

# Designing from the Margins

World-Building and Identity Construction in  
Women-Led Initiatives in Post-Conflict Contexts  
in Colombia

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## **It would like to thank**

\_the women who shared their stories, experiences, and dreams with me. Specially to Kate, your resilience, courage, and determination have been the heart of this project, and I am deeply inspired by your care, love and commitment to rebuilding your communities and transforming your territories.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge the land and people of Colombia, my home. This project is a tribute to the resilience and creativity of Colombian women, who continue to fight for peace, justice, and equality. It is my hope that this work contributes, even in a small way, to the ongoing efforts to build a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

# Abstract

## ENG

This thesis explores the role of communication design and world-building design in the construction of territorial identity within women-led initiatives in post-conflict contexts in Colombia. The research focuses on four initiatives led by women in territories historically affected by armed conflict, analyzing how these initiatives use design to resignify their realities, strengthen community identity, and promote social transformation. The study highlights the transformative potential of design in reconfiguring power relations, fostering economic autonomy, and challenging traditional gender roles. Through a qualitative approach, including semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation, the research examines how these initiatives contribute to peacebuilding and the reconstruction of the social fabric. The findings underscore the importance of design as a tool for creating new narratives and alternative futures, emphasizing the agency of women in post-conflict processes.

# Abstract

## ITA

Questa tesi esplora il ruolo del design della comunicazione e del design di world-building nella costruzione dell'identità territoriale all'interno di iniziative guidate da donne in contesti post-conflitto in Colombia. La ricerca si concentra su quattro iniziative guidate da donne in territori storicamente colpiti da conflitti armati, analizzando come queste iniziative utilizzano il design per ridefinire le loro realtà, rafforzare l'identità comunitaria e promuovere la trasformazione sociale. Lo studio evidenzia il potenziale trasformativo del design nel riconfigurare le relazioni di potere, favorire l'autonomia economica e sfidare i ruoli di genere tradizionali. Attraverso un approccio qualitativo, che include interviste semi-strutturate e osservazione non partecipante, la ricerca esamina come queste iniziative contribuiscono alla costruzione della pace e alla ricostruzione del tessuto sociale. I risultati sottolineano l'importanza del design come strumento per creare nuove narrazioni e futuri alternativi, enfatizzando l'agency delle donne nei processi post-conflitto.

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# Introduction

## Problem Statement and Justification of the Research

### **Problem Statement**

The chosen topic for this thesis is the role of communication design and world-building design in the transformation of territory in post-conflict contexts in Colombia. Specifically, the research analyzes the use of world-building design and communication design in the construction of territorial identities through four communicative proposals from initiatives and brands led by women. These initiatives, developed in territories historically affected by armed conflict, seek to resignify their realities and strengthen community identity. This thesis aims to understand how these proposals contribute to the construction of new narratives and social transformation in these contexts.

It is important to recognize the impact of several decades of conflict in the country. According to the 2018 report “¡Basta Ya!” by the National Center for Historical Memory, between 1958 and 2013, approximately 220,000 people lost their lives due to violence, 80% of whom were civilians. Additionally, more than 5 million people were forcibly displaced from their homes, making it one of the most severe internal displacement crises worldwide.

These figures not only reflect the magnitude of the violence but also its deep repercussions on the country’s social, economic, and cultural life. The conflict has disrupted life projects, fractured communities, and generated increasing distrust in institutional strategies. These challenges persist, making it essential to work on rebuilding the so-

cial fabric and consolidating lasting peace.

Post-conflict Colombia represents a key opportunity to advance in peacebuilding and the recovery of a country that has suffered profound consequences due to a prolonged armed conflict (Calderón Rojas, 2016). Between 2001 and 2019, 76,646 people from illegal armed groups demobilized. Of these, 43,055 entered the reintegration process: 29,745 successfully completed it, 11,852 remain in the process, and 1,203 are part of special reintegration programs (Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization, ARN, 2023).

However, reintegration into civilian life poses enormous challenges for those who have lived outside the law. This process involves facing social, economic, political, and cultural barriers, as well as the need to resignify their role in society. It requires deep dialogue about their participation in social dynamics during the conflict and the difficulties they face in their reintegration.

The 2017 ARN annual report reveals that unemployment among the reintegration population reaches 18.2%. The rate is particularly high for women, at 38.8%, compared to 14.5% for men. Additionally, the vast majority (95.2%) earn less than two minimum wages, and 65.4% hide their past as ex-combatants from their employers. Another relevant fact is that 37.8% work more than 48 hours per week, 49.6% have been in their current job for less than a year, and nearly 60% are in the informal sector.

These figures highlight that reintegration remains a complex challenge requiring sustained efforts to ensure professional training, job opportunities, and comprehensive support. Structural barriers still hinder the full reintegration of ex-combatants into society.

For women, these challenges are even greater, as they face a society with deep patriarchal roots, where traditional gender roles continue to limit their participation in leadership, entrepreneurship, and politics. Reintegration efforts often focus on their adaptation to these pre-established roles—such as motherhood and domestic work—rather than generating opportunities in historically male-dominated sectors (Gutiérrez & Murphy, 2023).

Although programs have attempted to incorporate a gender perspective, the available information remains insufficient to fully understand the gaps affecting women in this process. It is crucial to continue deepening these analyses to design more effective and equitable strategies for inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding.

In the post-conflict context of Colombia, many women have initiated projects and created brands not only as a source of income but also as a way to rebuild the social fabric and resignify territories affected by violence. However, despite these advances, they still face significant obstacles. For instance, although they have led 118 collective projects and 1,452 individual initiatives as of December 2022 (Torres-Acosta, 2024), many struggle to occupy leadership positions due to the disproportionate burden of caregiving tasks.

This research analyzes the role of communication design and world-building design in these processes of territorial and social transformation, highlighting their impact on women's participation and leadership in the pursuit of agency and economic autonomy.

Communication design and world-building design provide key tools for this pro-

cess, enabling the creation of new forms of representation and participation. Their transformative nature offers innovative and alternative perspectives that go beyond their conception as mere marketing tools.

Communication design and world-building design offer crucial tools for creating new forms of representation and participation. Their transformative potential allows for exploring innovative perspectives that extend beyond their traditional market function. Tony Fry, as cited by Bodi (2021), defines design as “a fundamental facet of the prefigurative character of our existence.” Similarly, Arturo Escobar (2007) argues that design not only produces objects but also generates ways of life, relationships, and meanings. In this sense, design has the capacity to shape realities and contribute to the construction of more equitable and sustainable societies.

In the reintegration process of demobilized women, design emerges as a powerful tool for imagining and constructing new ways of life in their communities. Its application in these territories can strengthen participation, drive local development, and promote social justice and equity.

This research aims to describe how communication design and world-building design have contributed to the construction of territorial identity in initiatives led by women in post-conflict contexts in Colombia. Through the analysis of four initiatives, it will explore how these strategies have been used for empowerment, territory resignification, and social fabric reconstruction. Additionally, it will highlight how women have challenged traditional narratives of reintegration, strengthening their autonomy and generating new representations of their territories. Finally, a data visualization will

be developed to illustrate the impact of these initiatives on social transformation and peacebuilding.

## Justification

This research is situated at the intersection of design, communication, and social transformation, with a particular emphasis on post-conflict contexts and how design influences the construction of territorial identities. Its relevance lies in exploring how design can transform social realities deeply marked by violence and exclusion. In the Colombian context, former female combatants face significant structural challenges when reintegrating into civilian life, as they must overcome both the consequences of armed conflict and economic exclusion and traditional gender roles.

This initiative aligns with the efforts of the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN), which has promoted gender-focused programs for women victims and ex-combatants since 2003 (Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización, 2020). In this landscape, initiatives and brands led by women serve as essential spaces for rebuilding the social fabric and resignifying their territories, thus promoting economic autonomy and strengthening territorial identity.

In this sense, design holds great potential to build more equitable and just societies through collaboration and sustainability (Escobar,

2007). Specifically, communication design and world-building design offer powerful tools for creating new narratives and projecting alternative futures in communities transitioning toward peace. This thesis aims to investigate how design, centered on local voices and needs, can empower women in post-conflict processes, allowing them to tell their own stories and challenge the power structures that have historically limited them. In this way, design serves as a key medium for generating authentic narratives that question stereotypes associated with armed conflict and recognize women's contributions to peace and social reconstruction.

Additionally, language and narratives play a crucial role in these processes, as they influence how communities perceive themselves and imagine their future (García, 2015). Stories have the power to construct realities, but they are also subject to power relations that determine which are validated and which are excluded (Hartman, 1991). From this perspective, design emerges as an ethical tool capable of helping communities tell their own stories, challenge dominant dynamics, and reimagine other possible futures.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that design, approached from a participatory and territorial perspective, can be a powerful tool for social transformation, embracing diverse cultural perspectives and fostering truly inclusive and meaningful world-building.

## Research Question

**What is the role of communication design and world-building design in the construction of territorial identity in initiatives led by women in post-conflict contexts in Colombia?**

## General Objective

To describe the role of communication design and world-building design in the construction of territorial identity in initiatives led by women in post-conflict contexts in Colombia.

## Specific Objectives

- *Identify the main impacts of the armed conflict on women in Colombia and their effects on territorial identity and the social fabric.*
- *Highlight the role of communication design and world-building design in the construction of territorial identity in initiatives and brands led by women in post-conflict contexts.*
- *Represent, through visual tools and quantitative and qualitative data, the impact of these initiatives on the social transformation of communities*

## Project Scope

This research has an exploratory and descriptive scope, focusing on four initiatives and/or brands led by women in post-conflict contexts in Colombia. The study aims to describe the role of communication design and world-building design in these initiatives, analyzing women's perceptions of how their projects contribute to territorial transformation and identity construction. It is important to clarify that no before-and-after measurements were conducted to establish a quantifiable impact; instead, the study prioritizes understanding, from the participants' perspective, how design has influenced the resignification of their territories and the creation of new community narratives

## Scope Dimensions

**Temporal:** The study focuses on initiatives developed after the 2016 Peace Agreement, within the framework of reintegration and social reconstruction processes in Colombia.

**Geographical:** Priority is given to territories included in the Development Programs with a Territorial Approach (PDET), identified as the areas most affected by the armed conflict, with high levels of violence, poverty, and institutional weakness.

**Thematic:** The theoretical perspective of this research is based on the concepts of gender-sensitive communication design (Comunicazione Gender Sensitive, 2023), world-building design (Escobar, 2018), and Dissocons

(Gutiérrez, 2022). These conceptual frameworks allow for analyzing how initiatives led by women use design to resignify territories, strengthen community identity, and promote social transformation in post-conflict contexts. The gender-sensitive communication approach focuses on how narratives and visual representations can challenge gender stereotypes and highlight the role of women in peacebuilding and territorial development

**Methodological:** A qualitative approach will be employed, based on literature review, non-participant observation, and semi-structured interviews with women leading the initiatives. The final research product will be a data visualization integrating information on the situation of women in the armed conflict in Colombia and the participants' perceptions of the impact of their projects on territorial and social transformation.

# Part 1

## Context of the Armed Conflict and Reintegration in Colombia

### Part 1 Context

History of the Armed Conflict in  
Colombia  
Impacts of the Armed Conflict  
Women in the Armed Conflict  
Women Victims  
Women Combatants



Fig 1. Hundreds of Indigenous people arrived in the country's capital to demand a meeting with President Iván Duque and an end to the growing violence in their territories in Bogotá, Colombia, October 19, 2020. (Juancho Torres - Anadolu Agency)

## Context of the Armed Conflict and Reintegration in Colombia

The armed conflict in Colombia has left a profound mark on the country's history, territory, and social dynamics, creating significant challenges for peacebuilding and sustainable development. This chapter aims to contextualize the main characteristics of the conflict, its impacts, and the efforts undertaken to reintegrate ex-combatants and consolidate peace in Colombian territory.

To achieve this, the chapter addresses the historical background and key actors of the conflict, as well as its consequences on the social fabric and territorial dynamics. Additionally, it analyzes the implementation process of the 2016 Peace Agreements and their impact on the country's transformation. From a gender perspective, it explores the challenges and opportunities in the reintegration of ex-combatants, with a particular focus on the specific situation of women in this process.

This approach is essential to understanding how initiatives and brands led by women in post-conflict contexts contribute to territorial transformation and identity construction. Through communication design and world-building design, these initiatives strengthen communities transitioning toward peace, enabling the resignification of territory and the creation of new narratives that promote social and economic development in these regions.

## 1.1 History of the Armed Conflict in Colombia

The armed conflict in Colombia has been a dynamic and highly complex phenomenon throughout its history. Its causes are diverse and have evolved over time, ranging from historical issues such as inequality in land access to more recent factors like drug trafficking. The involvement of multiple actors, the transformation of violence, and its impact on the population have made the search for a definitive solution increasingly challenging.

To better understand the evolution of this conflict, a timeline is presented, highlighting its most significant moments and stages. This chronology is based on the document *Basta Ya: Memories of War and Dignity* by the National Center for Historical Memory (CNMH, 2013), the chapter *Thou Shalt Not Kill. A Historical Account of the Armed Conflict in Colombia* included in *There is a Future if There is Truth: Final Report of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition* (de la Verdad, 2022), and the study *Stages of the Armed Conflict in Colombia: Toward the Post-Conflict Era* by Jonathan Calderón Rojas (2016).

### 1948-1958 La Violencia

The period known as La Violencia began with the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, leader of the Liberal Party, on April 9, 1948. This event triggered a wave of massive violence between the Liberal and Conservative parties, marking a political and social conflict that, between 1948 and 1966, resulted in 193,017 deaths. Additionally, land loss severely affected numerous peasants, with a total of 393,648 plots expropriated during this decade (CNMH, 2013), particularly impacting rural areas. The intense political polarization of this period laid the groundwork for subsequent conflicts in Colombia.

### 1958-1977 First Period The Emergence of Guerrillas

The Frente Nacional period (1958-1974) (CNMH, 2013), an agreement between the Liberal and Conservative parties to alternate power and overcome partisan violence, was heavily influenced by the United States. A national security strategy was implemented, combining military repression against armed groups with limited social reforms. This strategy, designed to address both internal tensions and the communist threat in the Cold War context, excluded alternative political forces and consolidated a highly centralized and repressive state model, contributing to

the emergence and strengthening of guerrilla groups (CNMH, 2013).

As a response to structural inequalities, the lack of agrarian reforms, military repression, and political exclusion, several insurgent groups were formed and consolidated. For instance, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) in 1965, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) in 1966, and the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) in 1967 (Rojas, 2016). Later, in 1974, the Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19) emerged, operating primarily in urban areas (CNMH, 2013).

### 1978-1991 Second Period Consolidation of Insurgent and Paramilitary Groups

During this period, the armed conflict in Colombia was characterized by the geographical expansion of violence and an exponential increase in the number of armed groups, including guerrillas and paramilitaries. This “demographic explosion” was accompanied by an ideological consolidation of guerrilla movements, which expanded their social base and areas of influence. At the same time, drug trafficking became a key player, financing armed groups and generating new conflicts over the control of illicit crop routes. The lack of political opportunities and growing social inequality fueled public discontent, facilitating recruit-

ment into both guerrilla and paramilitary ranks (de la Verdad, 2022).

The emergence of paramilitary groups in Colombia was linked to the creation of self-defense militias (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia - AUC) (Rivera, 2007), which were authorized to prevent the rise of armed groups and maintain territorial control. These militias were composed of landowners and political bosses, establishing hierarchical social orders that ensured the dominance of the powerful. Additionally, drug lords began forming their private armies, becoming an emerging economic force in various regions of the country.

This period was marked by a severe human rights crisis, characterized by forced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial executions. Between 1977 and 1983, there were 2,223 documented disappearances, 251 cases of torture, and 5,287 homicides (de la Verdad, 2022). Meanwhile, government attempts to negotiate with guerrillas failed to consolidate a lasting peace process.

### 1991-2002 Third Period Transformations in the Conflict

The 1990s were a period of profound transformation in the Colombian armed conflict, marked by key events that redefined the country's

dynamics. This period saw the dismantling of major criminal structures, peace negotiations with some armed groups, the enactment of a new Constitution, the strengthening of ties between drug trafficking and politics, and an unprecedented escalation of violence.

**Dismantling of the Medellín Cartel:** The fall of Pablo Escobar in 1993 marked the end of a terror-filled era of drug trafficking. However, after his death, drug trafficking fragmented into multiple organizations, leading to a reconfiguration of actors and methods that primarily affected civilians (CNMH, 2013).

