IN/SECURITY IN CONTEXT

An inquiry into the relational and contextual dimensions of in/security within the Colombian peace process

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCU</td>
<td>Self-Defence Force of Cordoba And Uraba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACORE</td>
<td>National Association for Retired Military Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acvc</td>
<td>Peasant Association of The Cimitarra Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascamcat</td>
<td>Catatumbo Peasant Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacrim</td>
<td>Criminal Bands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDSP</td>
<td>Consolidated Democratic Security Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINEP</td>
<td>Centre for Research and Popular Education/Peace Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNRR</td>
<td>National Commission for Reconciliations and Reparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNP</td>
<td>Department for National Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSP</td>
<td>Democratic Security Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELN</td>
<td>National Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPL</td>
<td>Popular Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>FARC</td>
<td>Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia</td>
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<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographical Information System</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAG</td>
<td>Illegal Armed Group</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHL</td>
<td>International Humanitarian Law</td>
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<tr>
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<td>International Nongovernmental Organisation</td>
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<td>IO</td>
<td>International Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRV</td>
<td>Index on The Risk of Falling Victim to The Armed Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>JEP</td>
<td>Special Jurisdiction for Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPL</td>
<td>Justice and Peace Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-19</td>
<td>April 19th Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>MAS</td>
<td>Death to Kidnappers</td>
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<td>MoD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoJ</td>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>National Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDVC</td>
<td>Norte Del Valle Cartel</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Nongovernmental Organisation</td>
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<td>PMC</td>
<td>Private Military Companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SoH</td>
<td>Sword of Honour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAECT</td>
<td>The Special Management Office for Territorial Consolidation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UARIV</td>
<td>Special Management Office for Integral Response to Victims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>Patriot Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>URT</td>
<td>Land Restitution Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>VLRL</td>
<td>Victim and Land Restitution Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WoT</td>
<td>War on Terror</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZRC</td>
<td>Farmer Reserve Zone</td>
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Abstract

This research is concerned with how in/security is understood and the implications of contested meanings of in/security. The basic premise of this thesis is that in/security in itself has no meaning and thus cannot exist in isolation. Instead, in/security is always defined in relation to something or someone. How we understand in/security derives from the contexts we navigate and the identities we construct. An inquiry into in/security therefore demands incorporating a multiplicity of narratives and discussing these in relation to each other. While scholars have called for a greater emphasis on exploring in/security in marginal sites, I argue that accounts from the margins must not be at the exclusion of other more dominant narratives. Such analysis – placing the elite/margin, included/excluded, powerful/weak – in the same framework in order to produce a relational account of in/security is largely missing.

This thesis sets out to provide a rich and detailed understanding of the everyday complexities of in/security. I propose a framework for capturing relational and contextual dimensions of in/security, and the implication of contested meanings of in/security understandings. Through an in-depth case study in the context of the transitions towards a post-conflict period in Colombia, following five decades of armed conflict, I inquired into in/security understandings at the margins in relation to the centre. The margins were represented by conflict-affected communities whereas the centre was represented by the Colombian government and key security sector institutions.

The research found several relational dimensions of in/security understandings between the state- and the marginalized community-levels. Moreover, contextual and identity factors had a significant impact on how in/security was spoken about and what was spoken of. Through the framework, it was possible to see in continuum the way deeply ingrained understandings of in/security reproduce violence as the government seeks to transition the country into a post-conflict period following five decades of armed conflict. The research, through a detailed empirical case study, supports the view that in/security is relational and derivative of context and with ties to identity. It contributes to further our understandings of in/security at three distinct levels.

At the theoretical level, the research builds upon existing literature in the field of security studies to advance an enhanced understanding of the relational and contextual dimensions of in/security, the contested meanings of in/security and the implications thereof. Methodologically, it proposes an alternative framework to capture the relational dimensions through shifting the problem formulation from a traditional focus on who is to be secured from what threats to how in/security is understood by different people/communities in different contexts. Empirically, it contributes to an off-centred understanding of in/security dynamics in the official transitions into the post-conflict period in Colombia. Through its empirical evidence it has the potential to offer an important contribution to the analysis of post-conflict transitions more generally.
Declaration

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Acknowledgements

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I owe a debt of gratitude to all the people in Colombia who in different ways contributed to my research. Most of all, the research participants who shared with me their experiences, knowledge and perceptions, which made this research possible. Unfortunately, their names cannot be disclosed, due to the sensitivity of the matters discussed.

I would also like to thank the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at the University of Manchester for providing me with a fieldwork bursary, and the Society of Latin American Studies for a travel grant provided. And last but not least, the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute for the studentship covering the entire four-year programme.

Finally, I would not have succeeded with my research without the love and support of my family. My husband Fernando Delgado, who have supported me in all possible ways, and my two wonderful daughters, Isabelle and Gabriella. Finally, I wish to thank my father, Anders Tornqvist, for all the help upon our return from Colombia, which made it possible to complete the thesis.
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to Isabelle and Gabriella, my two wonderful daughters who were born during this journey.
Map 1.1: Colombia

Source: Nations Online Project
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 An Abstract of Everyday In/Security

As I walked down the muddy hillside of the internally displaced person (IDP) settlement on the outskirts of Cúcuta (Colombia) in March 2015, an often to be heard narrative during my research directly confronted me – that of state abandonment. This was a place that appeared to encapsulate what interviewees referred to as state abandonment and the way it intersected with their marginalised conditions. Most basic needs were lacking and there was little connectivity to wider society outside of the settlement. This IDP settlement, which was informally occupying contested land, gave the impression of representing ‘the margin’ in every aspect. Most visible was the level of socio-economic marginalisation, such as the lack of any infrastructure or public services. In fact, my first visit to the settlement had been cancelled as heavy rain impeded access to the settlement, which could only be reached through mud tracks. A large brick building stood empty in the middle of the settlement. It had been built by the community to be used as a school building. However, as the inhabitants told me, the departmental education authority had refused to inspect the building and assign teachers as the settlement was considered by the authorities to be illegal. Considered illegal, children from the settlement have great difficulties in being accepted in schools elsewhere, although they are legally entitled to attend. The empty school building – unrecognised by state authorities, which provided few viable alternatives for the children to attend school – thus symbolised the social marginalisation of the settlement.

The margin, as the socially, politically, and economically excluded segments of society (D’Costa, 2006), was one of the contexts in which I wanted to explore understandings around in/security. In my inquiry into in/security, I sought to engage with questions around what in/security might mean for the people residing here. How did inhabitants negotiate in/security dynamics which materialised in the everyday life in the settlement? How did understandings of in/security, as perceived at the state level, and security-related policies and practices resulting thereof, play out here – far away from the elite security players in Bogotá? As we continued our journey through the settlement, Caesar, one of the inhabitants of the Perseverancia settlement, told me how he had arrived at the settlement two years ago, displaced by conflict-related violence from Sierra Nevada on the Caribbean coast. This was not the first time he had been displaced – like many of the settlement’s inhabitants, Caesar suffered multiple displacements due to persistent violence. Upon arriving at the settlement,
the most important thing to do was to secure a piece of land. Thereafter, construction material for a house had to be sourced from wherever possible. During this time, Caesar also needed shelter for himself and his family while building their new home. While Caesar managed to build a home, life in the settlement was hard. There was no electricity, no sewage system, and no rubbish collection. Water supply was limited, with one hose serving an estimated 1,000 families. Nor were there any health posts, schools or other basic service provisions. Many people in the settlement suffered trauma as a result of the violence they had experienced. Some were disabled, others were of old age and with restricted mobility. Many were adolescent single mothers. The needs appeared endless. Against this setting, I asked Caesar about the state-provided housing for IDPs, which is part of the compensation packaged under the Victim and Land Restitution Law (VLRL) signed into law in 2011. Caesar’s answer took me by surprise. ‘We couldn’t possibly live there,’ I was told. ‘There is no dignity, no security.’ Caesar was referring to the dynamics around violent actors, the cramped spaces, and the inability to produce food, the latter of prime importance for Caesar as a farmer.

Caesar’s reply indicated an understanding of in/security derivative of the current contexts he navigated. The way Caesar spoke of in/security was also relational to the government’s policies towards him as an IDP illegally occupying land. For Caesar, the government’s initiatives to attend to the IDP population constituted an important insecurity. In order to access state-provided benefits, IDPs must register with the authorities. However, Caesar feared that, by doing so, he would be forced out of the settlement and made to live in the state-provided housing. Other inhabitants I spoke to in the settlement confirmed that, despite the difficulties related to life in the settlement, there was a reluctance towards rehousing. Nevertheless, refusing resettlement delegitimised their victim status. Notwithstanding this, people preferred life in this settlement because they felt it was peaceful. Insecurities existed, but were related more to night-time robberies, accelerated by the complete darkness due to the lack of electricity. This somewhat puzzled me. Was it possible that this settlement had escaped other kinds of conflict dynamics, or was it an indication of the unwillingness to speak about such issues?

A number of events unfolded during my visit to the settlement, which made me consider what was really being said during the interviews – or rather, how things were being said and, more importantly, what was not being said and why. One such event indicating parallel in/security dynamics was the presence of a high-end 4x4 vehicle with blacked-out windows circling the settlement. Considering the material and monetary poverty of the inhabitants,
which was both visible and narrated to me, it seemed unlikely that any inhabitant would be in possession of such a vehicle. It bore no organisational logo; moreover, the only non-government organisation (NGO) present in the settlement was the one that I accompanied. It seemed possible that this was a display of presence and control of the settlement by illegal armed groups (IAGs). This impression was confirmed when I mentioned my observations and thoughts to Diana, the local representative from the NGO who had accompanied me to the settlement and who had worked with the community for many years. She believed the settlement was most likely controlled by one of the IAGs and that there was a deep level of distrust of outsiders. Diana’s account also revealed another contradiction. I had been told in interviews how the community had struggled to have the school building authorised. Yet, Diana spoke of how the community was reluctant to cooperate with her organisation to facilitate the approval of the school. The organisation had sought for some time to conduct a census of the number of children in the settlement as a way to pressure the authorities to attend to this community. Yet, despite the settlement’s inhabitants verbally supporting this project, the organisation had received little collaboration. I left the settlement with more questions than answers. Most pressingly, what were the in/security dynamics being played out here indicative of, in the everyday life in the margins? And how did they relate to other narratives and understandings of in/security – specifically that expressed by state authorities attending to conflict-affected populations?

Interviews with state-level officials provided opposing accounts in terms of the meanings of in/security. A brief excerpt from an interview held with a state representative involved in the government’s response to the victims of the armed conflict serves to illustrate relational dimensions of in/security. In an interview with Humberto at the Special Management Office for Integral Response to Victims (UARIV) in Bogotá, held in November 2014, the specifics of the VLRL were detailed. Humberto spoke at length about the enormous, yet unprecedented, task of attending to approximately 7 million victims of the armed conflict. In/security was predominantly spoken of in terms of numbers and statistics. The sheer number of victims registered with the UARIV was indicative of the insecurity generated by the armed conflict. The government’s response (assessed through largely quantitative indicators), however, indicated improvements in in/security dynamics, as victims were now able to claim their rights and entitlements. This, Humberto argued, meant that victims are now less threatened and that the state is getting better at providing protection and security. Thus, contradictions began to emerge around the approach to in/security at the state level, and how this approach was perceived among the local conflict-affected population. Contradictions produced contested meanings of in/security within society. These excerpts
from my fieldwork represent findings from asymmetrical levels of society, comprising the state-level and marginalised conflict-affected populations. The way in/security is understood across asymmetrical levels of society, and the implications of contested meanings, is at the heart of this research project.

1.2 Relational and Contextual Dimensions of In/security

The basic premise of this thesis is that security cannot be understood in isolation, but is always defined in relation to something else (Dillon, 1996; Hills, 2009; Krause and Williams, 1997), while derivative of contexts navigated and identities adhered to (Campbell, 1998; Nunes, 2012; Stern, 2005). Denoting the relational dimensions of security, in my research I speak of in/security, which is further elaborated upon in Chapter Two detailing the conceptual framework. The asymmetrical levels in my research refer to what scholars including Ackerly et al. (2006), Sylvester (1994) and Berents (2015) refer to as uneven power constellations, represented by the ‘centre margin’. In my empirical case study on Colombia, the state-level and marginalised conflict-affected local communities constitute the asymmetrical centre-margin levels. The state level is associated with sites of governance, authority and regulation. It is at this level where security-related policy and strategies are devised, through which state legitimacy is sought (Campbell, 1998). The conflict-affected communities are communities present in specific marginalised contexts, such as the Perseverancia settlement. Although I refer to these two levels as distinct separate realms, the research brings out the co-constitutive relation between the state and community levels.

The two above research excerpts seek to illustrate these aspects. For Caesar, understandings of in/security reflected life as a displaced person, a husband, a father, and a farmer risking losing the few remaining means of production, and finding ways to survive in the margins where the legal and illegal conflate. In navigating such contexts, Caesar is both a beneficiary and an adversary of the government’s security-related objectives, policies and practices. As a person displaced by the guerrillas from a region immersed in armed violence, Caesar is recognised as a legitimate victim in the VLRL and entitled to compensation and benefits. As a recognised victim, he is a priority object in the government’s proclaimed bottom-up approach to peacebuilding in the official transition into the post-conflict period, following five decades of armed conflict (Jaramillo, 2013). Yet, negotiating the illegal surroundings, be it illegally occupying land while refusing state-provided resettlement, or engaging in any way with the IAGs who tend to control such settings, also makes Caesar an antagonist of these very same government objectives. Thus, in/security for Caesar had as much to do with
everyday survival in the settlement as with negotiating this dual role as a beneficiary and adversary. In this way, in/security became more of a process than something to be achieved.

For Humberto, on the other hand, talking as a high-level public official, in/security appeared to be a commodity to be achieved (Wibben, 2016) and, in the words of Wolfers (1962), something that exists to a greater or lesser degree across the country. Clearly identified objects – such as the presence of IAGs, measurable levels of criminality and violence – were seen as the main causes of insecurity. Through different security-related policies, including the VLRL, insecurities were to be eliminated and, in this way, security achieved. Taken together, Caesar’s and Humberto’s narratives also hinted towards the relational aspects of in/security. Dominant narratives of the illegal settlements as dangerous and conflict-ridden sites informed state responses to resettle IDPs elsewhere – into organised, formal and legal housing provided by the state. Yet, the perceptions of IDPs of such housings resulted in a preference to remain in the settlement, despite violence and lack of basic human needs coverage. The rejection of state-provided aid by conflict-affected communities, in favour of remaining in an illegal setting which created relations with the IAGs, criminalised this population in the eyes of the authorities.

While the above accounts are but a small indication of contextual and relational dimensions of in/security understandings, they serve to illustrate how inquiring into these dimensions entails ‘[t]elling a multiplicity of stories about how, by whom and for whom security is enacted in particular locations, realising that they are likely to contradict each other’ (Wibben 2016, pg.140). These dimensions are nevertheless underexplored in the literature (Mandelbaum et al., 2016; Nunes, 2012; Wibben, 2016). Instead, most accounts of in/security place analysis at the level of the elites or subjects of authority (Wibben, 2016). The focus on articulations of those deemed institutionally legitimate to speak on behalf of a particular collective usually results in a focus on the state (McDonald, 2008). As a result, a number of scholars have argued that contextual accounts from the margins are often missing from dominant accounts of in/security, with the effect that little is known of how in/security is understood and experienced in such settings (Eriksson, 2001; Vaughan-Williams and Stevens, 2016; Wibben, 2016).

Although security studies have predominantly focused on the state level, there is nevertheless a growing body of research exploring narratives from the margins. However, while concurring with the need for a greater emphasis on exploring in/security in marginal sites, I argue that accounts from the margins must not be at the exclusion of other more
dominant narratives. Instead, taking a cue from scholars such as Vaughan-Williams and Stevens (2016), Hönke and Muller (2012), Wibben (2016), Browning and McDonald (2013), a multiplicity of narratives needs to be understood in relation to each other. Such analysis – placing the elite/margin, included/excluded, powerful/weak – in the same framework in order to produce a relational account of in/security is largely missing. Through the case study on Colombia, where I inquire into in/security understanding at the margins in relation to the centre, I seek to contribute to filling these above-identified gaps in the literature.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

Following on from this chapter, in Chapter Two I provide a review of security studies literature and based on this review, set out the proposed research framework. The first part of the chapter constitutes the literature review, where I bring together the different literatures on in/security to illustrate the evolution of the field and identify where important gaps exist. It begins with a brief discussion of realist and liberalist theories and their sub-variants, which I collectively term traditional security approaches. The purpose of discussing these approaches is to draw out underlying assumptions that influence discussions and debates on in/security, yet limit a thorough engagement with how in/security is understood across societies. In engaging with these limitations, I turn to critical security studies and the way in which this body of literature has advanced the concept of security and how, taken together, the approaches offer important insights into the limitations and implications of traditional approaches. The following section of the chapter discusses the main approaches of critical security studies and how they contribute to a deeper understanding of the referent object of security, identity, context, and the implications of underlying assumptions. Yet, despite the rich insights into the complexities of in/security, the literature suggests important areas where more research is needed. The subsequent section provides a discussion of these gaps, concluding that there is a need for a thorough contextual and relational approach to the study of in/security.

In the second part of the chapter, I set out the proposed conceptual framework for studying in/security. The framework centres on capturing the relational aspects of in/security, and the way in/security understandings are derivative of context and identity. Indicating the relational dimensions of security, I speak of in/security in the framework. An important aspect of the framework is the shifting of the problem formulation from a traditional focus on what in/security is, to how in/security is understood and produced. By moving away from a focus on security for whom and from what, to approaching the study of in/security through
a focus on the relational and contextual dimensions, and different derivative aspects, this rethinks the way the question is posed. It provides an alternative means for discussing in/security, providing the space for understanding in/security from a wider range of perspectives and in relation to each other.

