARC as well, because there were some [civilians] who allowed themselves to be [mis]led by what the military says,' one peasant remembered the vicious cycle of denouncements and the killings that took at the height of the conflict in the late 1990s (BUEN03). Then, in Santa Rosa, the FARC killed two important community leaders in the early 2000s: Santa Rosa's then-mayor and a social leader. Threats preceded the mayor's death, as the FARC had demanded that he relinquish his post. 'When they realised that the man was not resigning, they murdered him' (SANT10). In Buenavista, the FARC killed three community leaders, one mayor and two councillors in neighbouring villages (El Tiempo 2008). The murders caused anger because 'they were people of progress, good people. And they were murdered, and many of us didn't like that' (BUEN04). The murders were 'a very hard blow for the [us]' which the FARC 'haven't been able to explain' (BUEN02).

6.3 Straw-in-the-Wind: Civilian perception change ensues.

The FARC's actions notably jarred with their earlier justifications and the communities' belief in the rightfulness of violence for the good of the peasantry (rather than against it). The FARC, one community leader in Buenavista remarked 'lost confidence because of these things' (BUEN10). In Santa Rosa, a leader noted that after these episodes of violence 'we realised that they had become bandits [...] Sometimes they acted arbitrarily and also killed civilians' (SANT11). Another elderly community leader made a similar point, saying that 'in the beginning, there were ideological policies that were respected by [FARC] commanders [...] But as time passed, [...] they no longer defended the people, they attacked them' (SANT05). 'After having committed all these abuses', yet another former leader added, 'the guerrillas really lost their credibility' (SANT10).

Evidence 7: Indirect inter-actional legitimation

7.1 Hoop: Other armed actor takes over control.

Around the turn of the millennium, the Colombian army switched from a strategy of mobile units to establishing permanent bases in the territory to drive out the FARC from the region (Comisión de

la Verdad 2022, 46). In two large military operations, *Aniquilador II* in the year 2000 and *Libertad I* in 2003, the Colombian army significantly weakened the FARC in the region of Sumapaz (Semana 2000; Echandía Castilla 2012). Following these operations, the FARC reduced their presence in both communities. Although they retained a small foothold until the late 2000s, rebel-civilian interaction was now much more infrequent (Comisión de la Verdad 2022, 47).

Around Buenavista, the army started to develop a permanent presence in 2001. According to one leader in Buenavista, during the 2000s, soldiers outnumbered peasants in the region markedly (BUEN03). At the time, a commanding officer claimed that 'the army is not arriving alone' but together with an increased state presence (El Tiempo 2001). However, throughout the 2000s, institutions other than the military remained dormant due to the ongoing conflict and the accompanying threats to public officials (Morales Acosta 2017). Hence, the greater military footprint did not result in greater security for the peasants. Instead, the army considered the region a 'red zone' and a FARC stronghold, often taking drastic measures against the civilian population as part of its counterinsurgency strategy (Comisión de la Verdad 2022, 49).

Conversely, in Santa Rosa, state presence remained limited. One leader remarked that 'it was just the army – that was the [state's] presence in the area' which only changed with the decrease in conflict intensity in the 2010s (SANT10).

7.2 Straw-in-the-Wind: Civilian perception change ensues.

Participants in Buenavista remembered stigmatization and abuse by the military. 'We were called many things. [...] We were offered money or things like that [for information], other peasants were taken, others stripped naked,' one peasant remembers the army (BUEN03). 'There was a lot of aggression, a lot of stigmatisation of our inhabitants by the army, they said that we peasants had something to do with the guerrillas [...] permanent searches, house raids, registration, a lot of repression, torture, peasants arrested all the time,' another community leader added (BUEN02). Finally, the army killed young men from the community as *falsos positivos*, labelling them as guerrillas killed in action. One leader told us that

> They killed [...] boys born and raised here [...] For three months, the media [...] reported that in the Sumapaz marshlands, several guerrillas had been killed in combat by the army (BUEN02).

The continued transgressions, stigmatisation and harassment by the army caused many grievances among the community (50) and subsequently gave urgency to beliefs about the necessity for

peasant defence. As one community leader told me about the army, 'they, not the guerrillas, were the law. They were the representatives of the state, of the law, but they acted like criminals' (BUEN02). Normative beliefs in the protection and defence of the peasantry gained new importance in light of the new security landscape where 'the only ones who defended us at the time were the FARC' (BUEN08).

Conversely, in Santa Rosa, the state seldom factored into civilians' reflections and experiences of violence or repression were much more limited. Only occasionally, community leaders in Santa Rosa voiced complaints about the state's behaviour at that time, primarily regarding security provisions. Indeed, the state officials, and particularly military personnel, often appeared as ignorant of the problems and conditions of the peasant town, and participants remembered instances of stigmatisation of the town, whose people were frequently framed as guerrilla loyalists by state representatives (SANT02).

7.3 Straw-in-the-Wind: Civilians evaluate FARC relatively.

Leaders in Buenavista actively compared the army to the FARC. As one *campesino* leader remembered, 'We were not afraid when the guerrillas passed, but when the army arrived. That killed, imprisoned, and disappeared [people]' (BUEN02). Another remarked that 'the guerrillas were simpler. The army was more dominant, humiliating [us]' (BUEN09). Yet another leader noted that the FARC 'helped to enrich and strengthen the social fabric, the opposite of what the army did when it entered. [The army] broke the social fabric, creating mistrust, uncertainty and vandalism' (BUEN02). This relative assessment is certainly summarised by one of the union's leaders, who told me that 'the guerrillas were less arbitrary, they were more humane if we can talk about humanity in war, and they committed less injustice than the army' (BUEN02).

Conversely, in Santa Rosa, almost no participant made a direct comparison to the FARC when reflecting on the state's presence. One younger inhabitant was the exception when he noted that 'this was an area where we weren't afraid of guerrillas here. We were afraid of the army because we were threatened [by them]' (SANT03).

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