**Peace Processes:** Negotiations were held with several guerrilla groups, such as the M-19 and EPL, leading to their demobilization and political reintegration (de la Verdad, 2022). However, the persistence of groups like the FARC and the ongoing influence of drug trafficking prolonged the conflict.

**1991 Constitution:** The enactment of the new Constitution was a milestone in Colombia's history, expanding political participation and strengthening the rule of law. Nevertheless, the exclusion of some armed actors and the continued influence of drug trafficking limited the effectiveness of the reforms (de la Verdad, n.d.-c). *Political Crisis and Drug Trafficking:* During the 1990s, drug cartels increased their influence in Colombian politics. Simultaneously, the rise of

the "cocalero peasantry" became a key economic phenomenon. The State's response, focused on security rather than structural policies, deepened territorial conflict (de la Verdad, n.d.-d).

**Violence and Displacement:** The expansion of paramilitarism, the modernization of the military forces, and the increasing militarization of guerrillas created an extremely violent scenario. According to the *There Is a Future If There Is Truth* report, between 1992 and 2002, there were approximately 8,000 kidnappings, 10,000 disappearances, 30,000 homicides, and over three million forced displacements (de la Verdad, n.d.-b).

### 2002-2016 Fourth Period Democratic Security Policy

This period was characterized by the Democratic Security Policy implemented through the Plan Patriota during the presidency of Álvaro Uribe (de la Verdad, n.d.-e). This military strategy aimed to weaken guerrillas and restore state control over regions most affected by the conflict. Although it initially succeeded in reducing the operational capacity of groups like the FARC, numerous human rights violations were later exposed, generating controversy and concern.

The strategy involved a significant increase in military personnel, more than doubling the force between

1998 and 2010. This expansion aimed to combat insurgent groups and regain state control over guerrilla-influenced territories. While it militarily and politically weakened the FARC, reducing its legitimacy both domestically and internationally, the strategy came at a high human rights cost.

Between 2004 and 2006, the demobilization process of several fronts of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) took place (de la Verdad, n.d.-h). Although this initially brought some relief to affected territories, irregularities in the implementation of peace agreements led to a rapid rearmament phenomenon. As a result, numerous criminal gangs (BACRIM) emerged, continuing paramilitary-like violence and territorial control.

In 2006, serious concerns arose regarding President Álvaro Uribe's Democratic Security Policy, particularly due to explicit allegations of "parapolitics" (de la Verdad, n.d.-d). This term referred to the connections between paramilitarism and regional political elites. Investigations revealed that at least 87 politicians were convicted of collaborating with paramilitary groups to secure positions in Congress and regional governments. Despite these revelations, corruption stalled judicial processes and investigations into the president's possible links to paramilitarism.

In 2008, one of the darkest episodes of the conflict was revealed: the manipulation of combat ca-

sualty figures by the military under the government's results-based policy (de la Verdad, n.d.-e). This practice led to the so-called "false positives", a crime against humanity in which at least 6,402 civilians were murdered and falsely presented as guerrillas killed in combat to inflate military success statistics.

During this decade, Colombia experienced an unprecedented escalation of violence, characterized by intense armed confrontations in rural areas and a deep institutional crisis. The exposure of links between paramilitarism, drug trafficking, and political sectors eroded trust in institutions and exacerbated the conflict. Although the government sought to present the FARC as the primary enemy, the reality was far more complex, with multiple armed actors vying for territorial control and civilians caught in the crossfire.

## 2016 Peace Process with FARC-EP

In 2012, the government of President Juan Manuel Santos initiated peace talks with the FARC in Havana, Cuba. This process culminated in the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016, bringing an end to more than five decades of confrontation with the country's largest guerrilla group. The agreement included commitments on transitional justice, combatant demobilization, and rural development. As a result, 13,609 FARC members demobilized, 94.9% of whom have complied with their reintegration process, and over 8,000 weapons were surrendered (de la Verdad, 2022).

This process led to a 78% decrease in victims of the armed conflict, reflected in a significant reduction in humanitarian crimes such as targeted killings, massacres, forced disappearances, and the recruitment of minors (de la Verdad, 2022).

Although the signing of the agreement with the FARC-EP marked a milestone in the country's history, violence did not cease entirely. While a significant number of ex-combatants reintegrated into civilian life, Colombia continues to face the presence of other illegal armed groups.

Despite the progress made, violence remains a reality for social leaders and former combatants. Between

2017 and 2022, 292 demobilized individuals were reported killed (de la Verdad, 2022). These events highlight that building stable and lasting peace is a complex process with multiple challenges. The persistence of new armed groups and the continuation of violent dynamics demonstrate the need to strengthen protection and security measures, as well as to address the structural causes of the conflict.



Fig 2. Dozens of demonstrators gathered at Plaza de Bolívar to celebrate the new opportunity to end 50 years of war with the FARC, Noviembre 25, 2016. (Juan Diego Restrepo E).

## 1.3 Impacts of the Armed Conflict

The armed conflict in Colombia, which lasted for more than six decades, has left a legacy of violence, suffering, and profound transformations in society. According to the report *There Is a Future If There Is Truth* by the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repitition (2022), the impacts of the conflict have been devastating, affecting millions of people and irreversibly altering the country's social, economic, cultural, and political landscape.

Below are the main impacts of the armed conflict, based on figures and testimonies gathered by the Truth Commission, to provide a deeper understanding of the magnitude of the violence and its consequences across multiple dimensions.

Between 1961 and 2021

**9.804.387**  
Total victims

**4.302**  
Massacres occurred in Colombia

**49.5%**  
by paramilitaries

**18.3%**  
by guerrillas

**11.9%**  
by unidentified groups

**11.9%**  
by state agents

**154.173**  
Victims of targeted killings

**43.1%**  
committed by paramilitaries

**15.9%**  
committed by guerrillas

**3.5%**  
committed by state agents

**68.602**  
Victims of forced disappearance

**16.879**  
Children and adolescents  
forcibly recruited

**37.962**  
kidnapped individuals



The map shows the levels of the Historical Impact of The Armed Conflict in Colombia From lowest to highest  
Fig.3 (Observatory of Memory and Conflict, CNMH, 2022)

## Emotional and Psychological Impacts

The families of victims experience anxiety, uncertainty, and catastrophic thoughts, significantly affecting their quality of life. According to the National Health Observatory, victims of the conflict are 1.6 times more likely to attempt suicide than the general population (de la Verdad, 2022).

## Economic and Territorial Impacts

### Conflict Costs

Between 1999 and 2003, the armed conflict generated costs of 16.5 trillion pesos (equivalent to 34.66 trillion pesos in 2021), mainly due to infrastructure damage, kidnappings, forced displacement, and landmine contamination, according to the National Planning Department (DNP) (as cited by the de la Verdad, 2022).

### Displacement and Land Grabbing

Between 2010 and 2013, between 7.7 and 8 million hectares were abandoned due to forced displacement—an area larger than the entire departments of Guainía, Chocó, and Nariño. Drug trafficking and paramilitary groups controlled over 4 million hectares, exacerbating land concentration and inequality.

## Impacts on Production and Livelihoods

Movement restrictions imposed by armed groups disrupted crop harvesting, fishing, and trade, leading to food shortages and nutritional crises in affected communities.

## Cultural and Environmental Impacts

### Loss of Ancestral Knowledge

The conflict interrupted the transmission of traditions, rituals, and cultural practices, affecting community identity and cohesion.

### Environmental Damage

Armed groups altered fragile ecosystems, including National Natural Parks, for military and economic activities, such as drug trafficking.

Environmental degradation disrupted the biocultural relationship between communities and nature, causing distress and frustration among local inhabitants.

## Impacts on Democracy and Politics

### Functionality of Violence

The armed conflict and democratic political system coexisted due to regional disparities in state-building and the functionality of violence for political and economic elites. The exclusion of marginalized populations from democratic spaces and the armed struggle for inclusion created a vicious cycle, making it difficult to break the cycle of violence.



Fig 4. Women Victims of the Colombian Armed Conflict, Mayo 5, 2022. (Comisión de la Verdad)

## 1.3 Women in the Colombian Armed Conflict Violence, Resistance, and Reintegration

The armed conflict in Colombia has left an indelible mark on society, disproportionately affecting women, who have endured multiple forms of violence, exclusion, and vulnerability. According to the Truth Commission Report (2022), 10,864 testimonies reveal how the war deepened gender inequalities and exacerbated structural violence. The most affected groups have been rural, Afro-Colombian, Indigenous, and low-income women, who have suffered land dispossession, sexual violence, and social marginalization.

This section is divided into two main parts. The first examines women as victims of the conflict, addressing forced displacement, sexual violence, and the psychological and social consequences they have endured. The second section focuses on women combatants, exploring their motivations for joining armed groups, their experiences within these groups, and the challenges they face in their reintegration into civilian life

### 1.3.1 Women Victims of the Armed Conflict

As in many other countries, gender-based violence in Colombia is rooted in a patriarchal culture that imposes an unequal power dynamic between men and women. This mentality has led to the belief that men have control not only over women's bodies but also over their thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and freedom.

Within the context of the armed conflict, women not only face sexist and patriarchal violence in their daily lives but also become, alongside minors, the primary victims of war (de la Verdad, 2022). The violence exercised in these scenarios not only reinforces structural inequalities but also leaves profound scars on their lives and communities.

In Colombia, women experience the conflict on a constant basis, as both direct and indirect victims of violence (de la Verdad, 2022).

This double victimization places them in a state of extreme vulnerability, marked by fear, loss, and uncertainty about their future. In addition to suffering violence, they must rebuild their lives in unfamiliar environments, often with limited resources and under conditions of inequality that hinder their recovery and long-term stability.

**Directly, they endure torture, assassinations, disappearances, kidnappings, forced displacement, and sexual violence**



**Indirectly, they suffer the consequences of losing, disappearing, or having loved ones threatened or kidnapped, often forcing them to flee to other rural areas, towns, or cities in search of safety for themselves and their families.**

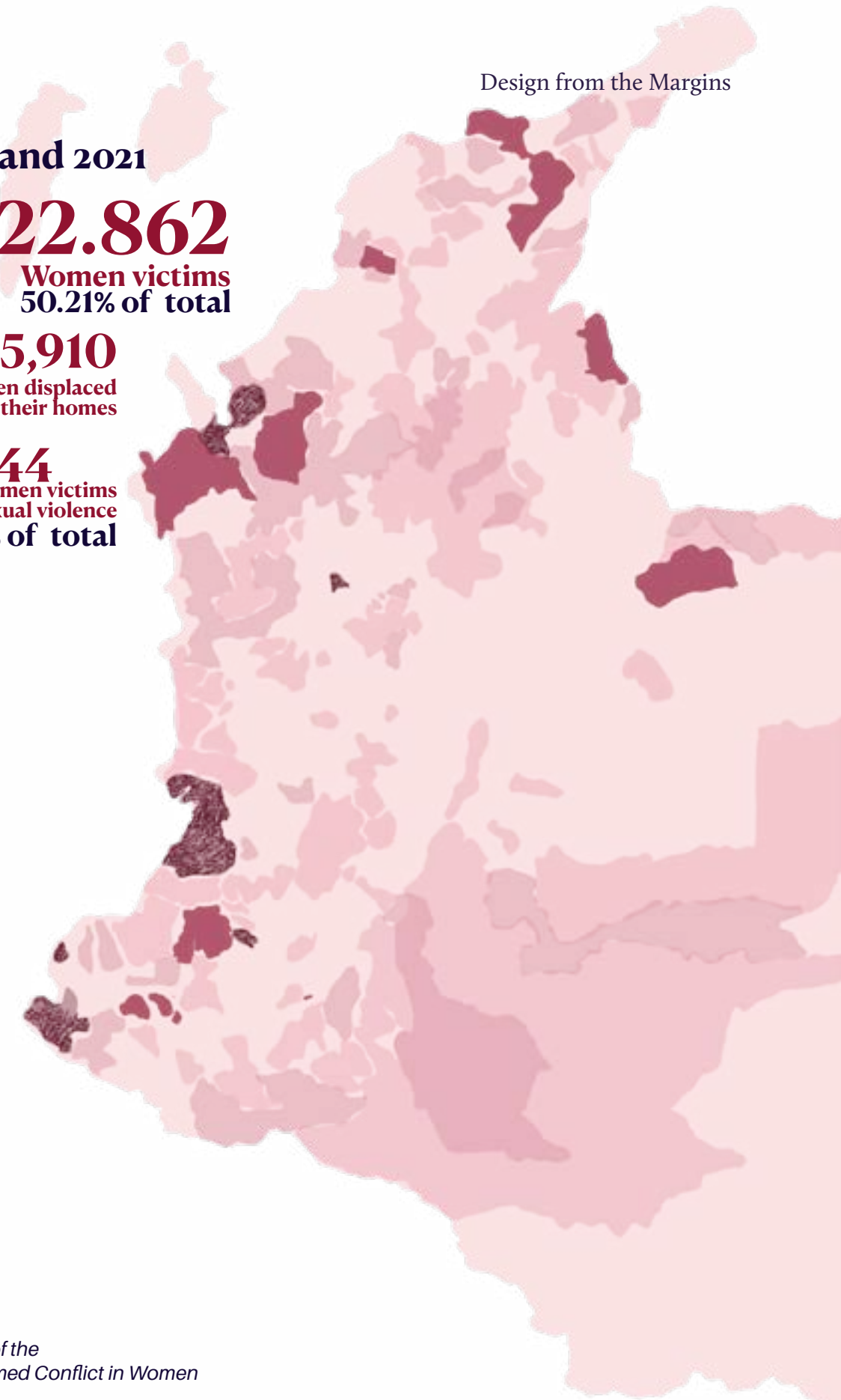


Between 1961 and 2021

**4.922.862**  
Women victims  
50.21% of total

**4,025,910**  
Women displaced  
from their homes

**4.445.344**  
Women victims  
of sexual violence  
90.3% of total



The map shows the levels of the Historical Impact of The Armed Conflict in Women From lowest to highest Fig .5 Data from "Boletín Datos para la paz", (2024)

## Forced Displacement

4,025,910 women were displaced from their homes, representing 50.1% of the displaced population in Colombia.

Loss of land and housing impacted their economic autonomy, leaving them in vulnerable conditions.

Many struggled to access land restitution programs and state support.

Loss of homes and livelihoods, especially affecting rural, Indigenous, and Afro-Colombian women.

Increased caregiving burdens, as many displaced women were left in charge of their children and other family members without access to basic resources.

Vulnerability in new settlement areas, where they often faced new forms of violence and economic precarity

## Sexual and Reproductive Violence

According to the Data for Peace Bulletin (Victims, 2024), 42,817 victims of sexual violence committed by armed groups have been documented.

90.3% of victims of crimes against sexual freedom and integrity are women, while only 7.9% are men. These alarming figures highlight the

disproportionate violence faced by women in the conflict, where sexual violence was used as a tool of control, subjugation, and humiliation.

### Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War

Sexual violence was used as a strategy of domination and social control, particularly targeting young women and girls.

Within armed groups, many women suffered forced abortions, mandatory contraception, and sexual slavery

### Perpetrators

Paramilitary groups and guerrillas used sexual violence to discipline communities and consolidate territorial power.

State forces were also involved in cases of sexual abuse, especially against women perceived as allies of the enemy.

### Impacts

Severe psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

Reproductive health issues, including sexually transmitted infections, infertility, and gynecological trauma. Stigmatization of victims in their communities, making it difficult to report crimes and access justice

## Psychological and Social Impacts

The impacts of the armed conflict on women are not only reflected in statistics but also in personal experiences and testimonies, revealing deep psychological and social harm. According to testimonies collected in the Truth Commission Report (2022):

Women reported experiencing an average of two to three human rights violations at different points in their lives.

Many women suffered multiple psychological traumas, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Violence also affected family and community structures, generating fear and social stigmatization.

Lack of access to justice and widespread impunity has prevented many women from receiving comprehensive reparations.

## Exclusion from Political and Community Life

Women leaders have faced systematic persecution and silencing aimed at preventing their participation in peace and social justice processes (de la Verdad, 2022).



Fig.6 FARC-EP Women combatants, Febrero 15, 2017. (Facebook Farianas)

## 1.3.2 Women Combatants Roles, Violence, and Reintegration

Historically, war has been perceived as an exclusively male domain, leading to the invisibility of women’s participation in armed conflicts. Official historiography has relegated their role to secondary functions, overlooking the fact that many have been active combatants, strategic leaders, and peacebuilders (Ocampo Martínez, 2021). However, information about their role remains limited, as their visibility has been insufficient over time. Most available data comes from testimonies of demobilized women. It is estimated that 40% of the FARC-EP was composed of women (Pulido, 2014).