The framework is developed as follows. I first set out how relational aspects of in/security can be captured. I thereafter draw out how the framework incorporates the way in/security is derivative of context and its ties to identity. This is followed by a discussion on the way I approach the state- and community levels, that make up the asymmetrical levels of the research. The final part engages with the implications of different in/security understandings, which include the production of boundaries and opposing security arrangements. The chapter ends by setting out the research questions.

Having reviewed the theoretical and conceptual literature, in Chapter Three I discuss why Colombia makes for a pertinent case study. The chapter provides a contextual background on the armed conflict in Colombia and important in/security dynamics pertaining thereto. This includes tracing the origin of a centre-periphery divide that features strongly in both policy and scholarly works on Colombia, and in which I situate the relational approach discussing the centre and the margin in relation to each other. The protracted nature of the conflict has produced diverse approaches to trace and explain the root causes and main drivers of violence. This includes situating the conflict within the literature pertaining to weak state/rebel violence (Fearon, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2004; Kalyvas, 2006), greed and grievance (Collier and Hoefler, 2000), geographical factors (McDougall, 2009), and hegemonic party politics (LeGrand, 1997; Simons, 2004). Explicit or implicit in these framings is the representations of the peripheries as uncivilised and savaged (Serje 2011), abandoned by the state (Idler, 2012a; Ramirez, 2015), and violent (LeGrand, 2016). I thereafter trace the evolution of the armed conflict in the peripheral regions. This is followed by an illustration of the multiple sites of alternative authorities (Mason, 2005) that were formed in these regions. By doing so, I move beyond the, at times, simplified dichotomy armed violence as a result of consolidated state power versus control by the IAGs (Henderson, 2011; Ince, 2013a). I pay particular attention to how dynamics have blurred the boundaries between the legal and illegal, the state and the IAGs.

In Chapter Four I set out the methodology adopted. It starts with a discussion on the research philosophy underlining my research and how this informed my approach to studying in/security. I thereafter set out the research design. Based on a single case study
incorporating various sites, the research design is created in a way that allowed me to bridge the asymmetrical levels that make up the research. This includes combining qualitative, quantitative and visual methods, which specific contributions I discuss. I thereafter set out how the research was conducted, which begins with the selection of the local research sites through mapping quantitative data pertaining to insecurity, as defined in national security-related policy. Thereafter, security-related policy was analysed in order to ascertain underlying assumptions and representations of in/security. Lastly, I set out how the interviews were conducted. This includes a discussion on the selection of interviewees, the practicalities of the interviews, ethical considerations, and specific methodological limitations pertaining to the interviews. Thereafter, I set out the method in which I analyse interview data and the rounds of interviews conducted.

In the following three chapters, I present the empirical findings from the case study. Each chapter corresponds to one of the sub-research questions. In Chapter Five, I set out the way in/security is understood at the state level, interrogating the derivative aspects of in/security, and underlying assumptions and boundaries. In order to capture the main state entities with a mandate to respond to the armed conflict, while avoiding conceptualising the state as a unified actor – which as Chapter Two demonstrated, produces important limitations to discussing in/security – I refer to these entities as the macro-level. Based on policy and discourse analysis, in-depth interviews, and aided by visual illustrations through GIS-based maps, the chapter demonstrates how in/security understandings are founded on a number of traditional security assumptions around territorial control, institutional consolidation, and governance. I argue that in/security understandings translate into a spatial sequenced approach that is tied to the centre-periphery divide of the country, whose origins were discussed in Chapter Three. This is followed by a discussion on how in/security policy and discourse are framed in a way that (re)produces a specific state identity, and how in/security understandings assumes distinct boundaries between the legal and illegal, and the political and criminal. Yet, these boundaries are purposefully manipulated to enhance state legitimacy and the manoeuvrability of the armed forces, in a way which produces important in/security implications. In analysing in/security understandings at the macro-level, I interrogate how the state is represented in in/security related policy and discourse, where it is located, and intra-state power struggles.

In Chapter Six, I shift focus to the community level to conduct a similar inquiry around in/security understandings. The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I analyse how in/security is understood and articulated among rural farming communities in the
Magdalena Medio and Catatumbo regions, and how these communities navigate in/security dynamics. In the second part, I conduct a similar analysis into two urban conflict-affected communities in the towns of Barrancabermeja (Magdalena Medio) and Cúcuta (close proximity to Catatumbo). I term these different communities collectively as the micro-level. Based predominantly on in-depth interviews, the chapter illustrates the co-constitutive interplay between in/security understandings, context and identity, and how in/security was spoken of in relation to communities’ perceptions of the past, present and aspirational state. In/security understandings translated into specific enactments and responses, which are discussed in the chapter.

In Chapter Seven, I bring together the way in/security is understood at the macro- and micro-levels in order to demonstrate a continuation in the approach to in/security as the country transitions from the five decades of armed conflict into the post-conflict phase. The chapter begins with a discussion on how a number of truth claims are produced though the way in/security is understood at the macro-level, which are thereafter contrasted with local claims around these dynamics. Based on these findings, the second part of the chapter illustrates how there is a continuation in the approach to in/security in the changing context. To illustrate the continuation, I discuss the in/security implications of the strategic importance of the resource extraction sector in the Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio regions, and the contentious interplay between the sector and the armed conflict. Both Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio are strategic energy resource and mining regions, where resource extraction is identified as a main driver of post-conflict development. In the remaining part of the chapter, I discuss the way continuation is produced through multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in various macro-level strategies and which, effectively, manipulate the boundaries between the legal and illegal, the political and criminal. I discuss the implications of the contested meanings of in/security that emerged from the empirical findings, and how these implications potentially affect in/security dynamics in the official transitions into the post-conflict phase.

In the final chapter, Chapter Eight, I draw together the main empirical findings to discuss how the thesis answered the research questions, relating findings back to the literature discussed in Chapter Two. The thesis ends with a discussion on the wider academic relevance of the research and the contribution to knowledge provided by the thesis.
CHAPTER TWO: In/Security as Relational and Contextual

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I bring together the different literatures on security to illustrate the evolution of the field and identify where important gaps exist. Based on the above, an alternative framework for studying in/security is proposed. As such, the first part of the chapter begins with a discussion of traditional approaches to studying security. I use the term traditional approaches to include the realist and liberalist theories and their sub-variants. While I refer to these theories as traditional approaches, I recognise that they differ substantially in their explanations of security and are, at times, opposing. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to engage in a thorough discussion on this rich body of literature. The purpose of discussing these approaches is to draw out underlying assumptions that influence scholarly and policy debates, and which remain entrenched in state institutions, yet limit a deeper engagement with the contested meanings of security, as a dynamic concept that evolves over time and space and with important relational and contextual dimensions (see, for example, Abello Colak and Pearce, 2009; Booth, 1994; Krause and Williams, 1997; Shepherd, 2013).

Following a relatively brief discussion of the underlying assumptions and limitations of traditional approaches to security, the next section introduces alternative approaches to security, whose prominence increased towards the end of the last century. Scholars tracing the historic trajectory of security studies point to a deepening and broadening of security beginning around this time (Krause and Williams, 1997; Shepherd, 2013; Williams, 2013). Deepening essentially moves security beyond the state as the sole referent object, whereas broadening expands the analytical horizon beyond the military sector.

Many of the alternative approaches advancing a deepening and broadening of security come together under the umbrella term of critical security studies. The approaches include various so-called ‘schools’, such as the Welsh, Copenhagen, and Paris schools, and postcolonial, post-structural and feminist approaches. Each of the approaches has its own particularities, adopting its specific notion of security and, to a varying degree, its own methodology. Not surprisingly, when encompassing such broad spectra, critical security studies is a somewhat contentious label. Yet, taken together, the approaches provide important insights into the limitations and implications of traditional approaches, and in doing so, offer a deeper engagement with security. The following section discusses the main approaches of critical
security studies against how they contribute to a deeper understanding of the referent object, identity and contextual dimensions, and the implications of underlying assumptions. Despite the rich insights into multiple dimensions of security however, the literature suggests important areas where more research is needed. I end the first part of this chapter with a discussion on these gaps, concluding that there is a need for a thorough contextual and relational approach to the study of in/security.

In the second part of the chapter, I set out the proposed conceptual framework. The framework centres on capturing the relational aspects of in/security, and the way in/security understandings are derivative of context and identity. It thereby shifts the problem formulation from a focus on what in/security is, to how in/security is understood and produced. In doing so, the proposed framework centres on three interrelated aspects: 1) an approach to in/security as relational process, derivative of context and identity; 2) challenging of the hegemony of the state through placing asymmetrical levels of society in the same framework; and 3) the implications of contested meanings of in/security. The framework is set out as follows. I first set out how relational aspects of in/security can be captured. I thereafter draw out how the framework incorporates the way in/security is derivative of context and with ties to identity. This is followed by a discussion on the way I approach the state and local community levels, which have strong connotations to context and identity. The final part engages with the implications of different in/security understandings, which include the production of boundaries, representations of in/security and security arrangements. The chapter ends by setting out the research questions.

PART ONE: The Evolution of Security Studies

2.2 Traditional Security Studies

I use the term traditional approaches loosely to incorporate realist and liberalist approaches – and their sub-variants – which have dominated security studies over the last half century (Krause and Williams, 1997). While the differences between these approaches are significant, several underlying central assumptions can be discerned, which centre on: 1) security as an achievable good, or a commodity; 2) the centrality of the state; 3) the nature of state-societal relations; and 4) a normative understanding of boundaries and exclusions.

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1 Realist subvariants include neorealism, defensive structural realism, rise and fall realism, neoclassical realism. Subvariants of liberalism include ideational liberalism, commercial liberalism, republican liberalism. For a comprehensive overview of each sub-variant, see (Legro and Moravcsik, 1999; Moravcsik, 1997; Morgan, 2000).
These assumptions – as this thesis will demonstrate – continue to influence state security policy and practice, being deeply ingrained in state institutions and societal groups (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2009). Yet, these same limitations effectively limit a deeper engagement with the contested meanings of security as a dynamic concept, which varies over time and space. The following section provide a brief discussion on the central assumptions of the traditional approaches referred to above, before engaging in a thorough critique of these assumptions.

2.2.1 Security as a ‘Thing’

Realism and liberalism fundamentally conceptualise security as an achievable good, something which actors (states) can obtain (Rothschild, 1995; Wibben, 2016; Wolfers, 1952). In the words of Wolfers (1952), security is something we can have ‘in greater or lesser degree’ (pg.150). A key argument of realism is that, when security is conceptualised as an achievable good, priority falls on the accumulation of material resources to increase power and thereby ensure security. From a realist perspective, security becomes virtually synonymous with the accumulation of power. Power, in this respect, is a function of various components. Waltz, drawing from Morgenthau, defines five main components and which, together, constitute power: the size of population and territory; resource endowment; economic capabilities; military strength; and political stability and competence – of which military force is the final arbiter (Waltz, 1979). In essence, the more power actors – that is, the territorial sovereign states – can accumulate, the more secure they will be. According to the realist argument, a state is secure to the extent that its core values are not in danger of being sacrificed – or is able to maintain these values by victory of war, if challenged (Lippmann, 1943; Wolfers, 1952). Core values in the main refer to rank, territorial integrity, material possessions and special privileges (Wolfers, 1952). What this implies, Wolfers (1952) points out, is that ‘security rises and falls with the ability of a [state] to deter an attack, or to defeat it’ (pg.484). Or, indeed, as Morgan (2000) adds, to expand its status, territory and wealth. That is why realism places particular importance on interstate power struggles over material resources for understanding security (Legro and Moravcsik, 1999). As a result, the study of security from a realist perspective becomes principally concerned with the study of threat, use and control of military force, with state preferences determined by capabilities (Nye and Lynn-Jones, 1988).

The association between security and coercive strength sets the realist approaches apart from the liberalist approaches. The latter fundamentally equate security with democratic systems
and the principle of rule of law, universal respect for human rights and thestrength of international institutions in mitigating conflict (Navari, 2008). Threats are thus more readily defined in non-military terms and may encompass matters as breaches of human rights or obstacles to free trade (Morgan, 2000; Navari, 2008). These differences notwithstanding, as Morgan (2000) points out in a comparative study on realism and liberalism, security is principally about the survival and physical safety of the actors and their people. By extension, security for both realism and liberalism concerns the deliberate use of force by states or other powerful actors, although liberalism makes greater allowance for the potential constraint of force. Wendt (1999) goes as far as to argue that the main differences are reduced to the frequency with which states pursue relative rather than absolute gains. Theoretically, both approaches are committed to a positivist problem-solving mode of inquiry. What this means is that these approaches tend to take prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised – that is, states – as the given framework for action (Cox, 1981). Security – whether determined by state capabilities or preferences – is still something to be achieved and, echoing Wolfers, something that states can have to a greater or lesser degree.

2.2.2 State Centrality

The way security is conceptualised by the traditional approaches also denotes the centrality of the state. In order to discuss the assumption of state centrality, a few points clarifying how the approaches conceptualises the state are required. As Brown (2011) demonstrates in his essay on the evolution of the field of traditional security studies, there has been an almost automatic assumption that the referent object of security is the state as an actor. Resultantly, identity issues and other society-related aspects have generally been disregarded (Booth, 1994). Realist approaches in particular posit that the state is ultimately locatable (Krupa and Nugent, 2015). As such, the state can be located within the people and things that bare its official seal. Effectively, ‘the state arrives when these people and things arrive and disappear when they do’ (Krupa and Nugent 2015, pg.10). Yet, as Taliaferro et al. (2009) point out, what is meant by the state is underdeveloped in the security studies literature in general and in realism in particular. Max Weber’s classic definition is often a starting point: ‘a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory. Note that ‘territory’ is one of the characteristics of the state’ (Weber, quoted in Taliaferro et al. 2009, pg.25). Nevertheless, as Weber’s definition assumes complete territorial control and uncontested legitimacy, traditional approaches tend to adapt the above definition to include a set of institutions placed within a geographically
bounded territory that at least claims a monopoly on legitimate rule within that defined territory (Taliaferro et al., 2009).

Based on this limited conceptualisation of the state, the notion of state centrality is founded on an assumption of the state as the primary actor in world politics and the provider for its citizens. State centrality does not deny the importance of non-state actors. In particular, liberalism holds that states are, in many ways, constrained by non-state actors. However, states are still the primary medium through which the power of non-state actors are channelled into the international system (Wendt, 1999). State survival is thereby the preeminent value as it is assumed to equate to security for all citizens within that state – a correlation more sophisticatedly elaborated in liberalist approaches with the attention to state-societal relationships (discussed below). In this way, the state becomes the main referent object of security. This assumption is particularly forceful in the realist approaches and, as a result, the state is seen as the most important international actor (James, 1989). This claim, however, has itself never been fully justified (Krause and Williams, 1997).

2.2.3 State-Society Relations

The liberalist approaches better justify state centrality by taking into account state-society relations in explaining security. It should be noted however, that, in doing so, emphasis is maintained on the state. State-societal relations are mainly concerned with how security-related state behaviour in world politics is influenced by a process of capture and recapture, construction and reconstruction, by coalitions of social actors (Moravcsik, 1997). What this means is that security-related policy is shaped by the interests and power of individuals and groups who constantly pressure the central decision-makers to pursue policies consistent with their preferences. As in the realist approaches, liberalism emphasises actor preferences and their implications for security. Yet, while the actor in the realist approaches is the self-interested state and its interaction with other states, liberalism traces state preferences to individuals and groups (Morgan, 2000). Thus, as Moravcsik (1997a) asserts, ‘liberal theory rests on a ‘bottom-up’ view of politics in which the demands of individuals and societal groups are treated as analytically prior to politics’ (pg.517). In this way, domestic politics is given greater importance for explaining security than in realist theories, with their almost exclusive focus on the external environment (Morgan, 2000). An implication of the focus on

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2 Understood as involving the use, organisation and effect of power in conflicts over scarce resources (Jacoby, 2015). Or, as Lasswell (1936) succinctly summarises, ‘who gets what, when and how’.
state-societal relationships is that states, according to liberalist approaches, are more reliably devoted to peace, stability, and commercial progress, particularly if they enjoy political legitimacy and have a market-based economy. This is because citizen preferences generally focus on enhanced lives and livelihoods and harbour an aversion to disruption, war, and other threats to those values (Morgan, 2000). Citizens provide support to governments in exchange for institutions that tend to their preferences pertaining to the scope and nature of public goods provision (also referred to as the contract between the state and its citizens). Through this process, institutions derive their legitimacy (Legro and Moravcsik, 1999) and justify their central position as the referent object of security. These differences notwithstanding, as Wendt (1999) notes, the traditional approaches in the main share a rationalist conception, which is that the actors – be it the state or powerful individuals – act in self-interest, whereby questions about identity and interest formation are less important.

2.2.4 Boundaries and Exclusions

The assumptions around the state and its quest for achieving – and, by extent, providing – security, presuppose specific boundaries around the state actor and societal actors. In terms of the state as a security provider, realism and liberalism make security provision for societal actors dependent on citizenship (Krause and Williams, 1997). Security, therefore, involves judgement on which kinds of political subjects and which form of political participation will be recognised, authorised and embraced as valid. As Burke (2013a) argues, the traditional approaches tend to emphasis national identity (though not the process of identity formation) – and often a highly contested version of it – to this end. The nation state, with its citizens brought together around national identity, is secured against, and at the expense of, various internal and external others. By extension, those who stand outside the borders around citizens are threats, whether potential or actual. Those outside these borders might be citizens from other states or from within the state, but who fail for various reasons to conform to the national identity. As Krause et al. (1997) summarise, ‘[s]ecurity comes from being a citizen, and insecurity from citizens of other states’ (pg.43). In this way, citizenship becomes a powerful process of normative claims-making, and one that is central to the legitimisation of the state (Krupa and Nugent, 2015). The process thus produces a sharp set of boundaries delimiting the state, citizens, and non-citizens. It produces an ‘included us’ and an ‘excluded other’. These boundaries conversely become the precondition for action by the former against the latter, whose security might be violated as a necessity (Burke, 2013a).
The creation of boundaries can thereby have a detrimental impact on security through the exclusions generated. Exclusions have been framed in different, although almost always in binary, terms such as inside/outside, self/other, domination/oppression, or directly as inclusion/exclusion (Mutimer, 2009). The production of exclusions, and the implications thereof, are the main concerns for many of the alternative security studies approaches. Many of the insights on the production and implications of exclusions have been provided by scholars coming together under the umbrella term ‘critical security studies’. Critical security studies scholars have also forcefully illustrated the limitations of studying security that results from placing the state as the referent object of security, with the state conceptualised as an actor and security perceived as an achievable good. In doing so, they have broadened the concept of security to include other referent objects, which in turn has directed attention towards the associations between security and identity, context, and the implications of speaking and making authoritative claims about security.

2.3 Turning a Critical Gaze on Traditional Approaches

Alternative critical approaches to security have always existed alongside the dominance of realism and liberalism. Yet, their prominence increased towards the end of the last century, which coincided with geopolitical events that the traditional approaches could not predict or explain – most notably the end of the Cold War (Lebow, 1994; Wendt, 1999). Scholars tracing the historic trajectory of security studies point to an intrinsically interlinked deepening and broadening of security taking off around this time (Columba and Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Krause and Williams, 1997; Shepherd, 2013; Williams, 2013).

Deepening entails moving beyond the state as the sole referent object of security to incorporate other actors, which might range from institutions, to groups, and to human individuals. The broadening of security, on the other hand, relates to the expansion of the analytical horizon beyond the military sector to include, among others, environmental, economic, political and societal spheres (Columba and Vaughan-Williams, 2015). Many of the alternative approaches advancing a deepening and broadening of security come together under the umbrella term critical security studies. The approaches include the various so-called ‘schools’, such as the Welsh, Copenhagen, and Paris schools, and postcolonial, poststructural and feminist approaches. At times, the concept of human security is included in the critical security umbrella. Each of the approaches has its own particularities, adopting its specific notion of security and, to a variable degree, its own methodology. Not surprisingly, when encompassing such broad spectra, critical security studies is a somewhat contentious
The approaches are not neatly delineated, and there are disagreements between and among scholars of these approaches as to whether they should fall under the critical security studies umbrella, human security being a pertinent example. The reluctance towards considering human security as part of the critical security studies approaches hinges on the problem-solving orientation of human security. The concept of human security does not generally engage in ontological, epistemological or methodological debates – which, as Newman (2010) argues, have led to human security being dismissed as uncritical and unsophisticated by critical security scholars.

There is also a great diversity within the different approaches. For example, the feminist approaches include at times opposing sub-approaches, such as standpoint feminism, liberal feminism, as well as a post-structuralist approach to gender. Others have questioned the purpose of the ‘critical’ appendage, as critical security studies have expanded to the extent that it now includes all ‘non-traditional’ security studies (Hynek and Chandler, 2013). Yet, taken together, the approaches offer important insights into the limitations and implications of the traditional approaches. In doing so, they contribute valuable findings on the referent object, and the association between security, identity, and context, and the implications of these associations. The following section discusses the main approaches of critical security studies against how they contribute to a deeper understanding of the referent object, identity and context, while interrogating the implications thereof. It should be noted however that, while I discuss the above-mentioned associations separately and draw out how specific critical security studies approaches have contributed to a deeper understanding of each, the associations are intrinsically linked.

2.3.1 Critical Security Studies and the Referent Object

As argued above, a common trait across the critical security approaches has been a commitment to deepening the studies of security so as to move beyond the state as the sole referent object of security. In engaging with the referent object of security, two main lines of inquiry can be distinguished. The first is an emphasis on problematising dominant conceptualisations of the state; that is, moving away from a narrow conceptualisation of the state as a coherent actor or entity. By focusing on matters such as governmentality, and what this means for security practices, security is largely perceived as negatively involving illiberal state practices. The second line of inquiry focuses on placing the individual as the referent object, justified by moral and ethical arguments. In this respect, security has normative connotations.
Problematising dominant conceptualisations of the state has been a main contribution by scholars adhering to the *Paris School*, who have largely focused on the associations between security and governmentality, in particular governance practices and techniques, and the insecurity emanating therefrom. Drawing from insights by political philosophers such as Foucault and Bourdieu, Bigo and Tsoukala (2008) inquire into contemporary forms of governability of liberal regimes. A key argument put forward by Bigo and Tsoukala is that new security relations are being formed, centring on the notion of professionals of the management of “unease”. The management of unease relates to forms of global policing that have become particularly enhanced following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA and the subsequent war on terror (WoT). It entails the formation of police networks at the global level and the polarisation of military functions of combat (Bigo and Tsoukala, 2014). A plethora of security professionals (including government and non-governmental institutions, police, military and private enterprises) are engaged in cultivating fear, unease and insecurity. One way in which this happens is through the production of particular knowledge claims and truths based on numerical data and statistics, technologies of biometrics and sociological profiles of potential dangerous behaviour. Importantly, the so-called security professionals are not a coherent group operating under the same logics of experience or practice. On the contrary, they are often in competition with each other – within and between states – for defining whose security is important, and of different audiences liable to accept, or not, those definitions. From this perspective, Leander (2005, 2010) has inquired into the extent to which the rise of private military companies (PMC) signal changes in how, and by whom, legitimate security knowledge is produced. Leander argues that PMC are part of a process in which security is privatised in a way that helps to re-militarise understandings of security. Technical, military, managerial security discourses are increasingly legitimised over civil non-militarised components of security, their authority being partly grounded in the way they exercise states’ monopoly on violence. The Foucauldian concerns of the Paris School with the production of knowledge and truths, it should be noted, are also central to many post-structuralist approaches, as discussed in the section below on identity.

The Paris School, with its focus on security as a governance technique, where the state may be located, and the boundaries between and among ‘the state’ and ‘the citizen’, largely perceives security as negative and with strong ties to illiberal practices. Scholars from the *Copenhagen School* have also drawn attention to the way security results in exceptional practices that bestow security with negative connotations. While predominantly placing the state as the referent object of security, Buzan et al. (1998) illustrate how a discursive designation of security sets in motion a particular type of emergency politics which often
have negative implications. A key conclusion made by Buzan et al. is that security is thereby not necessarily something good. Instead, governments/state officials should aim for desecuritisation. The framework of analysis proposed by Buzan et al. is applicable to a wide range of issues beyond military security issues, including environmental, economic, political, and societal issues, under certain circumstances. Based on Buzan’s securitisation framework, scholars have demonstrated how matters such as HIV/AIDS (Elbe, 2006), migration (Huysmans, 2000), and gender and ex-combatants (MacKenzie, 2009) have become securitised, with the negative implications thereto. Although largely state-centred, the Copenhagen School also brought the notion of societal identity to the forefront of security studies. Societal security, as conceptualised by Buzan (1991), concerns the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions. Society can, thus, be threatened and can replace the state as a referent object.

The Paris and Copenhagen schools have largely engaged with the broadening of security through problematising the state, or interrogating how matters become matters of security through the practices of state officials. The second line of inquiry, on the other hand, focuses on placing the individual as the referent of security. In doing so, the approaches have largely adopted a normative approach to security. To this end, the concept of human security forcefully emphasises the moral and ethical responsibility to reorient security around the individual. One of the main contributions of human security scholars has been the insight into how the greatest threats to security when the individual is the referent object comes from internal conflict, disease, hunger, environmental contamination, criminal violence – or, importantly, from their own state itself (Newman, 2010). Encompassing such a wide range of threats, human security is often summarised as ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’ (UNDP, 1994). It reverses the traditional security equation, where sovereignty and legitimacy rest upon territorial control and in which the role of citizens is to support this system, to that of the state and state sovereignty serving to support the people from which it (in theory) draws its legitimacy (Newman, 2010). In this way, human security has been presented as an integral component towards establishing a more just and humane global order (Grayson, 2010).

Scholars from the Welsh School also forcefully proclaim to put individuals – in particular, ‘the poor, the disadvantaged, the voiceless, the unrepresented, the powerless’ (Bellamy and Williams 2007, pg.7) – rather than states as the main referent object of security (Booth,

3 The securitization framework essentially illustrates the way in which an issue is declared a security threat, which in turn set in motion exceptional security practices.
In a far-reaching critique against the state referent object of traditional security studies, Booth drew forceful parallels between security, threats and emancipation (Booth, 1991). Security, according to Booth, means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people from the physical and human threats and constraints which prevent them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do. In this way, emancipation – as argued by scholars from the Welsh School – equates to security. Krause and Williams (1997), however, draw out two important implications as a result of shifting the referent object from the state to the individual, which essentially risk replicating the difficulties such shift seeks to overcome. Either individuals must be regarded as abstract actors – which is ungrounded in any social or historical context – or as an identity collective. If individuals are to be regarded as abstract actors, then questions arise around why and in what ways individuals are responsible for each other’s security and how responsibilities are institutionally expressed. This would lead to an almost inevitable return to a contract theory of the state. If, instead, one places a collective identity as the security referent (see, for example, Posen’s (1993) work on ethnic conflict), then the formation of (group) identity needs to be thoroughly theorised. Failure to do so risks falling into the realist objective trap, where group identity is merely replacing the state as the referent, replicating the exclusionary structures. The way this might happen can be illustrated by Buzan’s concept of societal security, with its focus on dominant societal groups that can be treated as a collective unit in a way that parallels the state. This effectively means large-scale collective identities along the lines of religion or ethnicity. Being the referent object of security, threats are defined as those which threaten the existence of this group’s identity. Moreover, as McSweeney (1999) points out, defining society in terms of identity effectively defines society as having a single identity, similar to that of the national identity emphasised in realism. Defining societal security as the defence of this identity risks fostering and legitimising intolerance and exacerbating securitising dynamics between identity groups. The association between security and identity which emerges from the above approaches is the second main contribution by critical security studies.

2.3.2 Critical Security Studies, Discourse and Identity

Broadening the study of security to incorporate referent objects other than that of the state brings to light the associations between security and identity as a relational process. The critical security studies approaches inquire into these associations to a varying extent. As with the referent object, two lines of inquiry are distinguished. One focuses on the role of
security in constructing a state identity, while the other focuses on the association between individual or group identities and security.

The associations between security and the construction of identity have been a main focus of scholars from post-structuralist approaches. Emphasising the way security is represented, drawing on discourse theory, scholars have brought to the forefront the politics of language, interpretation and representation in the construction of interrelated notions of danger, threat and identity (Burke, 2013a). The associations between security and identity have been argued along a Foucauldian perspective, which holds that discourses are much more than mere language. Rather, discourses should be understood as a series of practices, representations and interpretations through which different regimes of truth and knowledge are reproduced and authorised (Columba and Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Montesinos Coleman and Rosenow, 2016). Claims of truth, moreover, are always permeated by power struggles (Burke, 2013a). Continuing the Foucauldian line of argument, Burke holds that truth is a product of a dynamic clash of social forces and interests, in which no knowledge or truths are neutral. Security discourses are of particular relevance, as security ‘is one of the most powerful signifiers in politics, meaning that it ‘stands in for’ a set of very powerful ideas: it is rich with meaning, and these meanings enable powerful actors and institutions /…/ to amass resources, control agendas, [and] use violence’ (Burke 2013a, pg.78). Security discourses and practices, Burke continues, are not governed by rational concern for good outcomes. Instead, they are the product of struggles over power exercised in the name of security. As such, security threats and insecurities should not be treated as simply objects to be studied, but rather as the product of social and political practices (Aradau et al., 2015). Findings by Bigo and Tsoukala (2008) and Leander (2010), as discussed above, empirically illustrate such claims, and also serve to illustrate how the various approaches under the critical security studies umbrella are not neatly delineated.

From this position, David Campbell illustrates how security discourses are intrinsically linked to the construction of state identity. In his seminal book Writing Security, Campbell (1998) illustrates how difference, danger and otherness – which tend to be articulated in state foreign and/or security policies – form a fundamental part in constructing state identities. Underpinning Campbell’s argument is the insight that identity is not fixed by nature, but is constituted in relation to difference. However, difference – which is not fixed by nature – is constituted in relation to identity. The identities of states, Campbell argues, are never given, but (re)produced in relation to other states. Both identity and security are thus performatively constituted; that is, they are always in the process of being enacted rather than being a given
‘thing’. Security discourses are of particular relevance, as it is in the promise of security that the state is legitimised. Paradoxically, the inability of the state to succeed in its security project is the guarantor of the state’s continued success as a compelling identity (Campbell, 1998).

Tying in with the post-structuralist attention to discourse and meaning, scholars from feminist approaches have interrogated similar identity constructions, but relating to individuals or community groupings. Feminist scholars have been at the forefront of interrogating the way gendered identities relate to security. As Spike Petersen argues, narratives on security are also always narratives of identity (Peterson, 1992). Empirically illustrating such claim, Maria Stern’s account on security narratives, as expressed by Mayan women in Guatemala, emphasises the way security is derived from – and re/constructs – identity (Stern, 2005). Drawing on the writings of Campbell (1998), she illustrates how identity produces boundaries that demark an ‘inside’ from an ‘outside’, a ‘self’ from an ‘other’, a ‘domestic’ from a ‘foreign’, which are paramount for understanding security. Through the narratives of Mayan women, a strong sense of ‘we’ emerged (for example, related to being close to ‘Mother Earth’, speaking the Mayan languages, wearing Mayan clothes, and being sacrificing and reproductive). The way identity is constituted, Stern argues in her account of Mayan security narratives, can be seen as an attempt to determine, name and represent a subject, offering an image, a name of a self in language. Not only will understandings differ between representatives, but they will also vary over time and space. Different understandings will generate different ways of negotiating security. Emphasising gender aspects in a different way, Cynthia Enloe has illustrated how security practices are contingent upon entrenched gender dynamics, by interrogating the relationship between women and nationalism (Enloe, 2014). Focusing on the everyday lives of women, Enloe traces how the multi-layered politics of security, militarism and crisis depend on the presence of women, yet render women’s experiences invisible.

Yet, as most of the above-mentioned scholars argue, individuals will always negotiate overlapping identities, which come to play at different times and in different contexts (Columba and Vaughan-Williams, 2015). This, in turn, necessitates, as Berents (2015) and (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016) point out, locating and interrogating security as the lived experience – or the everyday – of individuals. Security thereby, have important contextual dimensions.
2.3.3 Critical security Studies and Context

The relationship between security and identity, as set out above, points to the importance of context. Scholars have engaged with context either with a focus on sub-national local contexts, or from a wider global approach. Both lines of inquiry, however, have rought to the forefront contexts that are marginalised in dominant security accounts. Marginalisation, however, as D’Costa (2006) elaborates upon, is a much-contested concept, though it is often associated with economic and political weakness or powerlessness. D’Costa defines marginalisation as a social status linked to particular identities or social groups with links to practices of exclusion and discrimination. However, as Enloe (1996) notes, the margins cannot exist without someone occupying the centre, and these processes are not simply inherent by-products of an exercise of power. Thus, individuals – as organised in collective identity communities – on the margins of society must be discussed in relation to power structures at the centre. On this aspect, feminist perspectives offer important insights. Scholars, including Ackerly et al. (2006), Sylvester (1994), and Berents (2015), have illustrated how these approaches begin at the margins, but interrogate those who occupy the centres and the exercise of power that continues the exclusions of communities at the margins. The margins are also captured through an emphasis on ‘the everyday life’, which seeks to tie the struggles of people and societal groups into macro-structural forces and dynamics (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016). The focus on the margin or the ‘everyday’ in this way, also points to relational dimensions of security. Emphasising the relational aspects of security and context, Hills’ (2009) study on post-war Iraq illustrates how the notion of security can accommodate multiple interpretations. Turning attention to the security arrangements at different levels of society, from local religious communities to international forces operating in the cities, Hills concludes that security cannot be understood in isolation from the political context in which it is to be employed.

The above-mentioned studies have focused on the importance of specific local contexts for understanding security and as a way of critiquing the traditional approaches. At a wider level, scholars have also engaged with context by drawing out the Eurocentric underpinnings of the traditional approaches and their subsequent failure to account for security dynamics of the majority of states. Much of this critique has been taken forward by scholars from a postcolonial perspective, with their concern about the practice of applying particular universals without reflecting on those particularities and the exclusions they produce (Bilgin, 2015). The power of the traditional approaches to explain state behaviour around security,
Ayoob (2002) argues, is thereby vastly reduced when applied to non-Western contexts. The focus of the traditional approaches on interstate security relations, for example, fails to recognise how postcolonial states in the Cold War period effectively ‘redefined the very notion of the security dilemma by making it primarily a domestic rather than an interstate phenomenon’ (pg.35). Moreover, the main claims around the interdependence of states are irrelevant as far as the majority of states are concerned. Not only do they ignore that fact that Third World countries (as Ayoob terms non-Western countries) experience relationships of dependence with the West, but they also fail to capture the reality of interstate relationships among Third World countries themselves. The inability of the traditional approaches ‘to address these realities, let alone capture them, results in their incapacity to explain the origins of most conflicts in the international system’ (Ayoob, 2002, pg.38). To such insights, Barkawi and Laffey (2006) add that the traditional approaches unproblematically derive their core categories and assumptions from a particular understanding of European experiences. A postcolonial reading of the Cuban missile crisis illustrates the point. Barkawi and Laffey (2006) harshly critique dominant accounts of the Cuban missile crisis, which overwhelmingly frames the crisis as an affair of the two superpowers, namely the USA and the Soviet Union. Cuba is depicted as either a client state of the Soviet Union or merely a geographical location of dispute between the two superpowers. Such framing, however, overlooks important dynamics and variables by failing to recognise the agency of Cuban authorities. Without specific Cuban motivations, Barkawi and Laffey argue, ‘it is unlikely that there would have been a crisis’ (pg.337). The failure to recognise the role that Cuban authorities played in the crisis, they argue, serves to reproduce Eurocentric assumptions that agency only resides in the great powers.