The participation of women in war can be analyzed from two main perspectives (Ocampo Martínez, 2021):

The pacifist approach, which associates women with motherhood, caregiving, and peace, reinforcing the idea that their “natural role” is to protect life rather than engage in violence.

The combatant approach, which recognizes them as active participants in conflicts, assuming combat, leadership, and armed resistance roles.

Since the 1970s, their presence in armed forces and insurgent groups has increased, challenging the notion that war is exclusively a male domain.

## Women's Participation in the FARC-EP

Laura Ocampo, in her study "State of the Question: Women's Participation in the FARC-EP Guerrilla" (Ocampo Martínez, 2021), critically analyzes the available literature and testimonies of demobilized women regarding their participation in the guerrilla between 1964 and 2019. This research follows a timeline to highlight their role in the FARC-EP.

### 1964 Origins in Marquetalia and the First Female Combatants

The FARC-EP emerged in 1964 as a peasant insurgency. In its early years, women were assigned support roles, such as food supply, caregiving, and propaganda, without being recognized as combatants. Some of the first notable women included Miriam Narváez, Judith Grisales, and Georgina Ortiz, the latter being the first woman to die in combat in the history of the FARC.

### The 1970s and 1980s Women as Combatants

With the consolidation of the guerrilla, women began to be recognized as active combatants, participating in guard duty, reconnaissance, and combat operations. This period marked a structural shift within the orga-

nization. Some women were forcibly recruited, while others joined voluntarily (Ocampo Martínez, 2021).

### The 1990s and 2000s Expansion and Increased Female Presence

The 1990s saw the military and territorial expansion of the FARC, leading to an increase in female recruitment, including peasants, students, intellectuals, and professionals.

At the Eighth Conference of 1993, the guerrilla declared equal rights and responsibilities between men and women, strengthening their participation in combat and leadership roles.

### Peace Processes and Women's Visibility in Negotiations

During the peace talks in Havana (2012-2016), women played a significant role.

The Gender Subcommittee was created, where former FARC combatants and women's organizations successfully incorporated a gender perspective into the agreements.

## Reasons for Joining

In many rural communities, women grow up with limited life choices, often constrained to male dependency, domestic work, or participation in illegal economies. In contexts where violence was part of everyday life, joining an armed group could seem like an alternative for survival or an escape from vulnerability. However, this decision often exposed them to new forms of oppression and violence within these structures.

This phenomenon, known as the militarization of femininity (Rico, 2014), demonstrates that the recruitment of young women and girls is not always due to direct coercion but is deeply influenced by economic and sociocultural factors, such as poverty, gender inequality, and lack of opportunities.

Similarly, testimonies from former female combatants challenge the dominant narrative often reflected in media and state policies. Many women in Colombia chose to join the armed struggle out of political conviction (Barrera Téllez, 2018).

For them, the country's deep social, economic, and political crisis demanded radical transformation. Through their participation, they sought to combat social injustices and contribute to peacebuilding through dialogue and structural conflict resolution. In a study on demobilized women be-

tween 1990 and 2003, Londoño & Nieto (2006) compared the reasons men and women joined armed groups:

**28%** of women joined for political ideology, compared to **26%** of men. **46%** of women joined due to family conflicts, compared to **26%** of men. 56% of women joined out of resentment toward another armed group, compared to only **7%** of men. **48%** of women cited economic reasons, compared to **25%** of men. Additionally, forced recruitment, especially of girls and adolescents, has been widely documented.

According to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP, 2025), 18,677 children were recruited by the FARC-EP between 1971 and 2016. Many saw the guerrilla as an escape from violence in their communities, though it often exposed them to new forms of oppression and abuse.

## Conditions Within the Guerrilla

Although the FARC promoted a discourse of gender equality, internal realities revealed tensions and contradictions (Ocampo Martínez, 2021).

### Gendered Division of Labor

Despite gaining access to combat roles, many women continued performing support tasks, such as cooking, nursing, and logistics. These roles were often devalued compared to similar tasks performed by men.

### Identity and Empowerment

For some women, guerrilla life provided a space for learning and autonomy, where they acquired military strategy, education, and leadership skills.

### Violence and Control

Gender-based violence within the guerrilla has been documented. Romantic relationships were regulated by strict rules.

Reproductive control was enforced, with reports of women being forced to use contraception or undergo abortions (de la Verdad, 2022).

## About the context...

The armed conflict in Colombia has left a deep mark on the country's history, altering its social, economic, and territorial structure. For more than six decades, its effects have been devastating, impacting millions of people. However, not all experiences have been the same—women have suffered differently, facing specific forms of violence, such as forced displacement, sexual violence, and social stigmatization. Despite these adversities, they have played a crucial role in resistance and the reconstruction of the social fabric. Whether as victims or combatants, their participation has been historically overlooked and, in many cases, reduced to stereotypes.

The signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016 was a significant step toward Colombia's transition to peace. However, violence persists in many regions, and the reintegration of ex-combatants, especially women, remains a challenge.

For this thesis, it is essential to highlight the fundamental role of women in these processes, emphasizing their agency and active contribution to peacebuilding. By recognizing their voices and experiences, a broader understanding of the post-conflict period is fostered, as well as of the strategies that have enabled their participation in the reconstruction of the country.

# **Part 2**

# Design for Transformation

Theoretical Framework

**Part 2**  
**Design for Transformation**  
Decolonial Design Theories,  
World-Building Design, and  
Alternative Designs  
Communication Design as a Tool for  
the Construction of Territorial Identity  
Design in the Construction of Territo-  
rial Identities  
Communication Design and Gender  
Culture

## 2 Design for Transformation

In a world that is rapidly and profoundly changing, we all have a role in designing (Manzini, 2015, p. 16). Today, more than ever, design is positioned as an agent of change capable of transforming our societies. In an ontological sense, we all inherently possess the ability to design (Bodí, 2021)—to imagine and create our own worlds. According to Bodí (2021), by recognizing that many of today’s problems originate from design decisions, we can leverage this discipline to build a more sustainable and just future.

Design, when viewed from a reductionist perspective, has been conceived as a tool primarily focused on the production of tangible and intangible objects for the market. This has contributed to consolidating a consumer model based on planned obsolescence and the creation of artificial and ephemeral needs.

Although progress has been made with concepts such as sustainable design and social innovation, which acknowledge the complexity of systems and the social impact of design, in practice, design is often reduced to a tool for driving consumption and perpetuating hegemonic dynamics. By prioritizing the production of objects for the market, the potential of design to address deeper social issues, such as poverty, social exclusion, and environmental degradation, has been largely overlooked (Norman, 2023).

Design must evolve, shifting from being “an unintentional destructive force to an intentional constructive practice” (Norman, 2023, p. 27). It must focus on repairing what has been damaged, collaborating with marginalized voices, and preserving the Earth’s limited resources (Norman, 2023).

For this reason, perspectives such as world-building design, pluriversal design (Escobar, 2019), and decolonial design (Escobar, 2022) provide tools that allow us to rethink design beyond hegemonic frameworks. These approaches demonstrate how we can adopt alternative visions to transform and design differently, even within the current system.

Within this theoretical framework, concepts such as world-building design, design for pluriverses, and decolonial design are explored—approaches that primarily emerge from countries considered part of the ‘Global South’. These perspectives offer valuable tools for addressing complex contemporary challenges from a critical and transformative standpoint. Furthermore, the role of communication design is examined as a world-building act, a symbolic exercise of power that, when placed in the hands of vulnerable communities, holds the potential to reconfigure power relations, resignify territories, and construct collective identities through agency.

### 2.1 Decolonial Design Theories, World-Building Design, and Alternative Designs

For authors like Arturo Escobar (2019) and Tony Fry (2020a), design is inherently ontological. “We design our world, while our world acts back on us and designs us” (Willis, 2006). The objects we create are not merely cultural products; they also co-create reality, shaping ways of being and knowing. For example, designing a chair is not just about creating a piece of furniture to sit on—it is also about co-creating a particular way of occupying space, relating to others, and perceiving time.

This perspective invites a deep reflection on the relationship between humans and the objects they design. Interactions with these objects go beyond mere functionality—they become integral parts of life, influencing actions, thoughts, and ultimately, identity.

By designing an object, we not only shape the material world but also co-create our reality, embedding in artifacts our values, beliefs, and aspirations (Willis, 2006). This connection between design and human identity underscores the transformative power of objects, reminding us of the responsibility of designers to create a world that is more just, humane, and sustainable.

#### Reorienting Design: From the Market to Creative Experimentation

Arturo Escobar (2019) raises a fundamental question:

*“Can design be reoriented from its dependence on the market toward creative experimentation with form, concepts, territories, and materials—especially when appropriated by subaltern communities in their struggle to redefine their life projects in a mutually enriching way with the Earth?” (p. 19)*

Through his critical and reflexive analysis, Escobar (2019) argues that this reorientation of design toward creative experimentation reinforces the importance of constantly rethinking the role of designers as agents of change. Their work not only shapes the present but also influences the future, creating both new possibilities and new limitations.

Similarly, Tony Fry (2020a) calls for a new way of thinking about design to address the challenges of the future. His concept of “Defuturing” (Fry, 2020a) critiques current paradigms and proposes a new foundation for design, one that enables more conscious and responsible decision-making. Fry (2020a) argues that design should not only focus on the present but also consider the long-term implications of its actions.

#### The “Crisis of Crises” and Systemic Thinking

Design decisions over time have led to an era of “crisis of crises”. Issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and geopolitical instability are not isolated phenomena but rather interconnected facets of an increasingly

fragile global system. Fry (2020c) criticizes the tendency to compartmentalize these crises, arguing that:

- **Analyzing** each problem in isolation ignores causal connections and collateral effects.
- This fragmentation **prevents a deep understanding** of the root causes of problems.
- It also **hinders** the implementation of effective solutions.

To address the complexity of the “crisis of crises”, it is essential to adopt a systemic perspective that recognizes the interconnections between different aspects of the global system.

Both Fry (2020c) and Escobar (2018) acknowledge that design has played a role in the crises facing humanity, but they also recognize its transformative power to heal these futures.

This highlights the importance and ethical responsibility of designers in shaping multiple possible futures.

### **Beyond Anthropocentrism: Designing for the Pluriverse**

It is necessary to acknowledge ourselves as part of a complex system, rather than maintaining a human-centered worldview. Life itself must take precedence, along with the interdependent ecological and cultural relationships of our pluriverses (Escobar, 2018a). The pluriverse is understood as the coexistence of multiple ways of being, knowing, and living.

Fry (2020a) emphasizes the need for ethical decisions in design, advocating for:

- Breaking away from anthropocentrism.
- Challenging hegemonic design practices. Shifting towards more holistic and ecologically conscious design approaches.

These changes are essential to address the deeply interconnected crises we face today. In parallel, Arturo Escobar (2018a) offers an alternative vision of design, centered on:

- *Local worldviews.*
- *Respect for ancestral cultures.*
- *A design approach for the pluriverse (Escobar, 2018a).*

In this approach, design is not merely about innovation but also about valuing the diverse realities that coexist. Escobar (2018a) argues that design should enable the creation of worlds where these different realities can coexist harmoniously, contributing to a more just and inclusive world.

### **World-Building Design: A Tool for Social Transformation**

World-building design plays a crucial role in the construction of sustainable communities, particularly in contexts where communities seek to redefine their relationship with their environment and their future.

The concept of design as world-building extends beyond objects—it becomes a broader process of social and environmental transformation. Through design, communities can reconfigure their territories, creating spaces that:

- *Address their immediate needs.*
- *Reflect their cultural values and history.*
- *Support their long-term aspirations (Escobar, 2018a).*

This perspective positions design as a powerful tool for collective agency, allowing communities to reshape their realities in ways that are inclusive, culturally respectful, and sustainable.

## **2.1.1 Alternative Designs**

In his doctoral thesis, Alfredo Gutiérrez (2022), a Colombian designer, coined the term *Dissoccons* to refer to the concepts of “Designs from the South, from the Souths (plural), Others, With Other Names” (p. 9). This term is linked to the concept of decolonial design and its critique of the dominant hegemonic design model, which has historically been driven by Global North countries (mainly Europe and North America).

Within the DISSOCONS framework, the aim is to challenge traditional design notions, particularly those associated with globalization and mass consumption, which are often based on the vision of industrialized countries. These design models not only promote cultural homogenization but also displace and marginalize local design practices and knowledge from the Global South (Latin America, Africa, Asia, and other historically colonized regions). According to Gutiérrez Borrero (2022), these perspectives can enrich design practice, fostering greater inclusion and sustainability.

### **Designs from the South**

The term “Designs from the South” refers to design practices emerging from the Global South, seeking alternatives to conventional

design models. This type of design prioritizes local realities and the specific needs of communities in contexts that have historically been ignored or misrepresented. The South thus becomes a space of resistance, where design solutions are based on ancestral and local knowledge, which often do not align with the models imposed by the North (Borrero, 2021).

### **Designs from the Souths (Los Sures)**

On the other hand, “from the Souths” (*de los Sures*) refers to a plural vision of the South, acknowledging the diversity of contexts within this category. It recognizes that there is not a single “South” but multiple “Souths”, each with its own cultural, social, political, and economic particularities. This concept highlights the heterogeneity of territories and design practices within them.

### **Other Designs and Other Names**

Gutiérrez (2022) also introduces the concept of “Others” “With Other Names,” emphasizing the need to create new categories and new ways of naming design practices rather than using dominant and globalized terms.

Challenging the idea of “one-world world” (Law, 2015)—which promotes absolute and universal truths—Gutiérrez argues that the realities we live in are contingent and relational, meaning they are not fixed or universal but are instead constructed through acts and rituals within specific contexts.

This perspective calls for a shift in how design is viewed, recognizing it as “other” when seen in relation to Indigenous or non-Western practices, which are rooted in their own worldviews, knowledge, and needs.

This implies revaluing local knowledge and rejecting the notion that design must be universal or that there is only one way to design, as proposed by more traditional perspectives.

It invites us to “start thinking about the arrival of alternatives to design, rather than thinking about an alternative design” (Borrero, 2020, p. 58), promoting the creation of solutions that arise from local realities and respectful interaction with the diverse forms of life that coexist in a plural world.

### **Dissocons in This Research**

In this thesis, the concept of Dissocons is used to refer to design approaches that challenge hegemonic practices. In this sense, women-led initiatives fit within this category, as they propose alternative approaches that reconfigure design from more inclusive, situated, and transformative perspectives.

## **2.2 Communication Design as a Discipline for Transformation**

Etymologically, the verb to communicate comes from the Latin *communis*, meaning “common.” To communicate is to bring something into the common space, that is, to establish a bond, an exchange, or a relationship with others. In its broadest sense, communication involves sharing something one possesses—an idea, a feeling, or knowledge (Watzlawick, 2021). Essentially, it is about establishing dialogue and sharing experiences with others. This act of connection is fundamental for constructing shared meanings and creating spaces for interaction and dialogue.

For Salvatore Zingale (2023), communication is not just about sharing something in common but about an encounter where people place themselves in a shared space of dialogue. We do not only engage with our own ideas and emotions but also connect with the thoughts and feelings of others, forming a bond that transcends the individual to build common ground. This perspective underscores that communication does not only inform—it also transforms, generating spaces for mutual understanding and collective action.

### **Communication Design: More than Aesthetics or Technique**

In this context, communication design emerges as a project-based discipline that goes beyond aesthetics or technical aspects. In its ontological function (Bucchetti, 2024), it is a discipline that actively shapes how societies

construct meaning, intended to organize and enrich dialogue between users and systems. It integrates narratives, visual and symbolic elements that facilitate interpretation of the environment and promote action in complex social and cultural contexts (Yudhanto et al., 2023).

More than just creating visually appealing messages, design must manage and translate content in a way that is relevant and coherent with the sociocultural contexts in which it operates. Every communicative piece, whether an image, text, video, or digital space, shapes how people interpret reality and engage with it (Bucchetti, 2024).

### **Communication Design as a Tool for Social Transformation**

From this perspective, design becomes a key tool for addressing the challenges of interconnection and social transformation, particularly in post-conflict territories. The communication designer is not just a creator of visual media but also acts as a cultural mediator, facilitating the construction of collective and identity-based narratives.

Their work has the potential to drive social change, fostering understanding, dialogue, and transformation within communities.