As the above three sections have demonstrated, critical security studies have made important contributions to demonstrating the necessity to move beyond the state as the sole referent object of security, while demonstrating interrelations between security, identity and context. The way these aspects are intrinsically interlinked, and the implications thereof, point to what scholars have termed the politicisation of security.

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4 The ‘West’ as incorporating Western Europe, North America, Japan and the British settler societies of Oceania (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006).
2.3.4 Critical Security Studies and the Politicisation of Security

The politicisation of security concerns the analysis of assumptions, implications and practices through which security is negotiated (Nunes, 2012). This entails questions around what security does politically, reflecting on the role of representations of security in encouraging sets of political responses, legitimating the roles of particular actors in particular ways (Browning and McDonald, 2013). In a similar vein, Bigo (2008) argues that ‘[p]oliticisation comes from the dispute about the boundaries of security’ (pg.125). What this means is that security is a process of (in)securitisation, in which powerful actors generate acceptance for their activities under a claim that they provide security – even if it implies the use of violence. Or as Aradau et al., (2015) urge, to problematise ‘the way in which things come to be viewed as security problems’ (pg. 6). Key questions to ask, therefore, are who is doing the securitising moves (that is, proclaiming something to be a threat), under what conditions, towards whom, and with what consequences (Columba and Vaughan-Williams, 2015).

The politicisation of security can be demonstrated by the formation of a victim identity in the context of an armed conflict and the implications thereof, which furthermore links the three dimensions discussed above (referent object, identity and context). In an armed conflict context, grievances and trauma are common foundations for collective identity construction (Jacoby, 2015). In a boundary generating performance (Campbell, 1998), negative group experience, as argued by Jacoby, commonly unifies a group against potential others. In this process, common identity categories that emerge are that of the victim and the perpetrator. There are important implications, however, around framing identities in such terms of oppression, as it suggests passivity (Denov and Gervais, 2007), and a lack of voice and agency (Jacoby, 2015). Furthermore, the construction of a victim identity risks playing into ‘victim blaming’ narratives (Williams, 1984), which risk having a detrimental impact on the security of victims. Hence, the construction of a victim identity also risks the production of exclusions and othering. However, as Bar-Tal et al. (2009) contend, the self-assigned status of the victim does not necessarily indicate weakness (emphasis added). To this end, Jeffery and Candea (2006) show how a victimhood identity creates space for a specific kind of politics. Victimhood is deeply political, they argue. Nevertheless, it makes a claim for a non-political space in which being recognised as a non-agentive victimised community encourages external support for political and legal campaigns for compensation and rights. Victimhood can, therefore, have a positive impact on security through its ability to access scarce resources, political influence and legitimacy (Jacoby, 2015). This, however, risks
feeding into victim blaming narratives. Indeed, Jeffery et al. (2006) caution that analysing the contradictions in certain victim positionalities can amount to exactly the kind of delegitimisation that the perpetrator (of the victimising act) might wish to see enacted. What the example of the formation of a victim identity in a conflict context demonstrates is that security, as opposed to being a thing, is made – that is, actors enact different frames (Wibben, 2008), in a process embedded in power constellations (Hönke and Muller, 2012) and which has important implications.

So far, this chapter has set out the dominant traits of the traditional approaches to security. This was followed by a critique of these approaches, largely centred around the limited understanding of security that the traditional approaches offer. This critique was interwoven with key insights to security offered by the approaches coming together under the critical security studies umbrella. Four main dimensions of security that the critical security studies centre on were discussed: the referent object, identity, context, and the politicisation of security. The next section will discuss important shortcomings of the critical security approaches, which I seek to address in the proposed framework.

2.4 Critiquing the Critical Security Approaches

The previous sections illustrated how challenging the dominant conceptualisations of the state, and its centrality as the referent object of security, is a main concern of many of the critical security studies approaches. Yet, despite the claim to move beyond the state as the main referent object of security, much of the literature continues to privilege analysis of state/elites over the political subject of threat and security (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006; Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016; Vaughan-Williams and Stevens, 2016; Wibben, 2016). Essentially, as McDonald (2008) points out, the focus on articulations of those deemed institutionally legitimate to speak on behalf of a particular collective usually results in a focus on the state. This line of critique has been levied in particular against the Copenhagen School’s securitisation theory. Although the Copenhagen School moves away from the traditional focus on the state as the referent object – as illustrated through the concept of societal security – it prioritises the discourse of dominant actors while excluding other forms of representations (Mcdonald, 2008). For its part, the Welsh School’s emphasis on the individual through the process of emancipation places states – in particular, Western states – and international institutions as the agency of emancipation (Bilgin, 2015; Hynek and Chandler, 2013). Moreover, emancipation takes on a universalist character, which is inappropriate to non-Western security contexts (Ayoob, 1997; Roberts, 2017). Tying in with
this critique, from a post-structuralist viewpoint, emancipation can be a potentially dangerous meta-narrative, providing an overarching explanation of the world (Columba and Vaughan-Williams, 2015). The way emancipation has been theorised for providing a universal explanation of what security is, thus, fails to thoroughly engage with diverse local contexts.

As a result, a number of scholars have argued that narratives from the margins are often missing from dominant accounts of security, with the effect that little is known of how security is understood and experienced in such settings (Vaughan-Williams and Stevens, 2016; Wibben, 2016). Effectively, the analysis of elites over the political subjects of threat and security overlooks the contexts in which a threat image is identified (Eriksson, 2001), or the everyday micro-practices of security (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016). The failure to engage with the way in which security is understood in specific contexts is a critique also levied against securitisation theory. As argued by McDonald (2008), the framework is unable to account for how security and threats are experienced among the most vulnerable in global politics. For example, Hansen (2000) has drawn attention specifically to how the securitisation framework not only neglects the experiences of women, but also serves to further marginalise women’s voices. Drawing on the example of honour killings, Hansen concludes that ‘if security is a speech act, then it is simultaneously deeply implicated in the production of silence’. This is because all speech seeks to project meaning, to define a particular situation and the subjects within it. The successful speech act implies the exclusion of other possible constructions of meanings. Securitisation thereby enacts a sharp distinction between the exceptional and the banal, the political and the everyday, implying an elitist vision of security (Huysmans, 2011).

Scholars working within the Paris School approach have better circumvented this slippage towards an elitist orientation by engaging with cultural contexts ignored by securitisation theory (Wibben, 2016). Yet, as Vaughan-Williams and Stevens (2016) contend, while the Paris School has made a valuable contribution through the problematising of a range of actors involved in (in)securitising moves, doing so creates arbitrary boundaries around the cultural contexts that delimit them and around certain types of political subjects. Analysis then falls upon the political subjects making the (in)securitising moves rather than exploring these dynamics from the embodied perspective of the subjects of such (in)securitising moves. Such concerns are echoed by Crawford and Hutchinson (2016), who argue that ‘while much has been said about security discourses and techniques, far less has been said of the ways in which practical security measures are experienced, felt and managed by
individuals and groups’ (pg.1185). While scholars from feminist approaches, such as Enloe and Stern referred to above, have indeed explored security from such an embodied perspective, which Vaughan-Williams et. al. hold is lacking, questions remain regarding how a focus on the marginalised may produce its own arbitrary boundaries and, thereby, exclusions.

Mutimer (2009) draws attention to the fact that critical scholars, who do focus on the excluded or the oppressed, generate their own exclusions in the way that they identify ‘those deserving /…/ whom it is their theory is for’ (pg.20). Such critique is echoed also by Randazzo (2016), who argues that critical scholars turn to ‘the local’ – in this case, referring to a range of locally based agencies present within a conflict and post-conflict environment (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013) - requires a form of identity-making by scholars where certain forms of agency are chosen over others. Choosing to include certain narratives and exclude others is a profoundly political act (Daphna-Tekoah and Harel-Shalev, 2017). Both Mutimer and Randazzo conclude, however, that it is all but impossible not to generate exclusions and, instead, urge scholars to critically reflect upon these. The importance of such reflection is emphasised by Montesinos Coleman and Rosenow, (2016), who point out that ‘even what emerges “from below” may bolster the power relations it seeks to undermine (pg.203). Others, such as Barkawi and Laffey (2006), encourage relational thinking, placing the weak/excluded/marginalised and the strong/included/elite in a common analytical framework, as a defence against the production of exclusions. On the other hand, the approach towards circumventing exclusions taken by Hönke and Muller (2012), referring to Mbembe and Nuall (2004), argue that we must resist academic research that treats the ‘other’, the ‘failed’ (and, thus, the ‘excluded’) as something apart from the world. Instead, we must reinscribe their knowledge, experiences and practices into the world, thus depicting them as normal and relevant parts of the human experience, not an exotic exception.

Nevertheless, while much of the above critique centres on the way the critical approaches fail to move away from universalising and ultimately a state-centred analysis, Daphna-Tekoah and Harel-Shalev (2017) counter this critique by calling for a greater focus on the state – or, more specifically, certain sectors of the state. Daphna-Tekoah and Harel-Shalev argue that the focus on ‘underdog actors and dominated populations’ (pg.256) neglects research on the narratives of violent state actors. Illustrating the point, they draw attention to the way security is understood by female soldiers of the Israeli Defence Force and how these narratives defy not only the notion of a unified state actor, but also unified state sub-sectors such as the army. Moreover, these narratives point to the blurred boundaries between
the state and the civilian population. Thus, while urging a widening of security studies to engage also with the narratives of violent state actors, such engagement must be accompanied by a thorough problematisation of the state. Such arguments tie in with those of Mandelbaum et al. (2016), Wibben (2016), and Nunes (2012), who hold that the relational aspects of security – incorporating a variety of narratives – is underexplored.

What stands out from these arguments is that there is a need for a thorough contextual and relational approach to the study of security. There is a need for much more rigorous attention towards the local everyday complexities of understanding and practising security. Such attention to the local must not, however, be at the exclusion of the state level or other more dominant narratives. Instead, the multiplicity of narratives needs to be understood in relation to each other (Browning and McDonald, 2013; Hönke and Muller, 2012; Vaughan-Williams and Stevens, 2016; Wibben, 2016). An approach that places what is often expressed in binary terms, such as elite/margin, included/excluded, strong/weak, in the same analytical framework in order to produce a relational account of security, is largely missing.

PART TWO: The Research Framework and Research Questions

2.5 The Research Framework

The proposed framework for capturing the relational and contextual dimensions of in/security shifts the problem formulation from a focus on what security is, to how security is understood and practiced. In my framework, I speak of in/security, denoting its relational dimension (discussed ahead). The shift from what security is, to how it is understood, provides an alternative means for discussing in/security, circumventing to a certain extent the (un)intended generation of exclusions. As argued above, the production of exclusions in theories, discourses and practices on and around in/security is largely unavoidable (Mutimer et al., 2013). Indeed, it is a well-known paradox that security for some leads to insecurity of others – derived from the so-called security dilemma as conceptualised by Hertz (1950), Butterfield (1951), and Jervis (1976). It is, therefore, possible to argue that an approach to in/security, which places emphasis on determining security for whom and from what (indeed, fundamental questions for most scholarship on in/security (Booth, 2013; Ciută, 2009; Mutimer, 2009)), will inevitably generate exclusions and binaries. Any in/security discourse that establishes the events that, and the actors whom, we should fear, necessarily establishes the ‘other’ and ‘that to be feared’ (Echavarria, 2010). An implication of the generation of exclusions, as Burke (2013a) points out, is that the security of the ‘excluded’ might be violated as a necessity for the security of the ‘included’ (see 2.2.4). By moving
away from a focus on security for whom from what, to approaching the study of in/security through a focus on the relational and contextual aspects, this rethinks the way the question is posed. It opens up the space for understanding in/security from a wider range of perspectives, though without engaging in what Baldwin (1997) refers to as ‘a mixture of normative arguments about which values of which people or groups of people [or states] should be protected, and empirical arguments as to the nature and magnitude of threats to those values’. It moves away from a traditional focus on the state as the referent object of security, to an approach where multiple understandings of in/security are related to each other. Buzan (1991) states that a concept of security that fails to specify a referent object makes little sense. This might be true if in/security is approached as an achievable thing, which is to be obtained by someone for some purpose. By approaching in/security as a relational and derivative process, the traditional focus on who is to be secured from what threats (Baldwin, 1997; Rothschild, 1995) gives way to a focus on how in/security is understood by different people/communities in different contexts, and how they relate to each other.

In the proposed framework, I centre on three closely interrelated aspects: 1) an approach to in/security as a relational process, derivative of context with ties to identity; 2) challenging of the hegemony of the state through placing asymmetrical levels of society in the same framework; and 3) the implications of different and/or contested understandings of in/security. The framework is set out as follows. I first discuss how relational aspects of in/security can be captured. I then draw out how the framework incorporates the way in/security is derivative of context and its ties to identity. This is followed by a discussion on the way I approach the asymmetrical levels of society through a focus on the state- and marginalised community levels. The final part engages with the implications of different in/security understandings, which include the production of boundaries, representations of in/security and in/security arrangements.

2.5.1 The Relational and Contextual Dimensions of In/security

The approach I take to inquiry into in/security understandings is that security in itself has no meaning (Krause and Williams, 1997) and, thus, cannot exist in isolation. Instead, security is always defined in relation to something or someone (Hills, 2009). At the most basic level, as Dillon (1996) points out, we can never think of security without insecurity. Security and insecurity, therefore, are not opposites, but rather co-constitutive – two concepts dynamically defining one another (Echavarria, 2010). For this reason, in moving away from
engaging with security and insecurity as two opposites that exist in isolation, the framework focuses on inquiries into \textit{in/security}, denoting this relational and co-constitutive dimension.

In order to capture the relational aspects of in/security, I largely draw upon the feminist approaches to security, as well as insights offered by peace study scholars working on hybridity. Feminist approaches, as indicated above, have provided important contributions towards the way security is relational and co-constitutive. Of particular importance for the proposed framework is the insights into the margins, and how the margins can only be understood in relation to the centre from where the power is exercised that generates and maintains exclusions. While the margin is a much-contested concept, I take a cue from Stern (2006), who approaches the margins as the various contexts that make up the life of individuals who consider themselves marginalised. In terms of the marginalised, I borrow from D’Costa (2006), who links marginalisation to social status, which is tied to identities or social groups. Marginalisation, D’Costa argues, is linked to exclusion and discrimination that is exercised by states or other social groups over which marginalised groups have little or no control. Because of their exclusion, several forms of discrimination occur, including limited access to education, social welfare and resources. To this understanding of the margin and the marginalised, it is pertinent to include also Leonard’s (1984) description of the marginalised as outside the major area of capitalist productive and reproductive activity. Importantly, Leonard distinguishes between involuntary and voluntary marginalisation, the latter exemplified by certain communes or artists. In my framework, I engage with involuntary marginalisation and, in doing so, I also inquire into the potentially fluid boundaries between the two.

The margin can also be understood as particular aspects of the local or the everyday. Its relationship with the centre concurs in many ways with the concept of hybridity taken forward by peace studies scholars. Hybridity in this respect seeks to capture the way peace (and, indeed, in/security) in societies emerging from violent conflict tends to be a hybrid between the external and the local (Mac Ginty, 2010). At all levels, ranging from the local to the international, there are subjects exercising their agency for peace or against it (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013). Important insights can be applied to the relational and contextual approach to in/security. In particular, hybridity helps to move away from the binary combinations persistent in the study of in/security. As Mac Ginty (2010) points out, such binary combination may simplify comprehension, but they risk projecting a compartmentalised and oversimplified notion of human societies. Binaries risk reinforcing hegemonised meanings and Western perspectives. Instead, Mac Ginty argues, ‘it is useful to
think of entities (individuals, communities, institutions) as being hybridized from the outset’ (pg.398). What this means for the framework is that the actors at the margin and the centre (discussed below) are approached as composites from various historic, social, and political processes of negotiation and adaptation.

The focus on the margins and the centre in a relational fashion points to in/security as a derivative of context and with ties to identity. The derivative notion of in/security ties in with many of the critical security studies approaches, meaning that how we understand in/security derives from the contexts we navigate and the identities we construct (Campbell, 1998; Columba and Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Krause and Williams, 1997; Nunes, 2012). As such, there is no universal understanding of in/security or a priori notion of what it means to be secure. Rather, understandings of in/security stem from the experiences of in/security of what Nunes (2012), referring to Wyn Jones, calls ‘real people in real places’ (pg.351).

The framework captures these derivative aspects through an engagement with contextual factors and identity constructions.

In this thesis, the main overarching context is conflict-affected marginalised regions in Colombia. In engaging with contextual factors, I add to the above insights by borrowing from scholars writing from a ‘critical geopolitics’ perspective and which challenge how contexts are constructed to justify violence (Dalby, 2010). While context has strong links to territory, indeed a main concept in the traditional approaches (2.2), it goes beyond ‘the militaristic mappings of global space’ (Dalby 2010, pg.281). Mabel Berezin – referred to in Paasi (2009) – defines four main dimensions of territory: social, political, cultural and cognitive. The social dimension relates to the way people inhabit territory collectively, whereas its political dimension refers to how groups struggle to establish, maintain and, at times, enlarge their space. Its cultural dimension centres on how collective memories are tied to territory and how territory is a medium for ideological struggles. Finally, territory has a cognitive dimension as ‘it has a capacity to subjectify cultural, political and social borders and place itself at the core of both public and private identity projects’ (Paasi, 2009, pg.216). Paasi points out that the importance of these four dimensions vary and they are often contested. As such, reflection upon and an understanding of their meanings require an analysis of the historically contingent societal processes involved in the production and reproduction of territoriality. What this means for the framework is that the inquiry into how in/security is understood, and the implications thereof, requires attention to the social, political, cultural and cognitive contexts in which the specific subject of study – be it the individual, communities or the state – navigate.
Engaging with contextual factors also entails engaging with identity factors. Not only is identity an important dimension of territorially, as argued above, but recalling Peterson (1992) narratives of security are also always narratives of identity. The framework, therefore, pays attention to the identities constructed in relation to in/security understandings. Taking a cue from McSweeney (1996), identity is not a fact of society and, as such, in the framework, identity categories are not decided upon a priory. Rather than assuming that identity is the unique value vulnerable to threat, the problem formulation is centred on in/security concerns of people who comprise society in a specific context. Where identity becomes relevant, the process of identity formation is deconstructed to establish, among others, the extent to which a particular identity category is derivative of in/security understandings, or how in/security understandings are derivative of a particular identity category. This approach to identity suggests, therefore, that the referent objects included in the study are largely determined by the selected research context.

The way the framework emphasises contextual and relational dimensions opens up space for including in/security narratives from a variety of levels, from the state level to the local level. It allows for a discussion of these narratives in relation to each other and in relation to local context. In this thesis, I inquire into asymmetrical levels of society by focusing on in/security understandings by actors at the state level, and marginalised communities at the local level. In my research, I set out to inquire how in/security is understood at these two asymmetrical levels of society in relation to each other, and to discuss the implications of contested meanings of security between and within these levels. Doing so requires problematising both the state and community levels. This entails questioning the dominant position and conceptions of the state on the one hand, as well as a simultaneous, reflective inquiry into the political subject of threat and security on the other.

2.5.2 Asymmetrical Levels

It has been argued that placing the state as the referent object of security produces a limited understanding of in/security, and is founded upon problematic assumptions of the state as an actor or fixed entity. Yet, as also illustrated above, these problems are not circumvented by simply replacing the state with the individual. The approach I take in this framework is a focus on asymmetrical levels of society, rather than a specific referent object. I inquire into understandings of in/security at the state and community levels in relation to one another. The following sections set out how I approach these two levels.
In order to avoid falling back on the dominant state centrality – which, as seen, has been the unintentional consequence of many of the critical security approaches – I move away from a conception of the state as an actor, fixed entity or institutional assemblage. Instead, I take forward the notion of the state idea. Doing so, as the following section seeks to demonstrate, brings to the foreground how invocations of ‘the state’ – commonplace in national security discourse and practice – are founded on and generate a particular understanding of in/security. These understandings translate into specific representations and subsequent enactments (Huysmans, 2011) around security. It should be noted, that the focus on the state idea as opposed to the state actor is intended as an analytical tool and not a contribution to the rich debate on (re)conceptualising the state.

In moving away from conceptualising the state as an actor, fixed entity or institutional assemblage, I take a cue from scholars such as Abrams (1988), Mitchell (1991), Campbell (1998), and Krupa and Nugent (2015). The first thing to point out, however, is that to question the concept of the state is not to deny the existence of a state system, consisting of institutions and government. Instead, what is argued here is that the state has no agency per se, but is an idea referred to in order to authorise (in the name of the state) and enact (by those thereby authorised) (Hay, 2014). As Abrams argues in a compelling fashion, conceiving the state as an idea brings to light how the invocation of the state is, in fact, a bid to elicit support or tolerance, specifically of the insupportable and intolerable. The institutions of the state system are the principal objects of that task, in particular through their coercive functions. Abrams uses the examples of armies, prisons and deportation centres as some examples of how the idea of the state and the invocation of this idea silences protest, excuses forces and convinces people that the fate of those falling victim to such practices is just and necessary. Thus, agency at the state level lies with the officials of the state system, who invoke reference to the state to justify security-related practice. As argued above, security discourses are of particular relevance, as it is in the promise of security that the state is legitimised (Campbell, 1998).

The way the state is invoked to legitimise the illegitimate, or solicit support for the insupportable, can be demonstrated by a reading of national security policy. I base my arguments on an analysis by Echavarria (2010) of the Democratic Security Policy (DSP), implemented in Colombia by the Uribe administration. While Echavarria’s work focuses on how security policies construct political identities, her analysis is pertinent also for
demonstrating how the idea of the state is elicited to silence protest and excuse force. The DSP was developed at a time when conflict-related violence in Colombia peaked. On the one hand, by referring to the weak state of the past, President Uribe sought to encourage the nation to believe that only an open war waged by the armed forces and the citizenry could end the terrorist threat. The weakness of the state in the past had created an enabling environment for IAGs, leading to the extreme levels of violence. As a result, the DSP was oriented towards state territorial consolidation, to be achieved principally through establishing military superiority of the state forces over that of the guerrillas. On the other hand, through evoking the idea of a strong state, Uribe justified the need for an authoritarian state. In the words of Uribe, only when security is achieved would people enjoy their democratic freedoms. Military power was increased at the expense of civilian power. The impact of the DSP led to severe criticism of serious abuses of power committed by the state security forces. Yet, scrutinising and criticising the aims and methods of government policy was severely restricted. Opposing state security efforts became equated with supporting the enemy. The way reference to the weak state justified repressive security measures through the DSP, ties in with arguments taken forward by Pearce (2010), which hold that in the Latin American context, as opposed to traditional conceptualisations of the state, state legitimacy is not found in its monopoly of violence, but rather in the lack thereof. In many Latin American countries, Pearce illustrates, in/security deriving from high levels of violence offers the state a new form of legitimation, which is that of internal wars with violent youth, drug traffickers and remaining insurgent forces. Moreover, the ongoing confrontations bestow significant political capital on the state, which impedes finding solution to rampant violence.

What the above examples seek to illustrate is that it is through reference to the state that protest is silenced and force excused. Invoking the state is thus a way of legitimising coercive power of the government and the armed forces. The state, as Abrams affirms, never emerges except as a claim for domination, which is a claim that has become so plausible that it is hardly ever questioned (Abrams, 1988). Like all totalities that cannot be directly seen, as Krupa et al. (2015) argue, the state must be imagined. What comes to represent the state in any given set of circumstances is, however, highly contextual. In the framework, I approach the state level as the government and state institutions, but focus on how the state is invoked by these actors to justify security-related policy and practice and how the state is perceived at the community level.
2.5.2.2 The local community level

The local community level makes up the second asymmetrical level in the relational framework. A main justification of the proposed framework is that shifting the focus to explore how in/security is understood to a certain extent avoids normative judgements and identity-making around the referent object of security, including ‘the local’ or ‘the marginalised’. As argued in the previous section, focus falls on community groupings present in the specific local context, as well as the way they construct identity through in/security understandings, or understand in/security through adherence to specific identity categories. A key descriptor of the local is that it is differentiated from the national and international. However, as Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013) point out, ‘any boundaries are blurred by the fact that all agency is networked in an increasingly complex manner’ (pg.770). As Booth (2007) argues, focusing on the local community level concerns the way individuals are organised collectively. Importantly, individuals live in a variety of overlapping and fluid identity communities. The focus on the individual, as organised through a variety of overlapping identity communities, therefore necessitates attention being drawn to local contexts where these identities are constructed. In this research, the local context is that of marginalised conflict-affected regions in Colombia. Thus, at the community level, the research seeks out the different ways that individuals become organised in identity communities, while avoiding predetermining fixed societal identities.

The focus on the state and community levels in the framework suggests certain boundaries delineating the two levels. These boundaries are, on the one hand, part of the research design in order to establish the two levels of the research. On the other, boundaries are tied to in/security understandings/discourses and identity, as elaborated upon in section 2.3.2. The third main aspect of the framework focuses on the implications of such boundary-producing performance, as well as the potentially contested meanings of in/security among and between the state and local community levels.

2.5.3 Implications of In/Security Understandings

Security discourses and their links to context and identity act as a boundary-producing political performance (see 2.3.4). Important in/security understandings are tied to these boundaries. Boundaries establish an ‘us’ against which threats are defined. An obvious way in which this happens is found in the way threats are distinguished in security policies. Going back to the DSP, as referred to above, the policy subsumed all threats posed by different armed groups into the threat of terrorism. Subsequent security policies disaggregated this
terrorist threat into guerrillas, criminal bands and organised crime (MinDefensa, 2011, 2015). In these later policies, reference is made to national and international legal frameworks for distinguishing among the IAGs, and between legal and illegal actors. Yet, outside the discursive practices of security policy, boundaries are less sharp. Going forward from Mitchell (1991), important dynamics lie in these elusive boundaries. Mitchell’s main argument holds that we need to examine the detailed political processes through which the distinction – elusive as it is – between state and society is produced. As Abrams, Mitchell rejects the notion of the state as a freestanding entity located apart from another entity called society. In any given area of practice, Mitchell asks, ‘how is the effect created that certain aspects of what occurs pertain to society, while others stand apart as the state’ (pg.89). Building on Mitchell’s insights into how these dynamics help understand the nature of the state, I argue that these dynamics help understand contestations over the meanings of in/security. This is done by looking at how the effect is created that certain aspects of in/security pertain to the state, to civilians and to IAGs, problematising the assumption that clear boundaries can be drawn between and within the state-citizen binary. Or, put differently, how boundaries may be purposefully manipulated to produce specific in/security discourses and understandings.

Other empirical studies on Colombia, discussed in the next chapter, illustrate similar blurred boundaries – although, in those cases, between different levels of the state and the IAGs. What these examples demonstrate is that the boundaries between what national security policy and discourse delineate as the state and the IAGs are neither sharp nor stable. At different times, in different places and in different ways, IAGs have, in fact, performed key state functions. What can be concluded from these studies, however, is that interrogating the boundaries between the state and the citizen sheds light on the many confusing and inconsistent messages about where the state is located and which institutions and individuals act in its name (Tate, 2015). Important in/security dynamics occur within these elusive boundaries, obscured through the assumptions underwriting national in/security discourse of distinguishable actors, including the state.

The framework thus places emphasis not only on the way boundaries are produced, but the implications thereof for those who act as the state, in the name of the state, and those which are acted upon. These include how certain voices are empowered or marginalised in different

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5 For example, in the context of the armed conflict, the insurgents are defined according to IHL. Uribe referred to the WoT doctrine and different international definitions of terrorism to define IAGs.
accounts of in/security and the in/security arrangements that emerge from these dynamics. The point here is to thoroughly interrogate the assumptions, implications and practices, and how these play out in different contexts and among different groups. According to Browning and McDonald (2013), it involves questions around what security does politically, reflecting on the role of representations of security in encouraging sets of political responses, legitimating the roles of particular actors in particular ways.

The framework, centering on the three interrelated aspects discussed above, thereby aims to generate an inquiry into the relational and contextual dimensions of in/security understandings, and the implications of contested understandings among asymmetrical levels of society. In doing so, an overarching research question has been developed which seeks to contribute to filling the gap identified in the literature. To answer this question, three sub-questions have been developed which are answered through an in-depth case study on Colombia.

2.6 Research Questions

In this final section of the chapter, the overarching research question and three sub-questions are set out. The framework detailed above was developed based on the review of the literature on the evolution of security studies, which identified a gap pertaining to a relational and contextual approach to the study of security. Through the framework, my research set out to answer the following overarching research question:

‘How are in/security understandings at asymmetrical levels of society relational and contextual?’

In answering this question, my research seeks to contribute to filling the gap in the critical security studies literature. The question will be answered through an in-depth case study on Colombia, set in the context of the official transitions into the post-conflict period following five decades of armed conflict. To this end, the following three sub-questions were developed:

1. How is in/security understood and practised at the state level?
2. How is in/security understood and negotiated among local conflict-affected communities?
3. In what ways do the contested meanings of in/security between the state and community level impact on (post)conflict dynamics?
The following chapter will discuss why Colombia makes for a pertinent case study and will provide a contextual background on the armed conflict and related in/security dynamics.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to bring together the different literatures on security to illustrate the evolution of the field and identify where important gaps exist. In doing so, I first discussed four central assumptions underlying traditional approaches to security and which, I argued, limit a deeper engagement with the contested meanings of in/security as a dynamic concept which evolves over time and space. These assumptions centred on 1) security as an achievable good, or a commodity; 2) the centrality of the state; 3) the nature of state-societal relations; and 4) a normative understanding of boundaries and exclusions. Approaches coming together under the critical security studies umbrella term have convincingly demonstrated the many limitations of the traditional approaches. In doing so, these approaches have provided important insights into the referent object of in/security, the way in/security is derivative of context and identity, and the politicisation of in/security. The approaches have emphasised and engaged with these aspects in different ways; however, taken together, critical security studies hold the potential to thoroughly inquire into how in/security is understood and practised by a diverse range of subjects and the implications thereof. Indeed, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, the approaches that form part of the critical security studies umbrella have come a long way in doing so.

Nevertheless, important shortcomings remain, which can be summarised as unintentionally maintaining several assumptions of the traditional approaches. To this end, the literature suggests two key areas where more research is needed. There is a need for more rigorous attention towards the local everyday complexities of understanding and practising in/security, in particular from marginal sites. I argue that accounts from the margins must not be at the exclusion of the state level or other, more dominant, narratives. Instead, by taking a cue from scholars such as Vaughan-Williams and Stevens (2016), Hönke and Muller (2012), Wibben (2016), Browning and McDonald (2013), a multiplicity of narratives needs to be understood in relation to each other. Such analysis, placing the elite-margin, included/excluded, powerful/weak in the same framework in order to produce a relational account of in/security, is largely missing. Related to this, the way in which contestations over in/security generate wider political implications is underexplored (Wibben, 2016). While the approaches hold the potential for thoroughly problematising the links between security practices and articulations in the wider context of politics, this dimension is often
underexplored or taken for granted (Mandelbaum et al., 2016). Based on this gap, the second part of the chapter set out the framework that I propose for capturing the relational and contextual dimensions of in/security.

A key contribution of the framework is shifting the problem formulation for studying in/security, from a focus on what in/security is to how it is understood. Determining security for whom and from what are fundamental questions for much scholarship on in/security (Booth, 2013; Ciută, 2009; Mutimer, 2009). Moving away from a focus on security for whom from what, however, to approaching the study of in/security through a focus on the relational and derivative aspects, I argued, rethinks the way the question is posed. It provides an alternative means for discussing security, thus opening up the space for understanding in/security from a wider range of perspectives. The framework centred on three interrelated aspects, which draw from the contributions of critical security scholars pertaining to the relational dimensions of in/security derivative of context and with ties to identity. Inquiring into the relational dimensions through a focus on asymmetrical levels of society, the framework challenges the hegemony of the state while interrogating the implications of contested meanings of insecurity. Informed by the above, an overarching research question and three sub-questions were detailed, which the research answered though an in-depth case study on Colombia as the country officially transitions into a post-conflict period. The next chapter discusses the pertinence of basing the inquiry on in/security understanding in the Colombian context, and provides a contextual background to the armed conflict and related in/security dynamics.
CHAPTER THREE: A Contextual Background on the Colombian Armed Conflict

3.1 Introduction

Having reviewed the theoretical and conceptual literature in the previous chapter, in this chapter I will discuss why Colombia makes for a pertinent case study for researching in/security understandings. When I commenced my research, the armed conflict between the Colombian state and the guerrillas, already half a century long, was still active. Nevertheless, alongside armed confrontation, the government and the FARC guerrilla were also engaged in peace talks. Although a peace agreement was not signed until late 2016, government policy since 2011 has been increasingly aligned to a transition into a post-conflict scenario, with the government defining the post-conflict period as ‘the period that begins with the signing of a peace agreement between the parties involved and successfully ends with the satisfactory fulfilment of the issues negotiated’ (translated from Spanish) (CONPES, 2016, pg.14). The transition into a post-conflict period following five decades of armed conflict has, as this thesis will argue, important implications for the way in/security is understood and practiced. Moreover, as argued in the previous chapter, understandings are also derivative of context in its various dimensions and with ties to identity (Paasi, 2009). As such, an analysis of the historically contingent societal processes involved in the (re)production of territoriality (see 2.5.1) is required. Thus, in order to discuss these dimensions in the empirical chapters, the aim of this chapter is to provide a contextual background analysis on the armed conflict in Colombia. This includes tracing the origin of a centre-periphery divide that features strongly in both policy and scholarly work on Colombia, and in which I situate the relational approach that I take in discussing the centre and the margin in relation to each other. In the main, dominant representations of this division characterise the peripheries as rural and underdeveloped, lacking in state institutional presence and governance structures, dominated by the IAGs and ravaged by violence.

In this chapter, I take a spatial-functional approach in discussing the armed conflict as the contextual setting of my research. What this means is that rather than providing a chronologically ordered summary of the armed conflict, I problematise the centre-periphery
division. I trace specific conflict related in/security dynamics pertaining to the peripheries, the function of multiple competing sites of alternative authorities (Mason, 2005) that have emerged in these regions, and the implications thereof. The chapter begins with introducing how the armed conflict and the centre/periphery division have been represented in the literature. I thereafter trace the evolution of the armed conflict in the peripheral regions, drawing out key dynamics. This is followed by an illustration of the multiple sites of alternative authorities, moving beyond the, at times, simplified dichotomy of armed violence as a result of consolidated state power versus control by the IAGs (Henderson, 2011; Ince, 2013a). I pay particular attention to how the dynamics have blurred the boundaries between the legal and illegal, the state and the IAGs. The chapter ends with a discussion of some of the implications of conflict dynamics and the multiple sites of authority in the peripheries.