## 2.3 Design in the Construction of Territorial Identities

Territorial identity is not limited to the geographic dimension of a place; rather, it is constructed through social, cultural, and symbolic interactions that give it meaning. It is not merely a delimited physical space but a dynamic social process built through the relationships between people and their environment. It is a social fabric woven from the interaction between a community and its surroundings (Borrini, 2007). This deep connection is reflected in cultural practices, traditions, and a shared sense of history, creating a collective identity rooted in a specific place.

People do not simply interact with physical space—they imbue it with meanings and values that shape their perceptions and sense of belonging. These everyday practices include activities such as agriculture, rituals, local festivals, and other symbolic interactions that contribute to the construction of a shared territorial identity (Borrini, 2007).

From this perspective, territorial identity is multidimensional and fluid, shaped not only by historical events and political processes but also by individual practices and interpersonal relationships. It emerges through social connections, from how people relate to their natural surroundings to how they interact with each other, forming a collective narrative (Méndez & Guillermo Paleta, 2024).

Thus, territorial identity is not a fixed essence

but a construction that evolves over time, adapting to new social and cultural dynamics. It is deeply influenced by power relations, territorial policies, and globalization processes, yet it is also a space for resistance and reclaiming identity. Communities, through their social practices, can redefine the meanings of their territory, shaping an identity that reflects their needs and aspirations (Méndez & Guillermo Paleta, 2024).

Territorial identity emerges from the dynamic interaction between the lived territory—which reflects the daily experiences and relationships of its inhabitants—and the represented territory, which encompasses the cultural images and narratives associated with that space (Law, 2015).

In this context, design plays a fundamental role, providing a space where these representations can be discussed and reconfigured, allowing communities to reclaim their territory and reimagine their future.

### **The Living Territory and Memory as Identity**

The idea of the territory as a living entity, imbued with memory, is another key dimension of territorial identity. As Escobar (2018a), cited in Serna & Zapata (n.d.), argues, territories are not just physical places; they are spheres that shape the relationships between people, nature, and each other.

This exercise of territoriality, which involves the use and control of space, is not only a physical act but also a cultural and political one. Shared memory holds histories, conflicts, and resistance, while also serving as a space for envisioning possible futures for the community.

Territorial identity is a dynamic process, sha-

ped by continuous interactions between people, their environment, and each other (Borrini, 2007). This concept suggests that the territory is not just a physical space but a collective construction, functioning as a living memory in constant transformation and recreation.

In this sense, design plays a crucial role in reconstructing and strengthening collective identity, enabling communities to redefine their relationship with the spaces they inhabit.

### **Communication Design as a Tool for Constructing Territorial Identity**

Since territorial identity is a collective and dynamic construction, communication design emerges as a key tool for articulating, making visible, and transforming these identities. According to Calabi (2024), communicating place-based identities is not merely about transmitting information but about deeply understanding the anthropological and environmental values that define them.

These values, dynamic and adaptive, require landscapes to be understood as “evolving systems”, where physical and spatial characteristics are continuously regenerated in response to human and natural interactions.

From an epistemological perspective, it is crucial to distinguish between landscape and territory to understand how territorial identity is built (Calabi, 2024):

Territory is a geographic, political, and physical reality, defined by borders and shaped by historical and anthropological dimensions. Landscape is the visible manifestation of the relationship between people and their environment—adynamic and ever-changing spaces sha-

ped by memory, culture, and social interactions. In this context, communication design plays a vital role in constructing territorial identity by mediating and reinterpreting these landscapes. It does so by:

Recognizing landscapes as adaptive systems in constant change, understanding that each transformation reflects social, cultural, and environmental processes. Viewing communication as a cultural negotiation, where symbols, narratives, and images influence how territories are perceived, inhabited, and transformed. Encouraging community participation in identity construction, promoting the valuation of the commons and the collective aspirations of those who inhabit these territories. Thus, communication design does not just document territorial change—it also drives it, facilitating a constant dialogue between past, present, and future. It becomes a tool for community empowerment, enabling people to redefine their life projects and make conscious decisions about their surroundings.

### **Design and the Reconfiguration of Territorial Identities**

This process involves the reconfiguration of territorial identities, which are in constant transformation, shaped by collective memory and social dynamics. As Uribe (2017) states, these identities are built collectively, through practices that intertwine memory, resistance, and transformation.

They are nourished by social practices, cultural interactions, and—above all—the recognition of the uniqueness of each community.

Design plays a critical role in the reconstruc-

tion of territorial identities in both post-conflict contexts and territories marked by inequality and social exclusion. Through design, communities can recover and reclaim their cultural identities while reconfiguring their territories to better align with their needs and aspirations (López, 2023).

This territorial identity construction process requires a constant negotiation between various visions of what life in the territory should be, as well as how these visions can be materialized in physical and symbolic spaces.

### **Beyond Visual Representations: Design as an Intervention Tool**

Territorial identity design is not only about creating visual representations—it is also about practical interventions in the territory, enabling communities to symbolically rebuild their relationship with space (Ruiz, 2020).

This process is achieved through:

The revalorization of cultural, historical, and natural elements, transforming them into symbols of resilience and belonging.

Providing communities with the tools to narrate their own stories, allowing them to translate their ideas into tangible forms.

Through designed objects, public spaces, and community-driven brands, communities can tell their stories and make their struggles, strengths, and aspirations visible (Ruiz, 2020).

### **Territorial Narratives as a Response to Inequality and Violence**

Territorial narratives not only reinforce

community identity but also offer responses to contemporary challenges such as inequality, displacement, and violence.

This process is bidirectional:

It is not unidirectional communication but a collective construction, where communities actively shape their symbols, stories, and spaces to reflect their shared histories and future visions.

### **Design as a Bridge Between Past and Future**

For this thesis, design plays a key role in reconstructing territorial identities, serving as a bridge between past and future, between local and global, between tradition and new ways of life.

By reclaiming their territories, communities not only redefine their physical spaces but also recover their voice and capacity to create sustainable and just futures.

## **2.4 Communication Design as a Tool for the Construction of Territorial Identity**

For this thesis, it is crucial to emphasize the relationship between communication design and gender culture, highlighting the ethical responsibility of designers in either perpetuating or challenging stereotypes that sustain disparities. At the Politecnico di Milano, the discipline of communication design promotes an ethical and responsible approach to the representation of gender and identity in visual media.

According to Giovanni Baule and Valeria Bucchetti (2012) in *Anticorpi Comunicativi*, design can challenge gender stereotypes by providing critical and project-based tools that enable the redefinition of female identity in the public and productive spheres.

### **Communication Design as a Means and an End**

In this sense, communication design functions both as a means and an end in itself (Bucchetti, 2024):

As a means, it serves as a tool for creating communicative artifacts that facilitate dialogue and promote advocacy for social causes, such as gender equality. These artifacts do not merely transmit messages—they also seek to generate social impact, challenging stereotypes and fostering a culture of parity.

As an end, the design process itself has a maieutic quality—that is, it has the power to “give birth” to ideas and awareness (Bucchetti, 2024). Designing is not just about producing a final artifact; it is also about creating a reflective space that raises awareness about the topic being addressed. In the case of gender equality, design not only communicates but also educates and transforms those involved in both its creation and consumption. This reflection process is essential for questioning visual representations that reinforce inequalities and for building new narratives that promote equity.

### **Communication Design and Representation in Post-Conflict Territories**

This approach is particularly relevant to this thesis because, in women-led initiatives and brands in violence-affected territories, reconstruction is not only about economic and social processes but also about symbolic ones.

For women who have lived in guerrilla groups and later as ex-combatants, visual and narrative representation must do more than just depict their role in rebuilding the social fabric—it must also help create more diverse and respectful representations of their identity and agency.

This is also an ethical responsibility in communication design practice. By adopting gender-sensitive design approaches, communication professionals contribute to building a more just present and future, where differences are valued and celebrated.

In the context of this thesis, making visible the transformative agency of women in peacebuilding is a central focus.

### **Principles of Gender-Sensitive Communication**

own narratives and futures.

As outlined in the Manifesto for a Gender-Sensitive Communication by the Design della Comunicazione e Cultura di Genere (dcx-cg) research team (2023), gender-sensitive communication is based on key principles:

***Inclusive language*** – *Avoiding default male normativity in written and visual communication.*

***Equitable representation in images and narratives*** – *Ensuring fair visibility for all identities. Eliminating bias and stereotypes – Promoting diversity and challenging hierarchical norms.*

***Intersectional approach*** – *Considering the multiple forms of discrimination that affect gender identities.*

### **Communication Design as a Tool for World-Building**

In this sense, communication design does not merely serve as a tool to highlight inequalities and challenge hegemonic narratives—it also becomes an act of world-building design. Through gender-sensitive communication, it is possible to reshape collective imaginaries, generate more equitable representations, and redefine territories based on the voices and experiences of those who have historically been marginalized.

When placed in the hands of vulnerable communities, this discipline has the power to reshape power relations and strengthen collective identities. It enables women and other historically excluded groups to be not just represented but also active agents in constructing their

# Part 3

## Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach, aimed at exploring and understanding social phenomena through the personal experiences and subjective perspectives of the participants (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado & Baptista Lucio, 2014). This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how women-led initiatives and brands in post-conflict contexts in Colombia contribute to the construction and transformation of territorial identity through communication design and world-building design.

The scope of the study is exploratory and descriptive: it is exploratory because it addresses emerging or underexplored phenomena, providing an initial understanding of design's role in specific contexts, such as Colombia's post-conflict landscape.

It is descriptive because it details the characteristics, experiences, and perceptions of the women leading these initiatives, focusing on territorial identity and transformation, without seeking to establish specific causal relationships (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014).

The methodological design is phenomenological, as it focuses on describing and understanding the lived experiences and subjective perceptions of the women leading these initiatives (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014). This approach emphasizes how they experience their territory and use design strategies to resignify the spaces they inhabit, thereby strengthening their territorial identities.

## Population and Sample

The target population of this research includes women-led initiatives and brands operating in territories affected by the armed conflict in Colombia. To select these initiatives, databases such as “Colombia Visible” and the “Agencia para la Paz y la Reconciliación” were consulted.

After conducting a bibliographic review in January 2024, a total of 40 initiatives led or co-led by women emerging after the 2016 Peace Agreement were identified. From this initial list, five initiatives were selected based on the following criteria:

**Female leadership** – The initiatives must be led or co-led by women.

**Focus on territorial identity and social transformation** – The initiatives must incorporate communication design or world-building design as a core element.

**Presence in post-conflict areas** – The initiatives must operate in territories historically affected by armed conflict.

**Accessibility of information and contact** – The initiatives must have available information and contact channels to facilitate interviews and data collection.

## Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

To gather information, the following techniques and instruments were used:

1. Bibliographic Review: Used to contextualize and deepen the historical and social bac-

ground of women’s experiences during and after the armed conflict in Colombia. Secondary sources such as academic articles, official documents, institutional reports, and relevant publications were reviewed to enrich the social context analysis of the studied initiatives.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews: This technique was chosen for its ability to capture in-depth experiences, perceptions, and strategies, while also allowing flexibility to explore emerging themes during the conversation (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014).

A semi-structured questionnaire was designed, organized into thematic blocks covering:

- *Female leadership*
- *Territorial identity*
- *Communication design*
- *World-building design*
- *Challenges faced by the initiatives*

A total of four interviews were conducted with women leaders and participants from the selected initiatives. The interviews were recorded with prior authorization and fully transcribed for further analysis.

3. Non-Participant Observation: Used to gather direct and contextual information on how the initiatives impact the community and their relationship with the territory. This method facilitated the collection of authentic and spontaneous data (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014). Data was recorded using an observation matrix, applied to the web pages and social media platforms of the studied initiatives.

## Data Analysis

To analyze the qualitative data collected, a categorization matrix was used to classify and organize the information into four key categories:

- *Communication design*
- *World-building design*
- *Identity construction*
- *Territorial transformation*

This analytical method facilitated: The clear identification of patterns, similarities, and differences among the studied initiatives. The exploration of interrelations between categories, particularly their impact on female empowerment and territorial transformation in post-conflict contexts.

## Data Visualization and Final Presentation

The final results of the analysis will be presented through a data visualization tool. To create this visualization, the following steps were taken:

- *Selection of an appropriate format to effectively represent the findings.*
- *Review of visual references to ensure clarity and effectiveness in the design.*
- *Careful graphic organization of the data to facilitate interpretation.*
- The purpose of this visual representation is to:
- *Enhance understanding of the results.*
- *Clearly and attractively highlight the fundamental role of design in:*
- *Peacebuilding processes.*
- *Strengthening women’s agency and leadership in post-conflict contexts.*

# **Part 4**

# **Designing**

# **from the Margins**

Analysis, and Results

**Part 4**  
**Designing from the Margins**  
**Analysis and Results**  
Women in Peacebuilding Initiatives  
Matrix Analysis of Initiatives

## 4 Women in Peacebuilding

Despite their fundamental role in peacebuilding and social transformation, women continue to be systematically excluded from formal negotiation and decision-making processes. According to UN Women (2024):

- Only 9.6% of negotiators and 13.7% of mediators in peace processes are women.
- Only 26.6% of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements have been women. If Colombia’s agreements are excluded, this percentage drops to just 1.5%, highlighting the continued marginalization of women in global conflicts.

Although the number of peace agreements with gender provisions has increased since the 1990s—from 12% (1990–2000) to 31% (2011–2020)—in 2023, only 26% of agreements mentioned women, girls, or gender issues, reflecting a decline in commitment to inclusion.

In contrast, women’s participation in informal peace processes has been key. In three-quarters of studied cases, women’s groups have played an active role in community-level peacebuilding despite being excluded from official negotiation spaces. In 2023, none of the peace agreements signed included women’s groups as signatories, perpetuating the exclusion of those actively working in reconciliation and community rebuilding (Women, 2024).

This exclusion extends to political leadership and international organizations:

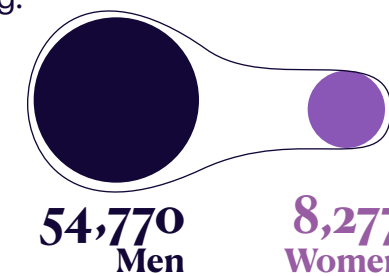
- 113 countries have never had a woman as Head of State or Government.
- Only 27 countries currently have a woman in these roles.
- 22% of Permanent Representatives in the UN Security Council (2015–2023) were women, rising to 33% in 2024.
- Women hold only 27% of parliamentary seats worldwide, dropping to 21% in conflict-affected countries.
- In ministerial cabinets, women occupy 23% of global positions, but just 19% in conflict-affected states.
- At the local government level, women occupy 36% of seats, but this figure drops to 20% in conflict contexts.

Nearly three decades after the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which set equal political participation as a goal, gender inequalities remain severe (Women, 2024). In conflict-affected countries, women’s representation is even lower, reflecting structural and political barriers that limit their access to decision-making spaces.

Excluding women from peace processes does not only undermine the sustainability of peace agreements—it also ignores the leadership and experience of those who have actively worked to rebuild the social fabric and consolidate peace in their territories.

## Gender Approach in Colombia’s 2016 Peace Agreement

According to Colombia’s Agency for Reintegration and Normalization (2019), as of February 2025, **63,047** people had demobilized, including:



Among ex-combatants from FARC-EP, **17,276** demobilized, including:

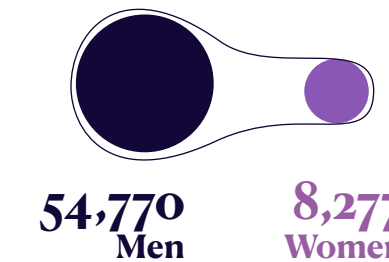


Fig. 7 Number of demobilized people ARN, (2019)

Throughout the armed conflict, FARC-EP women guerrillas have been reduced to simplistic narratives—either victims or perpetrators, without recognizing their active role in the fight for social justice and peacebuilding.

For many ex-combatants, weapons were not an end goal but a means to a broader struggle for social justice (Barrera Téllez, 2018). Their search for peace did not end with disarmament—it evolved into new forms of activism, such as:

- Defending human rights
- Preserving historical memory
- Promoting reconciliation

## Progress and Challenges

The inclusion of a gender perspective in Colombia’s peace agreements was a major achievement, acknowledging the differentiated impact of the conflict on women and LGBTQ+ populations while ensuring their participation in building lasting peace (Mujer, 2021).

A key milestone was the creation of the Gender Subcommittee (2014), composed of:

- Five government representatives
- Five FARC representatives
- Led by María Paulina Riveros (Government) and Victoria Sandino Palmera (FARC)

Its mission was to ensure that gender-specific measures were integrated into peace agreements to promote gender equity and reparations for victims.

Participants included:

- 18 women’s and LGBTQ+ organizations providing expertise.
- 10 former female guerrillas from South Africa, Northern Ireland, Guatemala, El Salvador, Indonesia, and Uruguay, who shared key lessons.
- 10 national experts on sexual violence, advising on justice and reparations for victims.
- 60% of the victims who traveled to Havana to testify were women, highlighting the need to address gender-based violence as a central issue in the peace process.

Despite international recognition of women's role, ex-combatants continue to be marginalized. After the peace agreement, gender barriers resurfaced, and far-right sectors mobilized against "gender ideology" (Gutiérrez & Murphy, 2023).

Women ex-combatants were:

- Pushed into **traditional gender** roles. Expected to give up their weapons and return to domestic roles.
- Excluded from **leadership roles**, while their ideas for social transformation were dismissed.

## Economic Reintegration of Women Ex-Combatants

Access to employment and economic opportunities is crucial for ex-combatants' reintegration. According to the United Nations Multi-Donor Fund for Peace (2023) and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization:

- 177 mixed cooperatives of ex-combatants exist, 45 led by women.
- 17 organizations of former combatants are exclusively composed of women.
- 2,175 women are involved in productive projects, including:
  - 1,067 in collective projects.
  - 1,108 leading individual projects.

However, major inequalities persist:

- 35% of women ex-combatants are engaged in unpaid care work.
- Only 15% work in independent projects.
- Only 12.4% participate in productive projects, and of these, 49% receive no payment.
- Women rarely hold leadership roles or administrative decision-making positions in these projects.

Most ex-combatants (5,368 men, 1,628 women, and 64 LGBTQ+ individuals) remain economically dependent on reintegration support programs (UN Peace Fund, 2023), demonstrating the lack of conditions for a dignified labor transition.

## Women-Led Initiatives in Post-Conflict Contexts

In post-conflict Colombia, women face unique challenges that go beyond material and economic reconstruction. Gender-based violence, lack of access to resources, and exclusion from decision-making spaces remain structural barriers limiting their participation in development and reconciliation processes.

Beyond economic impact, these initiatives challenge stereotypes that portray women as either victims or perpetrators. Instead, they emerge as leaders and change-makers, demonstrating that building a just and sustainable world requires their active participation (Gutiérrez, 2023).

One major challenge is double stigmatization:

- Pressure on demobilized women to return to traditional gender roles and hide their guerrilla past.
- Being framed solely as victims, limiting their recognition as active agents in peacebuilding and political participation (Huertas Díaz et al., 2017).
- Lack of incentives for their leadership, perpetuating their exclusion from decision-making spaces in post-conflict governance.

Despite these barriers, women have played a key role in rebuilding the social fabric and transforming their territories. Their:

- Ancestral knowledge
- Resilience
- Organizational capacity

...have been crucial in establishing productive projects, not only for economic autonomy but also to promote reconciliation and social cohesion. Community-led women's brands and businesses have been an effective strategy to:

- Overcome economic vulnerability
- Strengthen support networks
- Reclaim their role in society (Güiza et al., 2016)

## 4.1 Women in Peacebuilding

To understand how these dynamics materialize in the territory, the following sections present four women-led initiatives in post-conflict contexts. Through them, it becomes evident how they have achieved economic autonomy, redefined their history within the conflict, transformed their communities, and created new narratives of reconciliation.



Fig.8 Farianas Women from FARC-EP, Taken from facebook farianas(2019)

## 4.2.1 Tercer Acuerdo Comumarfu Cooperative



Fig.9 Tercer Acuerdo Coffee

### What

Café Tercer Acuerdo is much more than just a coffee brand; it is a symbol of reconciliation, memory, and resistance, where ex-combatants, coffee growers, and Indigenous communities work together to build a peaceful territory. The brand was created with the goal of revaluing the role of Fariana women in agricultural production, highlighting their contributions in cultivation, harvesting, processing, and marketing coffee as a commitment to peace.

Beyond coffee as a product, this initiative represents a territorial transformation process, where three historically affected communities—ex-combatants, Indigenous peoples, and campesinos (rural farmers)—join forces for social and economic reconstruction.

The name “Tercer Acuerdo” (Third Agreement) refers to the three fundamental milestones of reconciliation in the Marquetalia region, a key territory in Colombia’s armed conflict history:

The first agreement took place over two decades ago between the Nasa Wes’x Indigenous community and the FARC-EP.

The second agreement was the 2016 Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP.

The third agreement is a community-led pact to consolidate peace through coffee production.

### Who

The initiative is led by Yulieth Villa, a peace signatory leader, alongside the Comumarfu

Cooperative, which includes 48 members, among them 14 women signatories of the peace agreement.

This coffee-growing community has established alliances with:

Traditional coffee producers in the region.  
The Nasa Wes’x Indigenous reserve.  
Women leaders from the campesino communities of Gaitania.  
Together, they have created a collaborative economic model based on fair trade.

### When

Café Tercer Acuerdo was born after the signing of the 2016 Peace Agreement and has been developed in the former Territorial Training and Reincorporation Space (ETCR) El Oso, in Planadas, Tolima. Over the years, it has strengthened its presence in fair trade markets and sustainable production networks, becoming a symbol of territorial transformation.

### Where

The initiative takes place in Planadas, Tolima, a region with a deep coffee-growing tradition, but also one deeply affected by the armed conflict.

In this territory, the communities of Gaitania and the Nasa Wes’x Indigenous reserve work together to build a future based on sustainable production and reconciliation.

Marquetalia, Tolima, is an emblematic place in the history of the Colombian armed conflict, as it was there that the FARC-EP was founded in 1964. Today, this former war zone is being redefined through coffee production and collective work, as a commitment to peace.

### Why

Café Tercer Acuerdo aims to redefine the history of conflict in Colombia through a productive model that unites communities in an autonomous exercise of reconciliation.

Its goals include:

- Generating economic autonomy, especially for women ex-combatants.
- Strengthening fair trade.
- Positioning coffee as a symbol of territorial transformation.
- Building new narratives about peace, where every coffee bean tells a story of collective effort, resilience, and commitment to a sustainable and equitable future.
- On a symbolic level, this coffee brand represents a third peace pact, beyond formal agreements. It is the materialization of an autonomous effort for historical reconciliation, where communities have chosen to build together a present and future that honor their identities and aspirations.

## 4.2.2 Ixora Puntadas por la Paz Cooperative



Fig. 10 Ixora Women presenting their brand in Colombiamoda 2024

### What

Ixora/Puntadas por la Paz is a fashion brand created by women ex-combatants of the FARC who are undergoing the reintegration process. Through textile design, they have found a tool to redefine their history, achieve economic autonomy, and strengthen territorial identity.

The Ixora collection takes its name from the emblematic flower of Norte de Santander, known for its ability to flourish in any terrain and withstand harsh conditions. Similarly, the women of this initiative have overcome the challenges of post-conflict Colombia, creating a brand that symbolizes resilience, transformation, and female autonomy.

### Who

Currently, the initiative consists of seven women:

*Five peace signatories,  
Two local community members,*  
They have established a sewing workshop, which serves as a source of employment and empowerment.

The project has also received support from the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization (ARN), which has assisted in strengthening territorial relationships and promoting peaceful coexistence. Additionally, they have collaborated with businesswomen in the fashion industry and experts in garment-making, allowing their products to reach major fashion retailers in Colombia.

### When

The initiative emerged as part of the reintegration process following the 2016 Peace Agreement. Since then, the project has evolved, leading to the development of a growing product line, now sold in various national markets.

### Where

Ixora/Puntadas por la Paz was founded in the Territorial Training and Reintegration Space (ETCR) Caño Indio, located in Tibú, Norte de Santander.

From there, they have worked on creating and marketing their garments, expanding their reach across the country through partnerships with textile and fashion companies..

### Why

This initiative aims to promote women's political, economic, and social participation through fashion design, serving as a means of reaffirming their cultural identity and territorial ownership.

By developing a sustainable fashion brand based on identity, territory, and gender, the women of Ixora have successfully achieved economic autonomy and strengthened their role within their community.

Additionally, the project seeks to break stereotypes that have labeled ex-combatants as either victims or perpetrators, showcasing their leadership and transformative abilities.

Through fashion, these women have been able to reclaim their memory and contribute to rebuilding the social fabric in post-conflict Colombia.

## 4.2.3 La Trocha and Casa de Paz



Fig. 11 Casa de la Paz team

### What

La Trocha and Casa de Paz are much more than a brewery and a meeting space; they represent a collective project that embodies reconciliation and social transformation in territories affected by the armed conflict.

This initiative demonstrates that peace is not only built through institutions, but also through everyday life, culture, solidarity economy, and historical memory.

Through the production of craft beer and the creation of a space for dialogue, art, and community tourism, ex-combatants, victims, and local communities work together to redefine their histories and strengthen social bonds.

The concept of “trocha” (trail or path) symboli-

zes both the journey taken and the road ahead in the reintegration process and the pursuit of a peaceful territory, where diversity and collaboration become essential tools for rebuilding the social fabric.

### Who

La Trocha is a project co-led by:

Doris Suárez and Alexander Monroy, peace signatories,  
Alongside a team of ex-combatants, victims, and community members.

From the very beginning, this initiative has been dedicated to creating spaces for reconciliation through the solidarity economy and art.

In Casa de Paz, women play fundamental roles in the management of the project, leading

key areas such as:

Administration,  
Communications,  
Tourism.

They have helped establish Casa de Paz as a model for territorial transformation and active participation in peacebuilding.

Additionally, the project has successfully connected with over 100 producers, including:

Peace signatories,  
Conflict victims,  
Cooperatives that promote the solidarity economy.  
These partnerships have created networks of cooperation and economic sustainability.

### When

La Trocha was founded five years ago as a craft beer production initiative aimed at creating economic opportunities for peace signatories and local communities.

Over time, this initiative expanded into Casa de Paz, which has been operating for three years and has grown into a key space for art, memory, and building support networks.

### Where

La Trocha and Casa de Paz operate in a physical space in Bogotá D.C where ex-combatants and local communities come together to produce craft beer and create gathering spaces.

Their impact has expanded through:

Events,  
Fairs,  
Tourism circuits,  
...making them a model of social innovation

and reconciliation in post-conflict territories.

### Why

The initiative seeks to generate employment opportunities and economic sustainability for peace signatories and local communities, while also strengthening memory, culture, and reconciliation. Its purpose is to redefine conflict-affected spaces, transform social relationships, and demonstrate that peacebuilding can be achieved through collective work and the solidarity economy.

Through the production of craft beer and the establishment of Casa de Paz, spaces have been created for cultural activities such as art performances, concerts, exhibitions, and discussions. This approach ensures that memory and reconciliation are not just topics of discussion, but living experiences that create a meaningful impact on the community and strengthen the social fabric.

## 4.2.4 Avanza Tejiendo Paz Cooperative



Fig. 11 Avanza collection

### What

Avanza is a clothing brand created by former FARC combatants, who have found in the textile industry a tool for social transformation, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. More than just a brand, it is a symbol of resilience, change, and economic autonomy.

Its name comes from the word “avanzada” (advance party), a military term referring to a group of combatants who move forward to explore the path ahead. Now, they have redefined this concept to represent their transition into a new stage of life, advancing toward the consolidation of a textile enterprise that strengthens the solidarity economy and territorial identity.

Each garment is more than just a piece of

clothing; it is an expression of transformation, reconciliation, and resistance. Through design, Avanza seeks to tell stories of resilience, creating employment and opportunities for peace signatories and local communities.

### Who

Avanza was founded in the former Territorial Training and Reincorporation Space (ETCR) of Icononzo, Tolima, as part of the Tejiendo Paz Cooperative.

Currently, the team consists of:

14 men and 11 women, Who take on various roles in manufacturing and administration.

The initial idea was led by Valentina Beltrán, an ex-guerrilla and leader of the space, who secured the donation of three sewing ma-

chines through Professor Regina Parra from the National University of Colombia. With this support, they were able to take their first steps in clothing production and strengthen their reintegration process through textile design.

### When

Avanza emerged as part of the reintegration process following the 2016 Peace Agreement. Since then, it has evolved into a model of sustainable fashion and reconciliation, participating in fashion events and runway shows in Bogotá.

During the pandemic, the Avanza team diversified its production, manufacturing thousands of face masks, which were donated to vulnerable communities, reaffirming their commitment to solidarity and social reconstruction.

### Where

The initiative was founded in the ETCR of Icononzo, Tolima, a region historically affected by the armed conflict.

From this space, they have established a clothing workshop, aiming to expand their impact both regionally and nationally.

Avanza has successfully gained visibility in fashion events in Bogotá, promoting a narrative of transformation through design.

### Why

Avanza seeks to create employment opportunities and economic sustainability for peace signatories, while also contributing to social reconciliation and the redefinition of territories.

Its purpose is to demonstrate that entrepreneurship and the textile industry can be powerful tools for rebuilding communities affected by the conflict.

Additionally, the project aims to transform the perception of ex-combatant reintegration, showing that fashion is not just about aesthetics but also a medium for telling stories of change, inclusion, and new opportunities.

## 4.3 Analysis of Initiatives and Categories

To understand the impact of women-led initiatives and brands in post-conflict contexts in Colombia, an Analysis Matrix has been developed. This matrix helps identify their contributions across key dimensions:

### The Role of Worldbuilding and Communication Design

Examining how these tools have been fundamental in the symbolic and material transformation of the territory.

### Identity Construction within These Initiatives

Analyzing how territorial branding has strengthened the sense of belonging and collective memory within communities.

### Territorial Transformation

Assessing the impact of these initiatives in redefining spaces and creating sustainable development models.

This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how design and communication have been used as strategies for resistance, reconciliation, and empowerment in communities affected by the armed conflict.

Categories	CAFE TERCER ACUERDO/Cooperativa Comumarfu	Ixora / Cooperativa Puntadas por la Paz	LA TROCHA-Casa de la paz	Avi
<b>LOCATION</b>	Planadas- Tolima Espacio Territorial de Capacitación y Reincorporación (ETCR) El Oso	Caño Indio-Santander Espacio territorial de capacitación y reincorporación (ETCR) Caño Indio-Tibu	Bogotá-Colombia	Icor
<b>Economic Autonomy and Sustainable Production-Sustainability and Local Development</b>	Sustainable coffee cultivation promoting responsible practices. Reintegration of 58 individuals, including coffee growers, Nasa Wes'x, and women leaders. Coffee exports driving local development and international reach.	Sewing workshops as a tool for economic independence. Production and commercialization of garments with territorial identity. Sales in local and national markets, expanding commercial impact. Team of 7 former combatant women and 2 community women, fostering inclusion and collective work.	Craft beer as a tool for sustainability and reconciliation. Marketplace for peace-driven enterprises. Job creation for peace signatories, victims, and local communities. Solidarity economy and collective work model.	Tex rec Sus Sew Fini Col Acc
<b>Peacebuilding and Reconciliation-Reintegration Processes and Social Cohesion</b>	Intercultural dialogue between former combatants, rural workers, and Nasa Wes'x. Reducing stigmatization and fostering mutual recognition. Collective empowerment through coffee production. Coffee as a symbol of territorial peace and reconciliation.	Integration of former combatants and community members through collective work. Creation of dialogue spaces to strengthen reconciliation and inclusion. Breaking stigmatization through sewing and design as forms of self-expression. Design as a reconciliation tool, reinforcing memory and collective identity. Resignification of Catatumbo as a space of creativity and resilience. 'Puntadas por la Paz' brand positioning Caño Indio as a model for women-led transformation.	La Casa de la Paz as a space for memory, culture, and reconciliation. Dialogue between victims, ex-combatants, and civil society. Peace education and sustainable enterprises as economic alternatives. Artistic and cultural events promoting peace and coexistence. La Trochita as a symbol of collective journeys and transformation. A meeting place where all voices are respected.	Rei fasl Des reo Gar Trai "Aw Wo cre.
<b>Care Strategies, Healing, and Community Strengthening</b>	Strengthening communities through coffee production. Training and learning spaces fostering support networks. Care economy promoting collective development. Agroecological production with fair trade and sustainability.	Spaces of mutual support, promoting community strengthening. Sorority and social fabric reconstruction, encouraging collective work. Care economy, based on collectivity and association.	Community strengthening through cultural and educational peacebuilding activities. Care economy fostering solidarity and collectivity. Memory spaces for historical recognition of the armed conflict. Cultural events, concerts, and guided tours for reflection and engagement.	Stru Mu Car
<b>Design and Communication for Social Transformation</b>	Warm visual identity with yellow tones and Tolima landscapes. Illustrations representing ex-combatants, indigenous people, and coffee growers. Presence in social media, fairs, and academic events. Visual narratives reinforcing reconciliation and collective work.	Brand with territorial identity, reflecting Catatumbo's culture and resistance. Textiles as a peace narrative, incorporating local fauna, flora, and symbolism. Visual identity inspired by Ixora and the Catatumbo sunset colors. Wrap-around skirts designed for versatility and body inclusivity. Presence in social media, fairs, and events to amplify visibility.	Visual identity promoting reconciliation and transformation. Cultural spaces and symbols of resistance preserving territorial memory. La Trocha as a symbol of resilience, movement, and community roots. Beers inspired by biodiversity, reinforcing identity and tradition. Spaces for dialogue and collective construction.	Visi Des Col Fas
	Coffee as a symbol of transformation and reconciliation. Preserving rural landscapes through brand identity. Strengthening the connection to the territory through	Visual narratives of resistance and memory through design. Prints with territorial identity, representing Catatumbo's culture. Sewing and design as tools for autonomy and female	Brand linked to conflict memory and reconciliation.	