3.2 Representations of the Armed Conflict in Colombia

Colombia has experienced five decades of armed conflict between the government and several guerrilla organisations, making it the oldest of today's civil wars (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). The guerrillas were founded against a background of inequitable land distribution and few avenues to political participation. However, the protracted nature of the conflict, and the number of actors with conflicting explicit and implicit agendas, defy any simple overview and characterisation of the conflict. Instead, in setting out the main dynamics, I refer to the main analytical frameworks that have been applied by scholars to explain the persistent levels of armed violence in Colombia. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed account of the armed conflict and the main IAGs operating in Colombia. However, a chronology of main conflict-related dynamics, and an overview of the main armed actors, are provided in appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

The protracted and complex nature of the armed conflict(s) in Colombia has produced different lines of inquiry to trace the root causes and explain the persistent levels of violence. A common approach has been to adapt the association between weak states and rebel violence, as taken forward by Fearon (2004), and Fearon and Laitin (2004), in the Colombian context. The main arguments of this line of inquiry hold that, when conditions favour insurgency, the likelihood of civil conflict breaking out is greater. One such condition is rough terrain. Adding to this, insurgencies are more likely to emerge in states that are organisationally, financially and politically weak. Applying such theories to the Colombian context, scholars have found a consistent pattern of violence and rebel consolidation in Colombia’s remote and perceived stateless regions (Holmes and Amin Gutiérrez de Piñeres,
2014; McDougall, 2009; Oquist, 1980; Palacios, 2006; Richani, 2013; Waldmann, 2007). These findings are based on the premise of the inability of the Colombian state, as defined in traditional Weberian terms (see 2.2.2), to assume centralised control over sovereign territory. Scholars suggest different theories to explain the cause of state weakness, yet there is a general agreement on how the challenging nature of Colombia’s physical and political geography has impeded state-building (LeGrand, 1986; Stafford and Palacios, 2002). Colombia’s physical geography is both tropical and mountainous, while its political geography is characterised by multiple, discontinuous population centres and a large, relatively empty hinterland (McDougall, 2009). While this line of inquiry points out how state weakness has been a constant feature since Colombia’s independence in the early 19th century, it became particularly pronounced in the mid-1980s, deteriorating in the 1990s to the point that it bordered on state failure (Echavarria, 2010).

The first characteristic of the weakness of the Colombian state is the absence of strong state presence in many parts of the country (McDougall, 2009). While a variety of indicators point to state absence, including absent state institutions, scarcity of public services, to a failure to uphold the rule of law, McDougall refers to road density to demonstrate state absence throughout much of the country. McDougall argues that the distribution of road density shows that state power is concentrated in a few, centralised areas of the country. This greatly weakens centralised control over sovereign territory, which, in turn, has facilitated the emergence and consolidation of the guerrillas and other IAGs.

A second line of inquiry draws from the work by Collier and Hoeffler (2000), who theorise around how aspects of greed and grievances drive civil conflict. This body of research holds that the growth and evolution of the IAGs in Colombia have been directly related to their ability to loot exportable resource commodities, principally coca/cocaine, oil, and minerals (Bejerano et al., 1997; Gutiérrez, 2004; Nasi and Rettberg, 2006; Rettberg and Ortiz-Riomalo, 2013; Richani, 2013). Closely linked to these arguments are scholars taking forward Mary Kaldor’s theory on new wars (Kaldor, 1999). One of Kaldor’s key arguments is that, since the 1980s and 1990s, a new type of organised violence has emerged, characterised by hybrid low-intensity conflicts involving PMC, paramilitaries and illegal sponsors. As Echavarria (2010) notes, Kaldor’s arguments have been useful for explaining the eroded role of the state and the blurred divisions between terrorist actions by the guerrillas and ‘traditional’ political violence. From this line of inquiry, scholars have argued that the armed conflict in Colombia is no longer fought on ideological grounds. As
Echavarria argues, the involvement of the IAGs in the drug trade and organised crime (further elaborated in appendix 1) further support this argument.

Nevertheless, within the literature on the armed conflict in Colombia, no analyses have been complete without considering the political rivalry between the hegemonic Conservative and Liberal parties. Such rivalry has plagued the country since its independence from Spain in 1810, and been the underlying cause of many armed conflicts in the post-independence era (Simons, 2004). Hostilities are thought to have culminated in the civil war of 1948-1957, commonly referred to as *La Violencia*. The brutality of this war prompted the two parties to settle over a constitutional sanctioned power-sharing agreement called the National Front in 1958. The agreement stipulated that the Conservative and Liberal parties would alternate government every four years over the next 16 years. While diminishing violence along the Conservative-Liberal divide, the agreement effectively closed off competition from non-traditional parties, to the extent, as LeGrand (1997) argues, that the armed conflict is largely fought over a redefinition of the right to engage in politics.

Most of the above lines of inquiry hold in common the division of the country into a developed centre, largely corresponding to the geographical Andean centre, and the vast peripheral hinterlands (Ramirez, 2015). It is commonly held that the armed conflict is rampant in the peripheries, whereas it is contained – if not absent – in the central region (Mason, 2005; Ramirez, 2015). I draw on this division, following a spatial-functional approach to situate my research in the Colombian context. Focusing on the peripheral hinterlands (referred to in the literature also as the frontier zones), I trace the evolution of the armed conflict in the peripheries, paying close attention to the boundaries between the legal and illegal, state and non-state, and public and private. Following on from the previous chapter, I seek to draw out how the elusiveness of these boundaries makes it difficult to neatly delineate the legal state, the IAGs, and civilians.

### 3.3 The Centre-Periphery Divide

The ‘centre’ and the ‘periphery’ are terms frequently referred to in both academic literature and official discourse on the Colombian armed conflict, though employed in a relatively unproblematised fashion. Thus, a first step in employing a spatial-temporal approach to the armed conflict is to unpack these terms and draw out their main meanings. Ramirez (2015) illustrates how the periphery is fundamentally characterised as zones of absence. Nevertheless, nowhere in the country, Ramirez argues, does the idealised state said to be absent in the peripheries exist. State and non-state actors engage in violence on an extensive
scale, even in the centre, to achieve their specific aims. A way in which this manifests itself in central regions is through the appropriation of public institutions and national resources to advance their own private agendas (López, 2010). As such, Ramirez concludes, the impartial state, that many agree has yet to arrive in the peripheries, is thus an imaginative projection – an idea, as discussed in Chapter Two (2.5.2), rather than an existing entity, either in the centre or in the periphery.

In concurrence with such view, I focus in this section on how the peripheries have been represented in official and scholarly discourse and writings. Four distinct representations stand out. In an historical context, the peripheries have been represented as (1) the land of the colonos, a term used for people who ventured into these uninhabited regions to clear land for cultivation (a process called colonisation, and not to be confused with the colonisation by the Spanish crown centuries earlier). In some accounts, the peripheries have been presented in a compelling image as free land, available to all. The peripheries became an alternative for peasant farmers (hereon referred to only as farmers), dissatisfied with working conditions as tenants on the big estates (LeGrand, 2016; Oquist, 1980). Although the above allures to the peripheries as regions of geographical wilderness and mostly uninhabited, representations of the contemporary peripheries are commonly framed as being (2) abandoned by the state. As outlined above, the peripheries have commonly been characterised for what they are not, in terms of absence, lacking the key institutions and orientations said to characterise the state as a whole (Ramirez, 2015). They are borderlands, Idler (2012) argues, with weak state governance structures. Yet, what also emerges from these representations is the more nuanced historic (3) disconnection to the central state governance structures situated in Bogotá. By the early 20th century, Colombia was a fragmented country of regions defined by distinct economic activities (Gill, 2015). Regional elites, divided between the Liberal and Conservative parties, fought to control municipal appointments and the patronage and wealth-making possibilities that flowed from them. This elite, consisting mainly of large-scale landowners (latifundistas), frequently maintained private armies to protect their holding, violently displacing the colonos, and resisting the growth of state power into these regions (Simons, 2004). By 1970, the latifundistas controlled almost 80 per cent of all arable land, whereas nearly 200,000 people had been made landless (Fernandez, 1979). This inequitable distribution of land was, to a large extent, the result of the National Front governments’ promotion of large-scale industrialised

\[6\] The latifundos (large estates) are farms with 50 ha of land or more (Fernandez, 1979).
farming. In this process, many small-scale farmers were pushed from their land from the more developed central regions to the peripheral regions (Albán, 2011). As farmers colonised these peripheral regions, claims to the lands in which they settled were never formalised (Zamosc, 1983). This has resulted in a situation where most farmers today are without any formal titles to the land on which they have lived and worked on for generations (DNP, 2014a). The final representation is that of the peripheries as ravaged by violence perpetrated by a plethora of IAGs. In line with most research on armed violence in Colombia, LeGrand (2016) states 'frontier zones are among the most violent areas in Colombia today. There guerrilla groups have established their rural bases; there military repression is most intense, and there in recent years the cocaine traffickers have entrenched themselves in various ways’ (pg.5).

This understanding of the peripheries helps explain the formation and growth of the guerrilla groups and other IAGs. The self-defence forces, which would later evolve into the guerrillas and the paramilitaries, originated in the peripheral regions as a result of the Conservative and Liberal rivalry. The formation of the guerrilla groups can be traced to La Violencia, when liberal farmers organised to defend themselves against Conservative bandoleros (outlaws/bandits) and the Colombian army (LeGrand, 2016; Tate, 2015). They found a support base among the farmers displaced into the peripheries, who continued to be persecuted within the peripheral regions by the large estate owners and by state forces accusing them of being subversive (Albán, 2011; LeGrand, 2016; Tate, 2015). The monopolisation of political power by the Conservative and Liberal elites further facilitated the development of the guerrilla groups (Richani, 2013). By the 1960s, they had adopted a revolutionary Marxist platform and aspired for national power. While the formation of the guerrillas is tied to the La Violencia civil war and the displacement and persecution of farmers thereafter, the formation of the paramilitaries – as Hristov (2010) illustrates – is tied to the state and the rural elite. Shortly after the FARC and ELN guerrilla groups were formed, a particular kind of self-defence force – which later transformed into paramilitary groups – was legalised. While the purpose of the self-defence forces was to aid the national armed forces to defeat the insurgents, they were extensively used as private protection units for the rural elite, such as the cattle ranchers and coffee plantation owners, not only to protect landowners from guerrilla attacks, but to expropriate farmers from their land (Felbab-Brown, 2010).

So far, the understandings of the peripheries have largely emphasised their rural characteristics. Yet, while rarely referred to as the periphery as such, in and around many
urban centres are pockets of marginalisation which bear similarities to the rural peripheries. It is frequently argued that urban areas are under consolidated state control (Mason, 2005); yet, in many of these local marginalised pockets, violence is rife and bear a direct relation to the armed conflict (Berents, 2015). As is the case with the rural peripheral regions, these urban peripheral pockets are characterised by similar structural deficiencies, resulting in a high level of poverty, low job opportunities, and lack of access to services (CODHES, 2014). They are the theatre of the armed conflict in the urban areas, in which many IAGs are engaged in contesting territory and control over the population. While the presence of guerrilla militias and paramilitary groups has decreased in the last decade, the post-paramilitary demobilisation groups – officially termed Bacrim – have a strong presence in these pockets (International Crisis Group, 2014; Nussio, 2011; Ospina Ovalle, 2017; Prieto, 2013). Berents (2015), in a study on a marginalised barrio in Bogotá, illustrates how such urban peripheral pockets provide a pathway in and out of major cities for the IAGs to traffic drugs and arms to and from the wider conflict. As with the rural peripheral zones, the presence of IAGs has provoked a militarised response through the police and army. Law enforcement often enters in highly securitised ways. Indeed, as Rozema (2008) demonstrates, large-scale military operations have taken place in urban areas, such as Operation Orion in Medellin in 2002 to expel the guerrillas from one of Medellin’s urban comunas.

3.4 The Armed Conflict in the Peripheries

As the representations of the peripheries demonstrate, the armed conflict has been particularly intense in these regions. In the following section, I will discuss the armed conflict in the peripheries. In doing so, I focus on three interrelated aspects, discussed in the following order: 1) temporal armed conflict dynamics, 2) alternative sites of authority through shifting alliances, and 3) the erosion of state legitimacy in the peripheries.

3.4.1 Temporal Dynamics

While the current armed conflict is usually said to have started in the 1960s, with the formation of the FARC and the ELN guerrilla groups confronting the state (Restrepo and Spagat, 2005), in this chapter I focus on the conflict from the 1980s and onwards, as this was a time of conflict escalation. The guerrillas had moved from being isolated and largely insignificant to posing a serious challenge to state sovereignty (Ortiz, 2002). The paramilitaries were rapidly expanding, and the drug trade was taking a strong hold in the country. While many factors underlie this development (some of which have been discussed
above), an important cause has been the consolidation of the drug trade\(^7\) in the peripheral regions during this period (Peceny and Durnan, 2006; Rochlin, 2011; Simons, 2004). The 1980s saw the formation of powerful and violent drug cartels, which armed their own paramilitary forces for protection and expansion purposes (Gootenberg, 2012). At the same time, as the guerrillas abandoned their initial reluctance to engage in the drug trade, their income soared, which enabled them to more aggressively challenge the state and expand territorial control (Peceny and Durnan, 2006). The drug trade transformed the conflict. It created new incentives for territorial and political control centred around dominating the drug trade and the vast profits pertaining thereto. It also resulted in the state becoming engaged in two parallel wars: the counter-insurgency and the war against the cartels, with the former particularly affecting the rural peripheries and the latter urban peripheries. The situation led to a rapid escalation of violence in the 1990s.

While much of the violence of the 1980s and 1990s can be explained by the expanding drug trade, political developments had an important impact, too. Peace talks took place with the FARC between 1982 and 1984, which resulted in the formation of the left-wing political party, the Patriot Union (UP). Political reform provided for decentralisation of state power, such as direct mayoral elections. This raised expectations about the incorporation of the insurgents and their demands into the political system (Gill, 2015) – which, in turn, threatened the regional powerholders (Romero, 2003). The UP achieved huge success in following regional elections, winning 24 provincial deputies, 275 municipal council representatives, 16 mayoral posts, as well as three seats in the Senate and four seats in Congress (Hunt, 2012). These developments, however, unleashed a surge in paramilitary violence, acting on behalf of the rural elite and the national armed forces (Romero, 2000). As many as 4,000 members and supporters of the UP were assassinated by the paramilitaries between 1986 and 1992 (Rochlin, 2010). Additionally, labour and social movement leaders, human rights defenders, and anyone deemed a guerrilla sympathiser, were also targeted in the violent sprees of massacres, extrajudicial executions, kidnappings, and disappearances (Gill, 2015). These killings were justified on a counter-subversive discourse, and largely targeted unarmed civilians. In war, as the paramilitary leader Fidel Castaño declared, the unarmed civilian is a relative term, as unarmed guerrilla members are frequently disguised as civilians (Romero, 2000).

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\(^7\) The drug trade refers to coca cultivation, and the processing and trafficking of cocaine.
As the political party of the FARC was annihilated, guerrilla violence increased. At the turn of the millennium, the strength of the FARC reached a peak (Isacson, 2013; Simons, 2004). Its strength was largely an outcome of a second attempt at peace talks with the FARC that took place between 1998 and 2001 in Caguán (commonly referred to as the Caguán peace talks). As a condition for the talks, the FARC had been granted a demilitarised zone the size of Switzerland, which government forces could not enter and where the guerrillas had de facto control. The zone had been used as a safe haven to reinforce their fronts and for extensive coca cultivation. By the time the talks broke down, FARC had greatly built up its military capacity (Gomez-Suarez and Newman, 2013). This led to a renewed surge in violence during the first years of the new millennium (Restrepo and Spagat, 2005). The FARC effectively managed to encircle Bogotá (Henderson, 2011; Simons, 2004). For their part, paramilitary violence had been particularly intense during the Caguán peace talks, carrying out more than 100 massacres (defined as the killing of four or more non-combatants in a single event) each year (Isacson, 2013). Against this background, coupled with the inability of the armed forces to suppress the IAGs, national and international academics and policy-makers began labelling Colombia as a failed state (Shifter and Jawahar, 2004).

Important shifts in conflict dynamics occurred during the following two Uribe administrations between 2002 and 2010, and the forceful implementation of the DSP (mentioned in section 2.5.2). The previously separate confrontation against the drug traffickers and the counter-insurgency effort were merged into a fight against narco-terrorist (Echavarria, 2010). This was situated in the wider framework of the USA-led WoT, under which the Colombian government received substantial financial and technical support from the USA part of Plan Colombia (Rochlin, 2010). Situating the armed violence in Colombia in the framework of the WoT also enabled the government to claim that there was no armed conflict in Colombia. Rather, it is a question of terrorist groups seeking to capitalise on the drug trade (Semana, 2005). The guerrillas were thereby made devoid of their belligerent status and confronting the guerrillas was no longer restricted by international humanitarian law (IHL) (Echavarria, 2010). Instead, the terrorist threat was used to legitimise the use of violence of extraordinary measure by the state to counter the guerrillas (Elhawary, 2010).

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8 Plan Colombia was an aid package provided by the USA to assist, at first, Colombian country-narcotics efforts, and then the counter-insurgency struggle. Of the USD 9.94 billion provided since 2000, 71 per cent went to Colombia’s security forces (WOLA, 2016). Military aid included aerial herbicide fumigation, large-scale offensives, and defence reform, as well as military hardware and training.
There is still much disagreement as to the impact of the DSP. Analysts focusing on armed violence indicators tend to point to the substantial weakening of the guerrilla forces during this period. While the exact numbers of a clandestine illegal guerrilla group are impossible to ascertain, it is frequently held that the FARC was reduced from an estimated 20,000 armed combatants when Uribe came to power, to some 7,000 by the end of his second administration (Isacson, 2013; Saab and Taylor, 2009). At the same time, the paramilitary forces – the majority united under the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) umbrella organisation – had demobilised. Kidnappings and homicides drastically decreased (Elhawary, 2010). Nevertheless, many scholars and analysts contend the impact of these results. While conceding that the FARC and the ELN were considerably weakened, they point to how the guerrillas have resorted to more traditional guerrilla warfare tactics. Resultantly, there has been an increase in the use of landmines, improvised explosive devices, ambushes and sniper attacks (Isacson, 2013). Much critique has been raised against the mass violation of human rights and IHL committed by the armed forces under the auspices of the DSP. For its part, the paramilitary disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process, under the framework of the Justice and Peace Law (JPL), has been condemned for institutionalising impunity while disregarding the state’s responsibility for creating, consolidating, and expanding the paramilitaries (Gill, 2015; Meertens and Zambrano, 2010). While the AUC may no longer exist, it is argued that many of the paramilitary structures remain intact. While estimates vary, a significant number of the 30,000 paramilitaries that went through the DDR process have returned to these structures (Kaplan and Nussio, 2016; Pérez and Montoya, 2013; Romero and Arias, 2011). Together with paramilitaries who never demobilised, they have formed new armed groups (Prieto, 2013; Saab and Taylor, 2009). The government has labelled these groups Bacrim and which, until legislative amendments in 2015, were considered as criminal bands dedicated to common crime and drug trafficking. Critics reject this conceptual distinction between Bacrim and the paramilitaries, as it overestimates the efficiency of the AUC DDR process,

9 The Ministry of Defence report a decrease in homicides from over 23,000 in 2003 to just over 15,000 in 2012 (MinDefensa, 2013b). Kidnappings in the same period decreased from over 3,500 to 282 (Policía Nacional and Observatorio del Delito, 2014).

10 Among the gravest violations is the incentive scheme, in which soldiers were rewarded for every guerrilla member killed, now known as the ‘false-positive’ scandal. Farmers and marginalised youth were killed by the armed forces and thereafter dressed up and presented as FARC members. Based on statistics from the Colombian Attorney General’s Office, UNHCHR cited 1,708 cases of extrajudicial killings committed by state agents involving more than 4,000 victims (UNHCHR, 2013).
and denies the continuation between paramilitaries and Bacrim (Prieto, 2013). Comparative analysis of paramilitary violence and Bacrim violence tends to demonstrate that Bacrim operate in much of the same areas as the former paramilitaries and are engaged in the same kind of violence (Nussio, 2011). Others argue that, while there are indeed important similarities between Bacrim and the paramilitaries, Bacrim groups began to emerge before the AUC DDR process. As such, conceptualising Bacrim as the continuation of the paramilitaries, or so-called neo-paramilitaries, is a too simplistic explanation to these complex structures (Rico, 2013). Thus, important changes to conflict dynamics notwithstanding, as President Santos took power in 2010, violence in much of the peripheries remained a constant feature.

3.4.2 Alternative Sites of Authority

Asserting state authority across Colombia has been a persistent feature of Colombian national security policy, which became particularly pronounced in the DSP (Echavarria, 2010). As will be discussed in Chapter Five, the state is fundamentally conceived of in traditional Weberian definitions and closely related to the concept of sovereignty and exclusive political authority. For the Weberian state, the importance of these two concepts cannot be overestimated. As Mason (2005) reflects, ‘exlusive authority is the bedrock of the territorial state’ (pg.37). Yet, the Colombian state defined in this way has been unable to assert exclusive political authority in large parts of the country (McDougall, 2009; Oquist, 1980; Palacios, 2006; Richani, 2013; Thomson, 2011a).

Against the deficient state presence in the periphery, much scholarly work has focused on how other actors, in particular the FARC, have filled this power vacuum. Within a weak state rebel violence framing, it is often argued that their emergence and consolidation of power have a direct relationship to the Colombian state’s unconsolidated authority. Romero (2000) argues that the inability of the state to impose exclusive political authority is largely tied to the ability of sectors of society – legal and illegal alike – to resist state territorial consolidation efforts. The fragmented state authority has led to what Mason (2005) terms as a myriad of ‘alternative sites of authorities’ – or, in the words of Krupa and Nugent (2015), multiple and conflicting claims to the right to rule. However, these alternative sites of

11 Here, I refer to the relationship between sovereignty and political authority in the conventional term, where state sovereignty has arisen to enforce internal order legitimately and to protect against external threats, though recognising that the grounding of this claim has been subject to debate (Agnew, 2005).
authority have not only existed in opposition to the state authority. Instead, sectors of the state have frequently operated in overt or tacit alliances with other powerful actors to promote particular social, economic and political projects (Gill, 2015). Gill argues that the dynamics around alternative sites of authority have greatly blurred the boundaries between what official discourse distinguishes as the legal state, IAGs, and citizens, and further making the limits of state power difficult to determine. Recalling Mitchell (1991), important dynamics lie in these elusive boundaries (2.5.3). While alliances were always deeply contextual, it is possible to draw out several crucial developments.

3.4.2.1 The IAGs as an alternative site of authority

The IAGs are arguably the starkest form of alternative authorities in the Colombian peripheries. The authority exerted by the IAGs can largely be defined as ‘coercive authority’ (Hurd, 1999), due to the fear instilled by these groups among the population they control. However, in some contexts, they also enjoy what Mason (2005) terms legal, moral and problem-solving authority. Such authority is derived from the state functions they execute in the absence of strong state institutions and governance processes (Felbab-Brown, 2011; Ramirez, 2015). Such functions may include providing security and protection, establishing local policing and dispensing justice, and limiting the abuses of the rival groups. Groups have also provided public services, which tend to be absent in many peripheral regions, such as local clinics, vocational schools, and organising public works (Felbab-Brown, 2010). In most cases, both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries have used a combination of coercive and legal, moral and problem-solving authority over the population they control. Nevertheless, it is generally suggested that the paramilitaries have been more reliant on the former, whereas the guerrillas, to a greater extent, derive their authority from the latter (Felbab-Brown, 2010; Saab and Taylor, 2009). Moreover, successive governments’ strategies for confronting the guerrillas have inadvertently enhanced the moral and problem-solving authority of the guerrillas, particularly the counter-narcotics efforts. Much of these efforts have centred on eradication through aerial fumigation. A common consequence of fumigation has been the eradication not only of coca crops, but also food crops grown in close proximity, both of which are fundamental for the survival of many farmers in the peripheral regions. With few alternative livelihood opportunities, eradication efforts have

12 It should be noted, however, that there are many other less contentious sites of alternative authorities, such as the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, communities which furthermore enjoy constitutional recognition and autonomy.
increased the political capital of the guerrillas – that is, legitimacy and support from the local population (Felbab-Brown, 2010). This kind of legitimacy, however, has been increasingly diminished by the increasing brutality of the IAGs in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Felbab-Brown, 2010).

3.4.2.2 Alternative sites of authority through state-paramilitary alliances

A second site of alternative authority has been formed through the relationship between the state and the paramilitaries. Prior to being declared illegal in 1989, the state relied on the support of these private armies for the counter-insurgency fight. Thus, up to this point, the alliances between the paramilitaries and sectors of the state were based on shared objectives, which were officially centred on defeating the guerrillas and maintaining the status quo (Albán, 2011). Since being declared illegal in 1989, the paramilitaries have officially represented a threat to state territorial control. Nevertheless, collaboration between the armed forces and the paramilitaries widely continued even after the paramilitaries were declared illegal (Ávila, 2010; Ramirez Tobon, 2001). Paramilitaries received material, logistical and intelligence support from the armed forces (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013). At times, military officers directly collaborated in massacres and other attacks against the civilians. Mostly, however, they stand accused of deliberate negligence of failing to prevent or responding to massacres (Isacson, 2013). The paramilitary organisations largely maintained their claim to be defending state institutions against the shared insurgent enemy (Ramirez Tobon, 2001). Moreover, sections of the state have continued to rely on the paramilitaries for their social, economic and political project. Power and authority have been deliberately delegated by state officials to the paramilitaries (Ballvé, 2012; Duncan, 2013). Numerous public officials have also depended on the paramilitaries to consolidate individual power (Ávila, 2010; López, 2010; Ramirez, 2015; Ramirez Tobon, 2001). Thus, in these alternative sites of authority founded upon state-paramilitary alliances, the distinction between the legal and illegal, state and non-state, public and private became frequently blurred, making the limits of state power difficult to determine (Gill, 2015).

The emergence of the powerful drug cartels in the 1980s nevertheless added a layer of complexity to this collaboration. On the one hand, the paramilitaries were aligned with the national armed forces against the guerrillas; on the other, they were fighting this same institution to protect the drug trade (Peceny and Durnan, 2006). Furthermore, as the paramilitaries became more heavily involved in the drug trade parallel to the decline of the cartels, they sought to become an independent political, military and economic force (Gill,
To expand their power and reach, they sought to acquire land for themselves, rather than appropriating land on behalf of the rural elite. Through collaboration with judicial and land registry officials, they have been able to legalise land seized (Ballvé, 2013; Grajales, 2011). While continuing to collaborate with the armed forces, they increasingly attacked the state when it became a threat to their political and economic interests. As a consequence, hundreds of police officers, judges and judicial investigators have been killed by the paramilitaries (Tate, 2001).

These shared sites of alternative authority were able to emerge due to the inability of the state to successfully confront the guerrillas. However, while the alliances between sectors of the state and the paramilitaries over counter-insurgency efforts may arguably have been effective in the short term, the paramilitaries ultimately superseded state control (Gill, 2015; Romero, 2003). As the paramilitaries grew in size and power, the government’s control of politics, conflict, and violence weakened (Romero, 2000). Resultantly, the paramilitaries became a liability, effectively forcing the government to announce a peace process with the paramilitaries in 2003 in order to contain the violence it had helped release (Gill, 2015). The process, however, shattered the distinction between the legitimate state and the illegal paramilitaries, which official discourse had persistently sustained since the paramilitaries were declared illegal. As Gill (2015) illustrates, a number of paramilitary commanders withdrew from the process and began to expose their dealings and alliances with government officials in public testimonies. This provoked the government to extradite the top paramilitary commanders to the USA, where they were wanted on drug trafficking charges. By doing so, the government sought to reduce the implications of what had become known as the ‘parapolitics’ scandal. Nevertheless, by 2014, 61 members of Congress had been convicted for paramilitary connections and more than 60 others investigated – many of them allies of President Uribe. Nation-wide, more than 900 politicians, 800 members of the military, and 300 other officials have come under investigation (Stone and McDermott, 2016). The paramilitary/state collaboration is now widely acknowledged by public officials. Nevertheless, as Hristov (2010) point out, all official discourse frames the paramilitaries as a past phenomenon. The effect of this has been to re-establish the illusion of a separation between the institutional state and the paramilitaries (Gill, 2015).
3.4.2.3 Alternative sites of authority through paramilitaries, rural elite, and the national armed forces alliances

Alliances between the paramilitaries and the rural elite form a third site of alternative authorities in the peripheral region, in which the armed forces also partake. The rural elite refers to a diverse grouping, including cattle ranchers, agro-industrial exporters, landowners and drug traffickers (the latter who had become landowners through the large-scale usurpation of land). Many were historic rivals split along Conservative and Liberal party lines. Yet, a shared identity was articulated through their mutual opposition to state reformist initiatives, collective mobilisation, and the organisation of farmers (Romero, 2000). An attempt at rural reform by the government in 1968 fundamentally affected regional-central relations. In summary, the reform largely favoured peasant farmers while curtailing the power of the rural elite (Albán, 2011). As a result, it was met with strong opposition by the latter. As an illustration of the tensions between the rural elite, the central government, and farmers, the regional director of the Association of Cattle Ranchers claimed, ‘if farmers have the right to land, owners have the right to defend it’ (Romero 2000, pg.58). Although the reform was revoked by the following government, it had opened a schism between region and centre, and greatly fomented distrust by regional elites of the political power in Bogotá (Romero, 2000).

Furthermore, few from within the regional elite supported the peace negotiations with the FARC guerrilla in the 1980s and 1990s. They saw themselves as the principal victims of guerrilla action and considered the talks a betrayal by the government. They found an ally in the armed forces, in which a dominant section also opposed the talks (Delgado, 2015). Steeped in the Cold War security doctrine, they perceived the peace talks as a political victory for the communist guerrillas (Romero, 2000). In many peripheral regions, they responded by resorting to the formation and/or support of paramilitary armies. Much of the rural elites strongly identified with the paramilitary project, which had converted vast extensions of rural Colombia into zones of resource extraction, monoculture, and export-oriented agriculture (Gill, 2015). At the same time, they challenged the national government’s discourse and practices that emphasised the belonging and obedience to a ‘national community’, represented by the government in Bogotá. As Romero (2000) argues, that the armed forces, encouraged by rural elites, would confront the executive’s peace policy reveals intense antagonism within state institutions.
3.4.3 State Legitimacy Eroded in the Peripheries

An implication of the above alliances and alternative sites of authority has been an erosion of the legitimacy of state institutions, as perceived by many farmers. Much research has drawn attention to the antagonistic relationship between farmers and different sectors of the state. Ample evidence exists that government policy has been persistently biased in favour of the rural elite.\(^{13}\) Likewise, abuses by the armed forces against farmers have been widely reported by organisations and scholars alike (see, for example, Restrepo et al. 2004; Isacson 2013; Palacios 2006; Simons 2004; Amnesty International 2013).

As with the rural elite, an identity that united much of the marginalised population in the peripheries was formed against an opposition towards what they saw as an oppressive state. Romero (2000) argues that radical political identities and attitudes within subaltern groups formed against institutional arrangements, such as the National Front, and the inability to channel grievances and promote change through political participation. These were further strengthened with the revocation of the 1968 agrarian reform and the annihilation of the UP by the paramilitaries – acting on behalf of the rural elites and armed forces. A political identity of resistance against the central state and its local allies took shape, further strengthened by the violent response to their claims for justice and political participation (Romero, 2000). Coupled with the resistance from the rural elite, the centralised state – as represented by the government and political elite in Bogotá – were faced with weakened loyalties from above and opposition from below (Romero, 2000).

Against this fragmented and violent landscape, Alvaro Uribe won the 2002 presidential elections on a promise to forcefully confront the guerrillas militarily, consolidate state territorial control and thereby guarantee security to all Colombian citizens. Parallel to the increased militarised approach to security, the government made an explicit call on civilians to unite with the state in this quest for security. The way this was put in practice, however, effectively forced civilians caught in the sites of alternative authorities to take sides. In the words of Uribe, ‘the civilian population should define its position in support of our threatened democracy’, implying that those who were not with the government were against it (Ojeda, 2013). One way the government sought to materialise the call for civilians to unite with the state, was through the formation of information and collaboration networks. These networks were made up of citizens who were to inform and report to the security forces any

\(^{13}\) See, for example, the elaborate history on agrarian matters and armed violence by Thomson (2011) and Albán (2011).
suspect persons and activities (Presidencia de la Republica and Ministerio de Defensa, 2003). The information networks, together with other specific strategies of the DSP, effectively involved civilians in the armed conflict. On the one hand, the DSP dangerously blurred the distinction between civilian and combatant status (Mason, 2003; Ojeda, 2013). However, such blurring was justified by the framing of violence in the fight against terrorism. As Uribe argued, the Colombian context is that of an anti-terrorist fight and not an internal war. Resultantly, the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants, as established by IHL, ceased to exist (Mason, 2003). On the other hand, the DSP created specific boundaries between the state, good citizens, and non-citizens – the latter defined as terrorists and a threat to the state and the good citizen.

Tensions between the government and the civilian population also emerged in the approach taken by the Uribe government towards civilians falling victim to the armed conflict. The situation of the millions of IDPs – estimated at the time to have reached 10 per cent of the population (Ibáñez and Moya, 2010; Pécaut, 2000) – was found by the Colombian Constitutional Court to be unconstitutional. The government was ordered to adopt international standards of protection of the rights of the IDP population, though the sentence was followed by nearly a hundred rulings ordering compliance (Meertens and Zambrano, 2010). In a similar disregard of the rights of victims of armed violence, the JPL stipulated that victims of illegal armed actions by state actors held no rights to reparation provided through this transitional justice mechanism. With the change of government in 2010, however, a more forceful recognition of victims of the armed conflict has been established.

The current government’s approach to in/security in the peripheries within the post-conflict transition period, and the implications thereof, is the focus of Chapter Four. The contextual analysis on the armed conflict and in/security dynamics in the peripheries provided in this chapter, provide an important background for interpreting how in/security is understood and produced in the official transitions into the post-conflict context.

14 Other strategies include the ‘soldier of my town’ programme, where peasant farmers were to assume the role of the armed forces in peripheral and isolated areas. With minimum training, they were targeted with recovering state sovereignty in rural areas. This left the peasant soldiers and their families highly exposed to guerrilla retaliation.
3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have set out how the armed conflict in Colombia has been represented and explained in the literature. The protracted nature of the conflict has produced diverse approaches to trace and explain the root causes and the main drivers of violence. This includes situating the conflict within the literature pertaining to weak state/rebel violence (Fearon, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2004; Kalyvas, 2006), and greed and grievance (Collier and Hoefler, 2000). However, the conflict has also been explained though a focus on factors around geography (McDougall, 2009), and the hegemony of the two dominant political parties (LeGrand, 1997; Simons, 2004). Explicit or implicit in these framings are the representations of the peripheries as uncivilised and savaged (Serje 2011), abandoned by the state (Idler, 2012a; Ramirez, 2015), and violent (LeGrand, 2016), to name a few.

I have provided a spatial-functional reading of the conflict, through focusing on the evolution of armed violence in the peripheral regions. While there have been important changes to conflict-related dynamics over the past four decades, violence in much of the periphery remained a constant feature as President Santos took office in 2010. The large drug cartels of the 1980s and early 1990s have been defeated, though the drug trade was swiftly assumed by the paramilitaries and the FARC (Peceny and Durnan, 2006). The AUC paramilitary structure was subsequently dissolved, and the guerrillas pushed further into the peripheries. Yet, the guerrillas had by no means been defeated, whereas the break-up of the AUC produced a fragmented myriad of smaller armed groups, continuing to drive the lucrative drug trade and other illegal economies.

In moving away from a simplified dichotomy, which sees the protected violence as a contest between state power and that of the IAGs, I have set out how multiple sites of alternative authorities were formed. Importantly, these alternative authorities have not only existed in opposition to central state authority. Rather, state authorities have frequently operated in overt or tacit alliances with powerful actors to promote particular social, economic and political projects (Gill, 2015). An implication of these alliances has been the blurring of boundaries between the legal and illegal, the state and the IAGs. It has furthermore contributed to the erosion of legitimacy of the state as perceived by the marginal population in the peripheries – principally, farmers.