Fig. 12 Analysis Matrix

## 4.3.1 Designing Worlds for Peace Reconstruction, Memory, and Future

### The Role of Worldbuilding and Communication Design

Worldbuilding and communication design play a crucial role in initiatives led by women in post-conflict territories. These experiences not only address economic and social needs but also serve as expressions of design that emerge from local realities, challenging the hegemonic models of the Global North. As Alfredo Gutiérrez (Borrero, 2020) states, these initiatives can be understood as dissocons: practices that redefine design through unique worldviews, moving away from industrial standards and promoting community-based and sustainable solutions.

Arturo Escobar (2018) defines autonomous design as a practice emerging from communities, reflecting their values and aspirations, in contrast to externally imposed design models. In this sense, women-led brands and initiatives in post-conflict territories do not seek to replicate external models but rather build genuine alternatives that respond to memory, identity, and transformation within their contexts. These initiatives become tools of resistance (r-existence) and collective empowerment, reclaiming creative autonomy and women's agency as examples of decolonial design.

In this context, peace is not a fixed state but rather a space of dialogue and tension between

hegemonic models and local realities. It is in this intermediate space where the possibility of being emerges—where communities can design their own future, weaving a world that reflects their values, memory, and desire for transformation.

#### Academic Support and Co-Creation

These initiatives have received academic support based on worldbuilding design theories and the concept of Southern design. Notable examples include:

- *Café Tercer Acuerdo*, supported by the Design and Transition course at Universidad de Ibagué.
- *Ixora*, developed through the Vivas Creamos project by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- *La Trocha*, linked to the Peace Laboratory at Universidad Nacional de Colombia. *Avanza*, part of an undergraduate thesis in Industrial Design at Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

This support was neither hierarchical nor imposed; instead, it was developed collectively, recognizing diverse ways of designing. Designers involved in these processes acted as mediators, helping to translate and facilitate collaborative work emerging from the communities themselves. This approach underscores that design, as understood in academia, should not be imposed but approached ethically, treating others as equals.

As Tony Fry (2020) argues, design should be a generator of sustainable futures, not a force of defuturing. True co-creation, in line with Escobar's (2018) concept of pluriverses, involves working collectively, acknowl-

ding and respecting diverse perspectives.

#### Voices from the Territory

The women leading these initiatives share how design becomes an act of resistance and reconstruction:

Katerine Daza (Ixora):

***“Our project redefines the territory through creative work. We want to show that Catatumbo is not just a place of conflict but also a space for creativity, art, and resistance. Our workshop is not just a production space but a meeting place where we weave relationships, share stories, and strengthen our collective identity.”***

Dolly (La Trocha):

***“La Trochita is a symbol of our journey and struggles as peasants. We never imagined it would grow this much. It is a powerful tool to express our dissatisfaction without using weapons or causing harm.”***

#### Worldbuilding Design:

##### Bodies as Territories of Peacebuilding

The creation of these initiatives in post-conflict environments represents an exercise in worldbuilding design: a political and creative act that reimagines the territory and its future through collective construction, dialogue, and reconciliation. These initiatives not only shape physical landscapes but also redefine identities, bodies, and memories, transforming realities once dominated by conflict into spaces for sustainable peace.

The transition from a body for war to a body for peace requires practices of care and healing, both individual and collective (Corredor et al., 2022). Memory and expression through work, creativity, and community

become essential elements for cultivating cultures of peace. These initiatives not only rebuild economies but also reconstruct identities, weaving new narratives of resistance and hope.

#### Café Tercer Acuerdo:

A tangible example of worldbuilding design, where ex-combatants, Indigenous communities, and farmers collaborate in coffee production and trade. More than just a product, coffee is redefined as a symbol of reconciliation and economic justice.

#### Ixora - Puntadas por la Paz:

In Catatumbo, Ixora stands as a space for encounter, creation, and memory. Sewing and design become tools for economic autonomy and identity construction. Each stitch not only creates economic opportunities but also symbolically rebuilds the social fabric, turning fashion into an act of resistance.

#### La Trocha and Casa de Paz:

This initiative symbolizes the collective journey of ex-combatants, farmers, and local communities in their effort to redefine the territory. Casa de Paz has become a reference point for memory and reconciliation, demonstrating how political participation and the solidarity economy can challenge stereotypes and contribute to a more just future.

The practice of worldbuilding design in these initiatives has been an act of imagination and territorial reconstruction, allowing communities to envision a peaceful future in areas deeply affected by armed conflict. These experiences not only reframe the past of war but also build presents of reconciliation and sustainable futures.

As Escobar (2018) asserts, designing through a pluriverse perspective means recognizing multiple ways of existing and creating. This is precisely what these communities embody, turning their wounds into seeds for transformation.

Healing a territory requires more than visual or commercial strategies—it demands. Seeing the body as a site of memory and care, and recognizing the community as an active agent in rewriting its history. These initiatives call for a rethinking of design, not just as a discipline, but as a political and ethical practice that contributes to the construction of more just and diverse worlds.

### 4.3.1 Communication Design Weaving Narratives of Transformation

Communication design has been a key tool in making visible community-led initiatives in post-conflict contexts, redefining territorial identity and constructing narratives that communicate processes of change and resilience. As Katerine from Ixora states:

***“We wanted every piece we designed to be more than just clothing—it had to be a message, a representation of the peace and transformation we are building from our space.”***

These initiatives did not emerge in isolation, but rather through co-design processes, where communities actively participated in creating visual narratives that reflect their values, memory, and aspirations. This collaborative approach ensures that these brands were not externally imposed, but rather grew from local realities, challenging the hegemonic models of global design.

Each territorial brand integrates visual and communicative elements that reinforce its connection to history and territory, acting as bridges between the past, present, and future:

#### **Ixora:**

The prints represent the flora and fauna of Catatumbo, evoking a deep connection to the land and local identity. The flower, the brand’s central symbol, embodies resilience and fema-

le empowerment.

#### **La Trocha:**

The name refers to the paths of struggle and resistance within the communities, reframing their history and transforming it into a symbol of perseverance.

#### **Café Tercer Acuerdo:**

The visual identity incorporates the memory of previous agreements, representing the evolution of the territory toward peace and the articulation of the three communities in the agreement (ex-combatants, farmers, and Indigenous peoples).

#### **Avanza:**

The logo and visual narrative reimagine the meaning of the word “avanzada”—traditionally linked to war—as a symbol of progress and reconstruction. These brands do not merely serve an aesthetic or commercial function; they are tools that translate reconciliation and resistance into a powerful visual language, amplifying their impact at both local and national levels.

These initiatives act as a strategy of resistance, allowing communities to preserve their cultural identity while participating consciously in the global market. Through the intentional use of communication design, these initiatives have transcended their places of origin, reaching new audiences and fostering dialogue at both national and international levels. They have strengthened community representation, contributed to the reconstruction of identities, promoted cultural diversity, and helped to shape new narratives of peace.

Art and visual identity become vehicles for social transformation, where every gar-

ment, logo, or print is a political act that challenges stereotypes and rewrites histories. As Dolly from La Trocha states:

***“We are showing that we can resist, that we can express our discontent in many ways without weapons or violence.”***

## 4.3.2 The Construction of Identity through Women-Led Initiatives in Post-Conflict Contexts

### Identity Construction within These Initiatives

Territorial identity is a dynamic process that emerges from the interaction between lived territory—the experiences and daily relationships of the inhabitants—and represented territory, meaning the images and cultural narratives that are constructed around that space (Law, 2015).

In post-conflict settings, design plays a fundamental role by creating a space where these representations can be discussed and reconfigured, allowing communities to take ownership of their territory and reimagine their future. Initiatives like Café Tercer Acuerdo, Ixora, La Trocha, and Avanza exemplify how design and communication become tools for reclaiming territories affected by conflict, transforming war narratives into symbols of peace and resilience.

### Collective Identity and Territorial Branding

The collective identity built through territorial brands is deeply linked to shared memories and daily practices within communities. These brands become symbolic representations of their core values, traditions, and history (Ruiz, 2020). They not only strengthen the sense of belonging within the community but also act as a form of resistance against imposed narratives and external stereotypes. By cons-

tructing their own brands, communities take control of their narratives, making visible their efforts in autonomy, solidarity, and resilience.

### Lived Territory and Represented Territory

The lived territory in these initiatives is deeply rooted in the experiences of ex-combatants, Indigenous communities, farmers, and women who have faced armed conflict and are now working together to rebuild their lives. The represented territory, on the other hand, is built through the brands, which capture the collective memory and reframe it to project desired futures.

#### Café Tercer Acuerdo:

The lived territory is reflected in the daily farming practices and cooperation between ex-combatants, Indigenous people, and farmers. The brand, in turn, represents coffee as a symbol of reconciliation and economic justice, reshaping a space once associated with conflict.

#### Ixora:

In Catatumbo, the lived territory is marked by women's sewing practices and resistance. The brand, with its prints inspired by local flora and fauna, represents the connection to the land and women's empowerment.

#### La Trocha:

The paths once used for war now symbolize community and reconciliation. The brand reclaims "La Trocha" as a space for gathering and transformation.

#### Avanza:

The word "avanzada," once associated with military tactics, is transformed into an emblem of progress and reconstruction, reflecting the change in the lived territory of ex-combatants.

### Territory as a Living Entity

As Arturo Escobar argues, territories are not just physical locations but rather spheres where relationships between people and nature are inscribed (Serna & Zapata, n.d.). In these initiatives, the territory is understood as a living entity, rich in memory and in constant transformation.

#### Café Tercer Acuerdo:

Coffee is not just a product but a symbol of relationships between people and nature, where the memory of peace agreements is projected into a sustainable future.

#### Ixora:

The Ixora flower, the brand's central symbol, embodies resilience and permanence in the territory, connecting women with their land and history.

#### La Trocha:

La Casa de la Paz has become a reference for memory and reconciliation, where territory serves as a space for human and environmental relationships.

#### Avanza:

Through textile work, ex-combatants inscribe their stories onto the social fabric, reshaping their relationship with the space they inhabit.

### Design as a Political and Cultural Tool

In these initiatives, design is more than a visual practice—it is a political and cultural tool that enables communities to redefine their territorial identity. Through brand creation, these initiatives:

- Reconfigure narratives: Transform words and symbols associated with conflict into emblems of peace and resilience.
- Strengthen collective identity: Brands act

as symbolic representations of shared values, traditions, and history.

- Project desired futures: Visual narratives not only look to the past but also shape futures based on sustainability, social justice, and economic autonomy.

Women-led initiatives in post-conflict settings demonstrate that territorial identity is not static, but rather a dynamic process that emerges from the interaction between lived and represented territories. Design and communication are key tools in reframing these spaces, transforming war narratives into symbols of peace and resilience.

Through brands like Café Tercer Acuerdo, Ixora, La Trocha, and Avanza, communities are not only rebuilding their identity but also projecting futures where territory becomes a space of creativity, resistance, and hope. These initiatives stand as a testament to the power of design in reimagining more just and sustainable worlds, where memory and social transformation are interwoven into powerful visual narratives.

## 4.3.3 The Transformation of Territory Through Women-Led Initiatives in Post-Conflict Contexts

### Territorial Transformation

In regions affected by armed conflict, rebuilding the landscape is key to restoring memory, identity, and a sense of belonging. These dynamic spaces, where identity and otherness, history and change, perception and emotional experience converge, become scenarios for dialogue and transformation. Women-led initiatives such as Café Tercer Acuerdo, Ixora, La Trocha, and Avanza have shown that design and communication are not only tools for reconstructing collective narratives but also powerful means of challenging gender representations and reclaiming territories.

As Katerine from Ixora states:

***“Now, when people talk about Ixora and ‘Puntadas por la Paz,’ they talk about Caø-Indio. Our brand has helped more people learn about our history and our work. Before, few knew where Caø-Indio was, but now, many recognize us as a women-led productive project that represents our community.”***

### Design as a Tool for Reclaiming Territories

Communication design is an act of world-building, an exercise of symbolic power that, in the hands of vulnerable communities, can reconfigure power relations, reclaim territories, and

construct collective identities. Design can challenge gender stereotypes by providing critical and projective tools that allow women to reshape their identity in public and productive spheres.

In post-conflict settings, these initiatives design symbolic worlds where landscapes are reconfigured as spaces for dialogue between local identities and global influences (Calabi, 2022). By incorporating ancestral knowledge, native materials, or resistance narratives, these projects generate environments that blend aesthetics with politics, fostering collective agency and transformation.

### Women’s Participation and Leadership

A key factor in this territorial transformation has been women’s leadership and empowerment within these initiatives. Women have not only taken on essential roles in managing and marketing their products but have also challenged gender norms in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

### Café Tercer Acuerdo

In coffee-growing regions, women have overcome traditional gender roles in agriculture by actively participating in management and commercialization. Their leadership has been strengthened through:

- Training in quality control and production processes, increasing economic autonomy and visibility.
- Networking with female community leaders, fostering support and collaboration.
- Participation in decision-making spaces, such as the Women’s Community Council, Territorial Peace Council, Reconciliation and Peace Roundtable, and Gender Identity Commission.

### Ixora - Puntadas por la Paz

At Ixora, women lead all aspects of the project, from sewing and design to administration. This leadership has fostered:

- Economic empowerment and independence, breaking stereotypes that confine sewing to domestic spaces.
- Increased political participation, including representation in reincorporation processes and visibility at national and international fairs.
- The creation of safe spaces for collective dialogue, where victims, ex-combatants, and civil society engage in reconciliation. As Katerine states:

***“Traditionally, sewing has been seen as a feminine task limited to the home. However, at Ixora, we turned sewing into a political and symbolic tool, where each garment tells a story and makes women’s struggles visible.”***

### La Trocha and La Casa de la Paz

At La Casa de la Paz, women lead key areas such as management, communication, and tourism. Their participation has been fundamental for:

- Creating jobs with fair labor conditions, benefiting both peace signatories and civilians.
- Promoting dialogue between victims, ex-combatants, and civil society, fostering reconciliation and peacebuilding.
- Challenging gender stereotypes, prioritizing capacity and commitment over gender in all levels of the project.

### Avanza

At Avanza, women hold leadership positions within the cooperative, actively participating in decision-making and institutional negotiations. This empowerment has enabled them to:

- Transform traditional gender roles, promoting equity and inclusion.
- Leverage economic empowerment as a strategy against violence, equipping women with tools for autonomy and improved quality of life.

### Networks and Alliances for Transformation

The impact of these initiatives goes beyond economic benefits—they have also transformed how their territories are perceived.

Spaces once associated with violence have become hubs for reconciliation and sustainable development. These projects have built fair trade networks, strengthened community autonomy, and promoted economic inclusion.

### Café Tercer Acuerdo

- Participation in fair trade networks and solidarity fairs: Expo-Planadas, Feria Mundial del Café 2021, Ibagué Café Festival.
- National sales: Available in stores like La Tienda de la Empatía and La Casa de la Paz in Bogotá.
- International market connections: Partnerships with organizations supporting peace, such as the UNDP and ARN.
- Collaboration with rural and Indigenous communities: Works with Nasa Wes’x communities in Gaitania for coffee production.
- Training and brand development support: Partnership with the University of Ibagué.

**Ixora - Puntadas por la Paz**

- Participation in fashion and solidarity economy fairs: Colombiamoda Medellín, Pasarela Cumo, Cúcuta Moda, Hilando Sueños Fair in Pamplona.
- Building alliances with other women-led enterprises: Collaborations with Pastoral Social, IOM, and the National University of Colombia.
- Member of the National Network of Sewing Cooperatives for Peace (RENA-C): Works with Linás Closet in Cúcuta and produces workwear for rural workers.

**La Trocha and La Casa de la Paz**

- Creation of a solidarity entrepreneurship ecosystem: Produces craft beer in Ubaté and markets goods from conflict-affected regions.
- Alliances with peace signatories, victims, and civil society: Collaborates with private sector, academia, and international organizations.
- Works with over 100 producers: Distributes products through national and international networks.

**Avanza**

- Alliances with national and international brands: Presence in fashion events and peace-driven entrepreneurship fairs.
- Strategic partnerships: Works with UNDP, CNR, María Luisa Ortiz, and the European Peace Fund's Sustainable Territories project.
- Cooperative networks: Collaborates with Manifiesta and the World Women's Corporation Colombia.

**Beyond Economic Impact: Rewriting History and Challenging Exclusion**

These initiatives have not only transformed local economies but have proven that peace is built through creativity, memory, and community. Their impact extends beyond economic empowerment—they are rewriting the history of their territories and challenging deeply rooted structures of exclusion.

True reconciliation does not happen only at negotiation tables, but in every stitch, every coffee bean, and every community gathering that reclaims the past to build a more just and sustainable future.

# Part 5

# Data Visualization

**Part 5**  
**Data Visualization**  
Design Strategy Processes and  
Narrative Decisions  
Gender-Sensitive Representation in  
Data Visualization  
Potential Impact of Visualization

## 5 Data Visualization as a Tool for Transformation

In post-conflict contexts, the way communities' experiences are narrated is key to building memory, identity, and social justice. Data visualization is not only a means of organizing information in a clear and accessible manner but also a powerful tool that can challenge traditional representations and reframe territories through visual communication.

In this research, data visualization aims to construct narratives that reflect leadership, agency, and territorial transformation driven by various community initiatives. From a world-building design approach, these visualizations do not merely present data; they also contribute to the creation of new realities, in which former female combatants and their communities emerge as protagonists of change

### 5.1 Design Strategy Processes and Narrative Decisions

#### Methodological Approach to Visualization

For the development of infographics and visual representations, a process of data collection and analysis was carried out on initiatives such as Café Tercer Acuerdo, Ixora, La Trocha, and Avanza, prioritizing the following representation criteria:

#### Emphasis on territorial identity:

Each visualization incorporates graphic and narrative elements that highlight the connection of these initiatives with their territories and communities.

#### Data as tools for advocacy:

The graphic representations not only display quantitative information (such as economic and social impact) but also emphasize qualitative dimensions, such as collective memory and reconciliation.

#### Narratives of transformation:

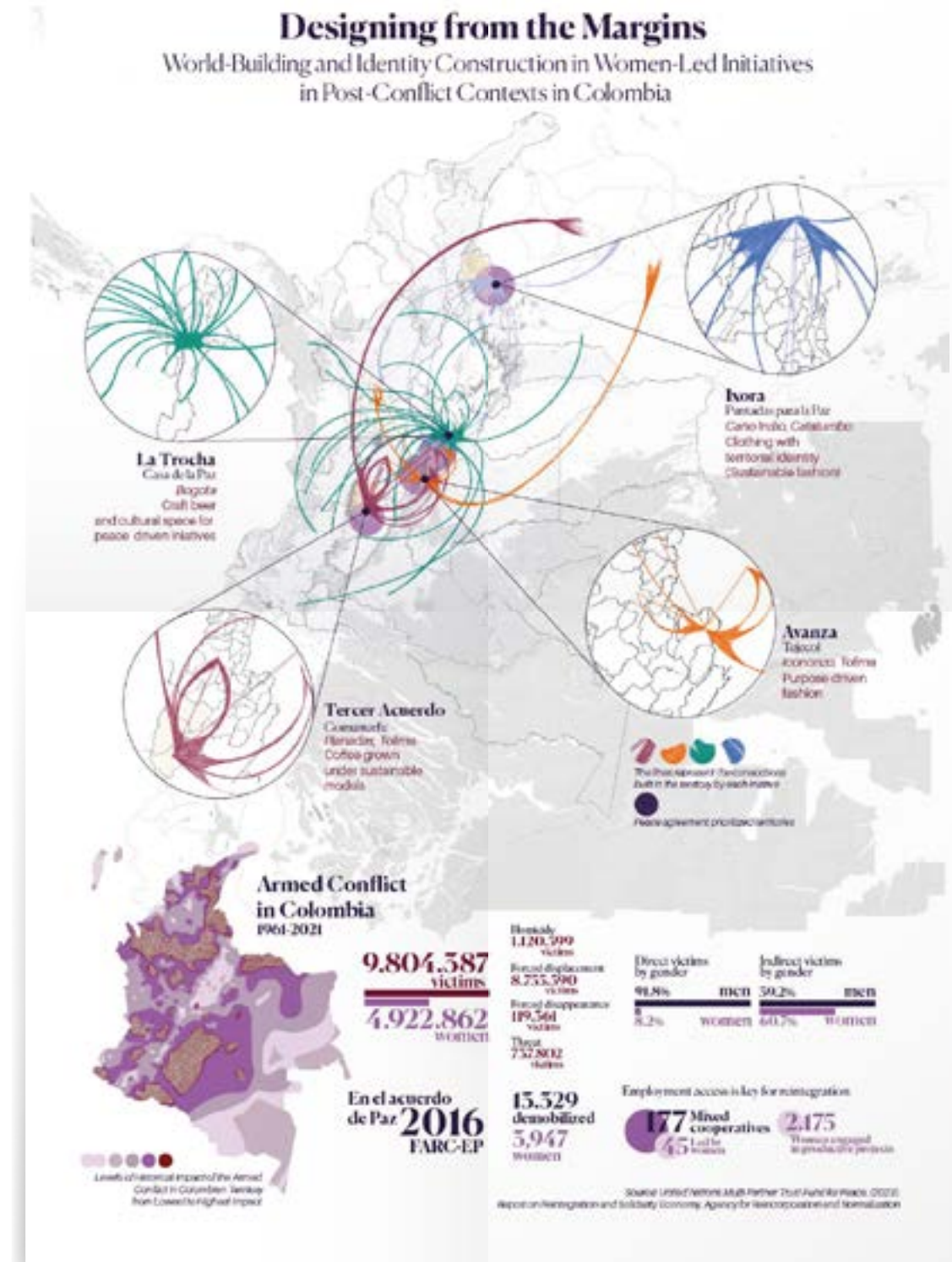
The graphics were designed to reflect how these initiatives have contributed to rebuilding the social fabric and challenging stereotypical representations of women in the post-conflict scenario.

#### Visual Construction and Graphic Codes

Two key infographics were created to represent the narrative of territorial transformation enabled by the leadership and participation of women in initiatives within post-conflict contexts:

## Map of territorial connections

This visualization represents how these initiatives have built networks of cooperation at the local, national, and international levels, highlighting their reach and projection.



## Radial diagrams

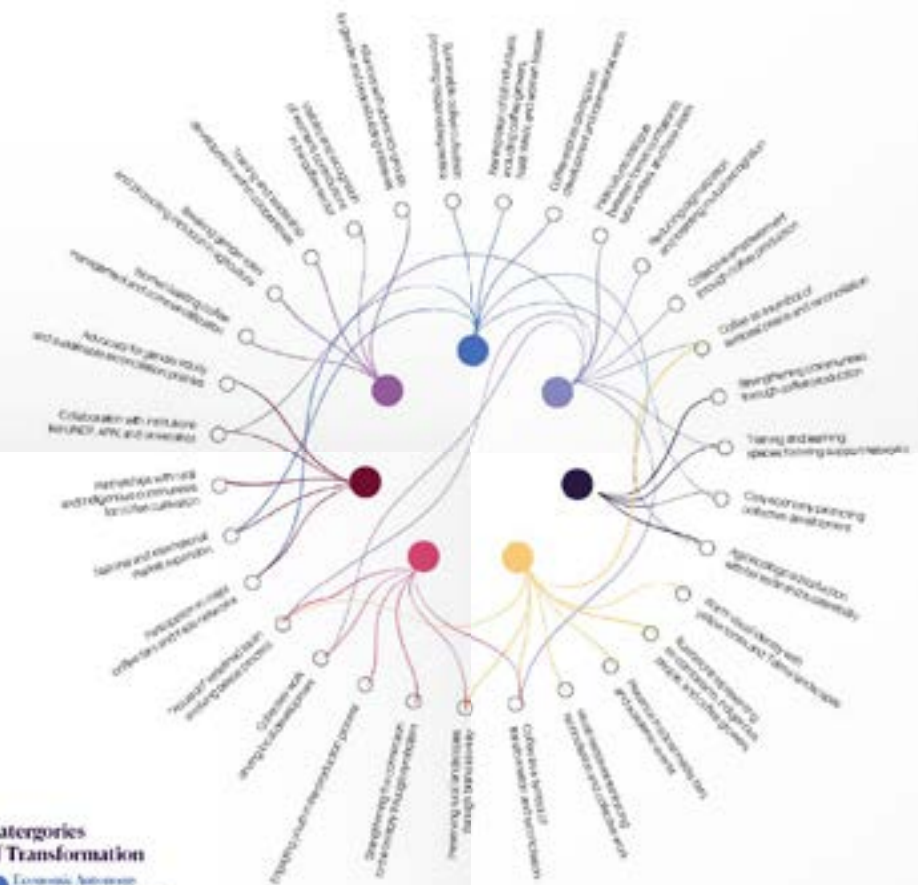
These diagrams illustrate the impact of each initiative in key dimensions such as solidarity economy, reconciliation, collective memory, territorial identity, and female empowerment. These categories are based on a previously developed analytical matrix



### Tercer Acuerdo Comumarfu

Café Tercer Acuerdo is more than a coffee brand; it is a symbol of reconciliation and resilience, bringing together former combatants, indigenous communities, and farmers to rebuild their territory through coffee production. This initiative revives the role of Farán women in agriculture, emphasizing their contribution to cultivation, harvesting, and commercialization as part of their commitment to peace.

The name "Tercer Acuerdo" (Third Agreement) reflects three key milestones of reconciliation in Marquetalia, the birthplace of the FARC-EP: the first agreement between the Nasa Wot'án indigenous community and the FARC-EP, the second being the 2016 Peace Agreement with the Colombian government, and the third as a community-led pact to consolidate peace through coffee.



- Categories of Transformation**
- Economic Autonomy and Sustainable Production
  - Peacebuilding and Reconciliation
  - Care, Wellbeing and Social Fabric
  - Design and Communication for Social Transformation
  - Territorial Identity and Collective Memory
  - Solidarity Economy and Peace Markets
  - Women's Participation and Leadership

**Flow Location**  
Manacas, Tolima

**Products**  
Coffee grown under sustainable models

**Networks and Commercialization**  
Participation in fairs such as Expo-Planetas, World Coffee Fair in Bogotá, Sales in Bogotá (Cascada de la Paz), Tienda de la Emprendedora and expansion to international markets

**Allies and Networks**  
UNDP, ARII, University of Bogotá, Women's Community Council, Acopep, ACOMPROCO

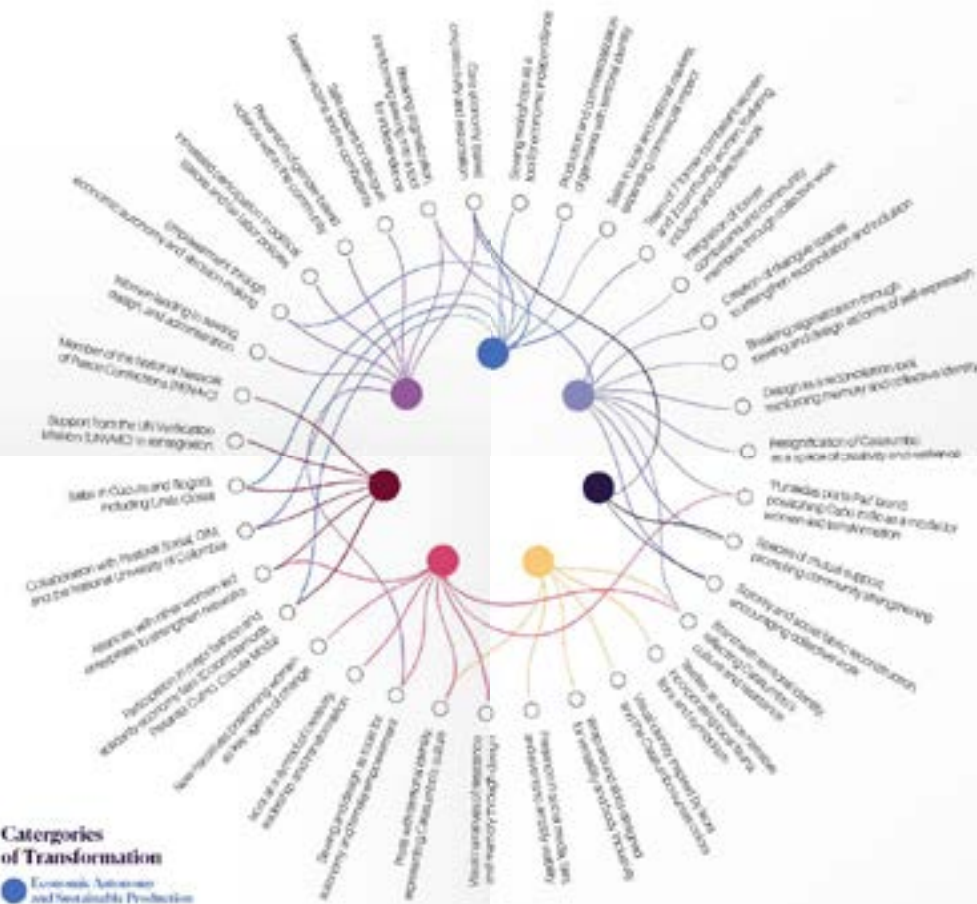




## Ixora Puntadas para la Paz

Ixora is a clothing brand founded by former FARC-EP women combatants in the process of reintegration. Through textile design, they have redefined their history, achieved economic autonomy, and strengthened their territorial identity.

Named after the emblematic ixora flower of Norte de Santander—a symbol of resilience and adaptation—this initiative embodies transformation and female autonomy. These women have overcome post-conflict challenges, using fashion as a means of empowerment and social change. More than just fashion, Ixora is a platform for women's political, economic, and social participation, reaffirming their identity and connection to their territory. It also challenges stereotypes about former combatants, highlighting their leadership and contributions to rebuilding Colombia's social fabric.



### Categories of Transformation

- Economic Autonomy and Sustainable Production
- Peacebuilding and Reconciliation
- Care, Wellbeing and Social Fabric
- Design and Communication for Social Transformation
- Territorial Identity and Collective Memory
- Solidarity Economy and Peace Markets
- Women's Participation and Leadership

**Base Location**  
Cairo India, Casanobio

**Products**  
Clothing with territorial identity

**Networks and Commercialization**  
Participation in fairs such as Colombiameda (Medellin), Pasaola Como (Cocuta), Bague Mode (Bogota), Lima's Closet, social media

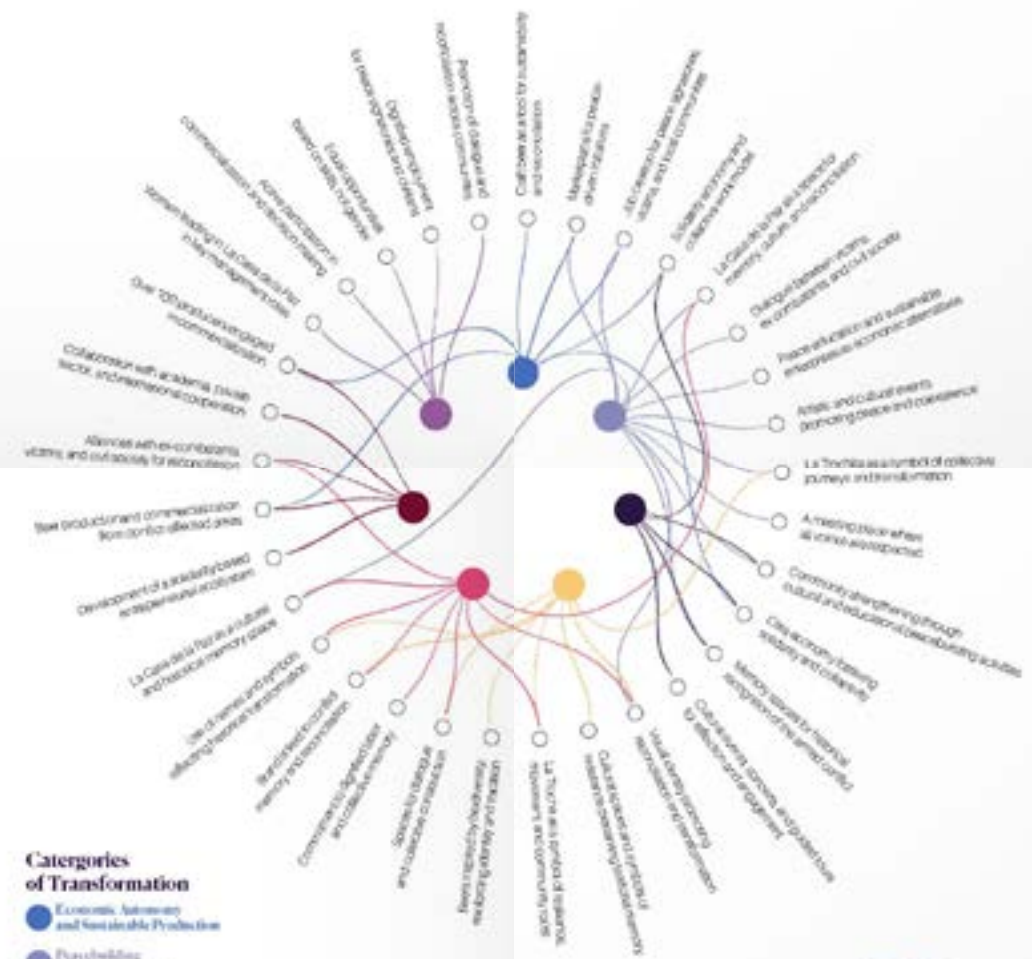
**Allies and Networks**  
National Network of Peace Confrontations (RINAC) Pastoral Social, UN, National University of Colombia



## La Trocha Casa de la Paz

La Trocha and La Casa de la Paz are more than a brewery and a meeting space; they embody reconciliation and social transformation in conflict-affected territories. This collective initiative proves that peace is built not only through institutions but also through daily life, culture, solidarity economy, and historical memory.

Through craft beer production and a space for dialogue, art, and community tourism, former combatants, victims, and local communities work together to redefine their narratives and strengthen social bonds. The concept of 'trocha' symbolizes both the path traveled and the journey ahead in reintegration, where diversity and collaboration become essential tools for rebuilding the social fabric.



### Categories of Transformation

- Economic Autonomy and Sustainable Production
- Peacebuilding and Reconciliation
- Care, Wellbeing and Social Fabric
- Design and Communication for Social Transformation
- Territorial Identity and Collective Memory
- Solidarity Economy and Peace Markets
- Women's Participation and Leadership

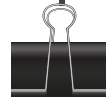
**Base Location**  
Bogota D.C

**Products**  
Craft beer and cultural/memory-driven enterprises

**Networks and Commercialization**  
Produced in Ubató and sold in Bogotá (Casa de la Trocha, cultural spaces, fairs) Participation in solidarity economy fairs and peace-driven entrepreneurship networks

**Allies and Networks**  
National University of Colombia, Pastoral Social, UN, Consorcio Via 40

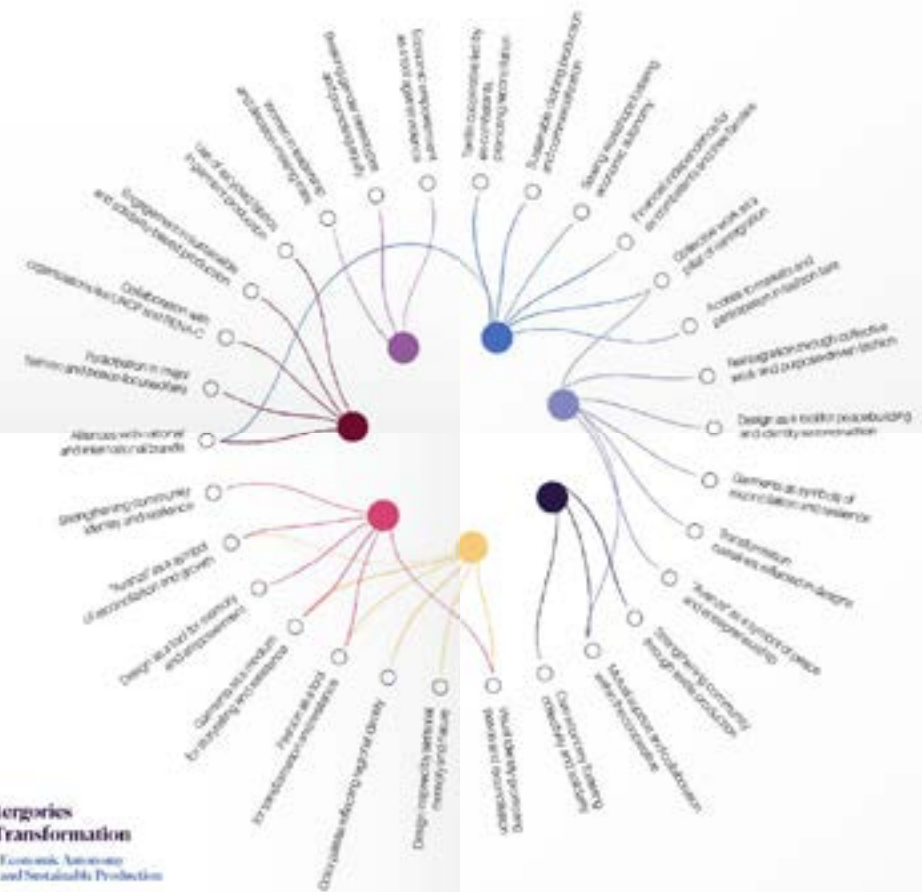




## Avanza Tejcol

Avanza is a clothing brand created by former FARC-EP combatants who use textile design as a tool for social transformation, reconciliation, and economic autonomy.

Its name, derived from the military term "avanzada," has been reclaimed to symbolize their transition into a new phase of life, where they build a textile enterprise that strengthens solidarity economy and territorial identity. More than clothing, each piece represents resilience and reconciliation, narrating stories of transformation while creating opportunities for peace signatories and local communities.



### Categories of Transformation

- Economic Autonomy and Sustainable Production
- Peacebuilding and Reconciliation
- Care, Wellbeing and Social Fabric
- Design and Economic Action by Social Transformation
- Territorial Identity and Collective Memory
- Solidarity Economy and Peace Markets
- Women's Participation and Leadership

**Reconciliation**  
Economía Social  
Productos

Purpose-driven fashion (textiles as a symbol of reconciliation)

**Networks and Commercialization**  
Participation in fashion and solidarity economy fairs (Columbiana, Bagui Modis) Sales in national markets and partnerships with designers

**Mix and Networks**  
UNOP, ARI, University of Bogotá  
Women's Community Council, Asopeje, ASOMAPROSO



## 5.2 Gender-Sensitive Representation in Data Visualization

The visualization exercise in this research is grounded in the principles of the Manifesto for Gender-Sensitive Communication (Politecnico di Milano, 2023), which establishes essential guidelines for ensuring inclusive and bias-free visual communication. Accordingly, the data visualization in this study was designed based on the following criteria:

**Inclusive Language:** The narratives avoid reducing former women combatants to victims or agents of violence, instead emphasizing their active role in territorial transformation.

**Equitable Representation:** Women are portrayed as leaders, creators of solidarity economies, and peacebuilders, highlighting their agency and community participation.

**Elimination of Stereotypes:** The representations prioritize women's leadership and self-management, avoiding portrayals that define them solely by their past in the conflict.

**Intersectional Approach:** The infographics reflect the diversity of experiences within these communities, showcasing the interaction between former combatants, farmers, and indigenous people in each initiative

## 5.3 Potential Impact of Visualization

The infographics developed in this research have the potential to create a tangible impact on how these initiatives are perceived and positioned both nationally and internationally. Some of their key contributions include:

**Visibility of Local Processes:** By mapping the impact of these initiatives, the infographics highlight the magnitude of the transformation generated, reinforcing their legitimacy and recognition.

**Strengthening Territorial Identity:** By showcasing the connections between these initiatives and their territories, the visualizations help construct stronger narratives on the role of communication design in post-conflict reconstruction.

**Advocacy and Awareness Tools:** These representations can be utilized by NGOs, international organizations, and governmental actors to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of reintegration and territorial transformation led by women.

# Part 6

# Conclusions

**Part 6**

**Conclusions**

Personal

About the Data Visualization

Next Steps

## 6.1 Personal reflection

When I started this project, I was deeply aware of the profound impact that armed conflict has on communities, particularly on women, who often bear the brunt of violence, displacement, and social stigmatization. As a Colombian woman, this issue hits close to home. Colombia, my country, has endured decades of armed conflict, and I have witnessed firsthand how women—especially those who were once part of armed groups and have since demobilized—are now at the forefront of rebuilding their communities and fostering peace. These women are using design, creativity, and collaboration as tools to transform their territories, reclaim their identities, and challenge the narratives that have historically marginalized them.

During the project journey, not only did I gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women in post-conflict contexts, but I also had the privilege of learning from resilient and empowered women who are reshaping their realities and creating new opportunities for themselves and their communities. Their stories of reintegration, resilience, and transformation have been a source of inspiration and a testament to the power of design as a tool for social change. As a Colombian woman, this work has allowed me to connect with my country's history in a profound way, while also contributing to a future where women, including former combatants, are recognized as leaders and agents of change in the construction of a more just and peaceful society.

### **Regarding my learnings as a designer:**

Tackling such a complex and multifaceted issue was an invaluable experience that allowed me to refine my research, communication, and design skills. By immersing myself in the historical and social context of Colombia's armed conflict, I gained a comprehensive understanding of how design can be a tool for social transformation. I realized the importance of creating strategies that empower women to reclaim their territories, rebuild their identities, and challenge traditional gender roles. Conducting interviews with women leaders and participants in these initiatives helped me develop my skills as a listener and interviewer, allowing me to uncover the deeper motivations and aspirations behind their work. Organizing and analyzing the data from these interactions was a crucial step in translating their stories into meaningful design outcomes.

This process reinforced my belief in the power of design to create inclusive and impactful narratives.

### **Personal Reflection**

On a personal level, this journey has been deeply enriching. I learned about the resilience and creativity of women in post-conflict contexts, who are not only rebuilding their lives but also redefining the narratives of their territories. I connected with inspiring women who are challenging stereotypes, breaking barriers, and creating spaces for dialogue and reconciliation. Their stories of perseverance and hope have left a lasting impression on me, reminding me of the importance of empathy, collaboration, and humility in design practice.

I also gained a deeper appreciation for the role of design in addressing systemic issues such as gender inequality and social exclusion. This project has shown me that design is not just about creating aesthetically pleasing solutions but about fostering meaningful change and empowering communities to tell their own stories. The barriers to achieving gender equality and social justice are significant, but initiatives like the ones I studied demonstrate that change is possible when communities are given the tools and support to lead their own transformation.

## 6.1 About the visualization of data

The data visualization developed in this research serves as a tool to highlight the transformative impact of women-led initiatives in post-conflict contexts in Colombia. Through a combination of maps, radial diagrams, and infographics, the visualization aims to communicate the social, economic, and cultural contributions of these initiatives in a clear and accessible way. The result is designed to showcase the connections between these initiatives and their territories, emphasizing their role in rebuilding collective identities, fostering reconciliation, and promoting economic autonomy.

### Benefits of the Data Visualization

#### Clarity and Accessibility

The visualizations are designed to present complex data in an intuitive and engaging manner, making it easier for stakeholders—such as NGOs, policymakers, and international organizations—to understand the impact of these initiatives.

#### Awareness and Advocacy

The visualizations serve as a powerful advocacy tool, raising awareness about the challenges faced by women in post-conflict contexts and the transformative potential of their initiatives. By highlighting the economic, social, and cultural impact of these projects, the visualizations aim to challenge stereotypes and promote a more nuanced understanding of women's roles in peacebuilding and territorial transformation.

#### Engagement and Collaboration

The visualizations are designed to foster engagement and collaboration among stakeholders. By mapping the networks of cooperation established by these initiatives—both locally and internationally—the visualization encourages the formation of new partnerships and the exchange of resources and knowledge. This collaborative approach is essential for scaling the impact of these initiatives and ensuring their sustainability.

### Empowerment and Representation

One of the key goals of the visualizations is to empower women by giving them a platform to tell their own stories. The visual narratives emphasize the agency and leadership of women in these initiatives, challenging traditional representations that often reduce them to victims or passive beneficiaries. By showcasing their contributions to peacebuilding and social transformation, the visualizations aim to amplify their voices and inspire other women to take an active role in shaping their communities.

### Potential Impact

The data visualization platform has the potential to create a significant impact at multiple levels:

#### At the Local Level

The visualizations can strengthen the territorial identity of the communities by highlighting their cultural heritage, resilience, and achievements. This can foster a sense of pride and belonging among community members, encouraging them to continue their efforts toward reconciliation and sustainable development.

#### At the National Level

By making the impact of these initiatives visible, the platform can influence public policies and funding decisions, ensuring that more resources are allocated to support women-led projects in post-conflict areas. It can also contribute to a broader national dialogue about the

importance of gender-sensitive approaches in peacebuilding and social transformation.

#### At the International Level

The visualizations can serve as a model for other countries facing similar challenges, demonstrating how design and communication can be used to empower marginalized communities and promote social justice. By sharing the stories of these initiatives on a global stage, the platform can inspire international organizations and donors to invest in similar projects, creating a ripple effect of positive change.

**Conclusion**

The data visualization platform is more than just a tool for presenting information; it is a means of fostering dialogue, challenging stereotypes, and promoting social transformation. By combining rigorous research with creative design, the platform aims to amplify the voices of women in post-conflict contexts and contribute to the construction of more inclusive and equitable narratives. While the challenges of achieving gender equality and social justice are significant, the visualizations demonstrate that change is possible when communities are given the tools and support to lead their own transformation.

This project has shown me that data visualization is not just a technical exercise but a powerful medium for storytelling and advocacy. Moving forward, I hope to continue exploring the potential of design and communication to create meaningful change, both in Colombia and beyond.

## 6.2 Future Steps

### **Incorporating Feedback**

The next step in this research is to incorporate feedback from the stakeholders involved in the women-led initiatives, as well as from experts in design, gender studies, and peacebuilding. This feedback will help refine the data visualizations, ensuring that they accurately reflect the experiences and aspirations of the communities they represent. Additionally, further testing with a broader audience—including NGOs, policymakers, and international organizations—will provide valuable insights into the usability and impact of the visualizations.

### **Expanding the Scope**

While the initial focus of this project has been on women-led initiatives in post-conflict contexts in Colombia, the next phase will involve expanding the scope to include other regions and communities facing similar challenges. By adapting the visualizations to different cultural and social contexts, the platform can serve as a model for other countries undergoing post-conflict transitions. This expansion will also involve collaborating with local organizations and experts to ensure that the visualizations are culturally sensitive and contextually relevant.

### **Engaging with Stakeholders**

To scale the impact of this project, it will be essential to engage with key stakeholders, including government agencies, international organizations, and private sector partners. Presenting the visualizations to potential sponsors and collaborators—such as the Colombian Agency for Reintegration and Normalization (ARN), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and local NGOs—will help secure the resources and support needed to further develop and implement the platform. These stakeholders can also provide valuable feedback on how to align the project with existing peacebuilding and gender equality initiatives.

### **Policy Advocacy**

One of the long-term goals of this project is to influence public policies that support women-led initiatives in post-conflict contexts. By demonstrating the transformative potential of these initiatives through data visualization, the platform can advocate for increased funding, resources, and policy changes that promote gender equality and social justice. Engaging with government agencies, such as Colombia's Ministry of Gender Equality, will be crucial in achieving this goal.

### **Building a Global Network**

On a bigger scale, this project has the potential to create a global network of women-led initiatives that share resources, knowledge, and best practices. By connecting communities across different regions, the platform can foster collaboration and solidarity, amplifying the impact of these initiatives on a global scale. This network could also serve as a space for dialogue and exchange, where women from different contexts can learn from each other and work together to address common challenges.

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