This chapter has provided a historic contextual analysis on principal in/security dynamics pertaining to the armed conflict, with an emphasis on the centre-periphery divide in which I situate the Colombian case study. The next chapter details the methodology I adopted for
researching how in/security is understood and produced, and specifies the methods applied in the case study on the Colombian armed conflict and the official transition into the post-conflict period.
CHAPTER FOUR: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I set out the methodology adopted for researching how in/security is understood and produced, and the implications thereof. It starts with a discussion on the research philosophy underlining my research and how this informed my approach to studying in/security. I set out my ontological perspective, epistemological position, and positionality. Thereafter, I set out the research design. Based on a single case study incorporating various sites, the research design is created in a way that allowed me to bridge the asymmetrical levels that make up the research, which I term the macro- and micro-levels. The macro-level relates to state-level entities with a direct mandate to respond to the armed conflict. The micro-level is made up of rural and urban communities. Combining qualitative, quantitative and visual methods, I was able to inquire into highly sensitive topics in volatile settings. This resulted in rich and detailed accounts of how in/security is understood and navigated by different sectors of society. Research was conducted in three loosely chronological phases, each requiring its own specific methods. First, the specific research sites were selected through mapping statistics pertaining to insecurity, as defined in national security-related policy. In this section, I discuss how data was selected and used, and how the maps were created. Thereafter, in the second phase, security-related policy was analysed in order to ascertain underlying assumptions and representations of in/security. Specific discourse techniques were employed to this end. The third phase pertains to qualitative interviews at the macro- and micro-levels. In this section, I discuss how interviewees were selected and approached, the practicalities of the interviews, and ethical considerations. Thereafter, I set out how I draw from grounded theory for the analysis of data and the rounds of interview conducted. Finally, I discuss how interviews were an interactional process, ending with a short outline of how interview data was triangulated.

4.2 Reality as Subjectively Constructed: The Research Philosophy

Exploring how we understand in/security, and how understandings are derivative of context and with ties to identity, denotes a belief that realities are local and specific and are actively constructed (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). There is no objective reality (Shepherd, 2013); rather,
it is the individual who constructs their own reality (Marsh and Stoker, 2010). Therefore, it is the individual’s interpretations and meanings of in/security as linked to this subjective reality that are of importance for the study of in/security. This can only be established and understood within discourses, contexts or traditions, of which the researcher is also part (Marsh and Stoker, 2010).

4.2.1 Ontological Position

My position underlying this research – that there is no objective meaning of in/security – reflects a constructivist ontological perspective. This perspective informs my approach to studying in/security through a focus on how in/security is understood, rather than engaging in the debates on what in/security is. The constructivist ontological perspective posits realities as local and specific, and actively constructed (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It is the individuals who construct their world and reflect on it, though their views are shaped by social, political and cultural processes. In other words, ‘reality has no social role/causal power independent of the agent’s/group’s/society’s understanding of it’ (Marsh and Stoker, 2010, pg.191). This reality – or how an individual understands the world and reflects on it – is neither static nor universal, but multiple and variable and is constantly subject to modification and change across time and space. Importantly, these subjective realities are inter-subjectively constituted in relation to each other. This ontological position that I base my research on harbours an important assumption that informs my research. That meanings (of in/security) will differ and, by extension, be opposing at times. Therefore, my research aims to explore the implications of the contested meanings of in/security that are derived from different contexts and identities, which individuals navigate and construct.

4.2.2 Epistemological Position

From this position, I adopt an interpretivist epistemological position, which posits that social phenomena cannot be understood independently of our interpretation of them. It is the interpretations and meanings of in/security that are crucial, which can only be established and understood within discourses, contexts or traditions, of which the researcher is also part (Marsh and Stoker, 2010). It is from this interpretivist epistemological position that I explore how in/security is understood, and the implications of the contested meanings. Through collecting narratives in different contexts that research participants navigated, I was able to observe fragments of their social world. This includes the IDP settlement referred to in Chapter One, as well as public spaces and offices, community centres, shelters, and neighbourhoods. This allowed me to locate certain relationships between the understandings
of in/security narrated, and the social structures and practices in which they are embedded (Krause, 1998).

4.2.3 Positionality

As the definition of an interpretivist epistemological position holds, the analyst’s own interpretation of a given phenomenon, event or data set is paramount (Shepherd, 2013). A high degree of self-reflexivity is thus called for. Here, I take a cue from Booth’s (1994) reference to Anais Nin’s observation that ‘we see things not as they are, but as we are’ (pg.3). As a researcher, my interpretation of data is similarly influenced by the identities that I construct and contexts that I navigate. Here, I will set out two identity-related factors that I believe influenced data collection and analysis. The first relates to my identity as a researcher. I did not set out on this research journey without any prior experience of the Colombian armed conflict. While I am not Colombian and have not grown up in the shadow of an ongoing armed conflict, having conducted previous research in conflict-affected regions of Colombia, I had certain expectations of what I thought I would find. One such expectation was contrasting accounts between the macro- and micro-levels, where the armed forces would be perceived as a security threat at the local level, whereas local communities would be perceived, at the macro-level, to have ties with the guerrilla. This was, to a certain extent, confirmed. However, my previous research in Colombia had largely approached in/security as a thing, that could be defined, addressed and improved. Approaching in/security as derivative, relational and as an ongoing process allowed me to distance myself from my previous experiences and conceptual ideas.

The second identity factor loosely relates to gender; that of having a Colombian surname through marriage, being pregnant and having a small child during fieldwork. As I sent out my requests for interviews, in Spanish and signed with a Colombian-sounding name, most interviewees expected me to be a Colombian national. Almost all the interviews began with me having to explain where I came from and where my name came from. On learning that I had changed my surname when I got married, discussions often strayed into a curious conversation around machismo. Interviewees expressed surprise over how a Swedish person, perceived to come from a liberal and equal society, would change her name to that of her husband. Not even in Colombia, they would often say, widely regarded to be a machoistic country, did women do that. Many discussions were had and it proved to be an excellent icebreaker. These conversations greatly reduced the distance between the interviewee and myself. I believed it established a degree of confidence which made interviewees more
willing to discuss sensitive topics. However, my family situation proved to have more challenging consequences. My first daughter was born a year before starting fieldwork, whereas I was pregnant with my second child during the latter part of my fieldwork. My family situation, then, influenced my decisions on which areas I travelled to and the activities I undertook in the research sites. At times, it is possible that this created a certain distance between me and the research participants. Referring to Perseverancia once more, interviewees were keen to share their food and drink with me during the interviews. Being pregnant, I did not feel comfortable consuming food and water which I perceived had a high chance of being contaminated. However, I was concerned that, by refusing their offers, I would be perceived as being disrespectful, treating the interviewees as unhygienic, dirty, second-class citizens – which, as they had just narrated, was precisely the way they were made to feel by wider society. Uncomfortable as I felt, however, I politely refused their offers.

The underlying foundations of my research set out above, based on a belief that realities are local and specific and actively constructed, informed the overall purpose of the research project and the subsequent research questions. The research questions, in turn, informed the development of the research methodology. In exploring how understandings of in/security derive from the contexts we navigate and the identities we construct, I adopted a case study methodology. In my case study, I employed mixed methods combining qualitative, quantitative and visual methods.

4.3 The Colombian Case Study

A case study methodology was selected as the most appropriate approach for capturing derivative understandings of in/security. While there is a lot of ambiguity around the definition of the case study, I apply the definition developed by Yin (1994), who argues that the case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context. In this way, the case study offers a tool for researchers to ‘study complex phenomena within their context’ (Baxter and Jack 2008, pg.544), using a variety of methods (Rowley, 2002). In seeking to explore how in/security is understood and the implications thereof, adopting a case study methodology supports the deep and detailed inquiries necessary to answer these kind of how and why questions (Rowley, 2002). The benefit of the case study, therefore, is that it produces context-dependent knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006), while being about something larger than the case itself (Seawright and Gerring, 2008).
make use of a single case study with embedded units (Baxter and Jack, 2008). It is a single case study, since I am exploring in/security understandings in the unique context of the Colombian armed conflict (Yin, 1994). Within this case, I am looking at two subunits, the macro- and micro-level. Data is analysed within, between, and across the subunits (Baxter and Jack, 2008) in order to discuss the relational aspects of in/security. I have no specific time frame in which I explore understandings, since understandings of in/security are tied to history, among other things, and thus the research cannot be cut off in such an arbitrary manner. Geographically, the case study is limited to specific locations of the internal armed conflict, specifically focusing on the centre-periphery divide (see 3.3) and the two local research sites. As such, I do not include international in/security dynamics, which also impact on the armed conflict.

4.3.1 Micro-level: Local Conflict-Affected Communities

The research uses the term micro-level to capture communities, with no professional affiliation to the state system, which in different ways are exposed to the armed conflict. Resultantly, there is a great deal of heterogeneity within the micro-level and such variation defies easy categorisation. Geographically, the micro-level is limited to the two specific research sites and includes both rural and urban populations. Conceptually, the micro-level speaks of what might be perceived as ‘the other’ (Stern, 2006b) or the ‘marginalised’ (D’Costa, 2006) (2.3.3).

According to the research framework set out in Chapter Two (2.5), focus falls on the presence of community groupings in a specific local context. Once the local sites were selected (discussed ahead), I sought out different community groupings present in these sites. By community groupings, I refer to individuals tied together through certain shared and easily apparent identities. These were selected through visits to the research sites and the initial interviews with organisations working with local communities (discussed ahead). The two initial community groupings selected can be categorised as peasant farmers’ communities and the IDP population. The representatives selected from these categories, therefore, have a unique exposure to the armed conflict, conditioned by their belonging to the specific community and its shared identity and/or history, experience and social understanding. I seek to capture understandings of in/security loosely representative of these communities, yet without presupposing that in/security understandings had ties to these preselected identity categories. As research commenced, however, the boundaries that I assumed delimited these communities proved to be much less sharp. The following section
sets out the initial characterisation of the farmer associations, artisanal miners, and IDP population.

4.3.1.1 Farmer associations

Subsistence farmers comprise a community grouping that is based not only on their agricultural activity, but is also built around a cultural and political identity based on their relationship with, and struggle for, land (Arboleda Velazquez, 2013). The connection between land ownership and the armed conflict has made this group particularly affected by violence. While many have lived and worked on the land for generations, most subsistence farmers are without formal land titles, largely an outcome of the colonisation process (see 3.3). In response to the violence directed against these communities, many farmers have become organised in associations and are championing the creation of farmers’ reserves (ZRC, per Spanish acronym) as a way to confront the impact of the armed conflict in rural areas and to formalise landownership. The ZRC is established by Law 160/1994 and decree 1777/1996, with the objective to, among other things, prevent further concentration of rural property, and to encourage the rural farming economy. A ZRC consists of a specified area of land, in which farmers are organised in an association develop and implement a specific development plan, tailored towards the region and emphasising sustainability and environmental protection. They offer no political autonomy along the lines of indigenous reserves. The ZRC entity sprung from the demands of the right to land by colonising farmers as a form of vindication against large-scale estate owners, who have throughout history oppressed farmers and the peasant farming economy (Ordoñez Gómez, 2012).

Two farmer associations are included in the micro-level, namely Acvc and Ascamcat. Acvc is a broad-based association made up of 120 community action committees (JACs), cooperatives, fisher people committees and other organised groups of rural workers, such as informal miners. It was formed in 1996 in response to the mass displacement of farmers in the Magdalena Medio region, mainly caused by paramilitary and the national army-perpetrated violence. Among its objectives are the comprehensive defence of human rights, equitable landownership and land redistribution, and the involvement of farmers in rural development decisions and processes. The Acvc is implementing a ZRC covering parts of the municipalities of Yondó, Cantagallo, San Pablo, and Remedios (see map 7.4). Interviews were held with two founding members of the association – one male and one female – who described themselves as ‘humble farmers’, ‘activists’, ‘human rights defenders’, and ‘community leaders’. Interviews were also conducted with two informal miners, both male,
who spoke of themselves also as community leaders. In addition, I attended the two-day annual assembly of Acvc, where I listened to a variety of narratives by farmers and miners, from the executive committee and those with no such leadership positions. While I only participated as an observer in this assembly, the narratives around in/security dynamics in the region helped inform my analysis.

Ascamcat is a farmer organisation championing similar issues as Acvc, though with a particularly strong critique of the state-led coca eradication programmes. Formed in 2005 by farmers from the municipalities Convención, Teorama, el Tarra, San Calixto, El Carmen, Tibú and Hacarí, it seeks to establish a ZRC comprising part of these municipalities (see map 7.4). Interviews were held with two members from the leadership committee, one female and one male. They described themselves in a similar manner as the founding members of ACVC. An additional member, not part of the executive committee, was also interviewed. In addition to referring to himself as a farmer, he also spoke in his capacity as the regional spokesperson for victims.

4.3.1.2 Internally displaced people

The IDP population is by far the largest category of victims of the internal armed conflict in Colombia, with over 6.6 million officially registered as of March 2017 (UARIV, 2017a). Within this category, a variety of overlapping identities, cultures and communities are found, including farmers, indigenous, Afro-Colombians, women, and youth. Many suffer from multiple displacements.

Research at the micro-level included urban IDP communities. One is the IDP community in the Perseverancia settlements, where I conducted an interview, comprising approximately 15 inhabitants. Two persons spoke in their capacity as community leaders, one of whom was a member of the JAC, whereas the rest indicated no form of activist/leadership position. Apart from the IDP community in Perseverancia, 11 research participants made up the urban community of people living under the social control of the IAGs, of which five came from the Catatumbo/Cúcuta region and six from the Magdalena Medio region. Among these individuals, all spoke as activists and four as community leaders. Of the 11 interviewees, three worked in local CBOs. One of the interviewee from the Magdalena Medio region was interviewed in Bogota.

Focusing on these categories, based on the assumption that they have suffered disproportionately from the armed conflict, helped set the boundaries of the research. It should
be noted, however, that overlapping identities influenced their narratives, as the empirical chapters show. In this way, alternative community groupings emerged which provided different insights into in/security understandings. In this sense, the human rights defender, immersed in the quest for justice for the victims of the armed conflict, also spoke as a mother and a woman. Likewise, the subsistence farmer spoke also as a community leader and as a relative of people killed by the IAGs. The IDP related his experience as a displaced, but also the pressing insecurities he had to negotiate on a daily basis in seeking the truth around the forced disappearance of his son. At times, these alternative identities (that is, alternative to the predefined categories) had a stronger impact on in/security understandings. In this way, alternative communities also emerged, which provided different insights into the understandings of in/security. The case of the IDP communities illustrates this. By interviewing representatives from these communities, it became clear that interviewees felt very differently about this identity category, with some opposing it and others embracing it. Some of the individuals who were displaced many decades ago continued to consider themselves as IDPs, whereas others did not. The way this community spoke about in/security was greatly influenced by the presence of the IAGs in their daily life. As this form of social control was linked to the contexts they navigated, a better way to capture this community was to think of it as a community under the control of the IAGs. In this way, whether a person considered themselves to be an IDP or not became less relevant.

4.3.2 Macro-level: The Government and State Institutions

I use the term macro-level to encompass the ‘state system’. That is, the clusters of institutions of political and executive control, while avoiding the use of the term ‘the state’ (as set out in 2.5.2). In limiting the research, emphasis is placed on the state entities directly involved in the official response to the armed conflict, and which have a direct mandate over matters including national security and defence, territorial consolidation, victims’ assistance and reparation, land restitution, justice and human rights. Other entities and sectors are referred to where appropriate. Research at this level mainly consisted of analysis of national policy and discourse. Complementary interviews were held with nine officials from the special management office for territorial consolidation (UAECT), the special management office for integral response to victims (UARIV), the Land Restitution Unit (URT), the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), and the Local Ombudsman Office. The state system is analysed while approaching the state as an illusionary idea, which is revealed through placing focus on discursive practices. What this means for the research is that macro-level security understandings will be analysed through how the invocation of the idea of the state informs
and justifies security-related policy and practice, particularly in relation to the peripheral regions.

4.4 Capturing Relational and Contextual Dimensions through Mixed Methods

Meanings, as Derrida concludes, are often difficult to ascertain (Columba and Vaughan-Williams, 2015). In seeking out the narratives that would allow me to interpret understandings of in/security and the implications of the contested meanings, I made use of a variety of methods. Specifically, I combined qualitative, quantitative and visual methods, in a way that enabled me to develop a more thorough answer than either method would separately. Through combining in-depth interviews, discourse analysis, statistical research and geographical information system (GIS) maps, I was able to bridge the macro- and micro-levels (Locke et al., 2010) and more thoroughly explore the co-constitutive and relational aspects of in/security. The way these methods were combined to select the research sites (discussed ahead) furthermore allowed me to capture in/security understandings from the embodied perspective of the subject of securitising moves, which was identified in Chapter Two as a research gap (2.4). It resulted in a thick description of complex phenomena around how we understand and negotiate in/security, capturing the relational and co-constitutive dimensions.

4.4.1 Qualitative Methods

Within this mixed methods approach, the balance is largely tilted towards qualitative methods, as such methods allow for the derivative understandings of in/security to be explored. Qualitative methods are well suited for interpretative research as they tend to take the research participants’ perspectives as the point of departure, as opposed to the researcher’s (Blaxter et al., 2001; Cooper et al., 2012). Through in-depth interviews, which was one of the main methods I employed, interviewees produced ‘thick descriptions’ through elaborated and detailed answers (Rapley, 2004). As my research is embedded in local contexts, it needed also to be responsive to changing local conditions, which qualitative methods allowed for (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The focus of the interviews had to shift between different contexts, and also on a number of occasions during an interview as a response to changing dynamics. One such example is the events that unfolded during a group interview in the Perseverancia settlement, referred to earlier, when individuals not part of the group would unexpectedly participate. A qualitative approach allowed me to both adjust my questions as well as include the shifting dynamics caused by this event in my analysis.
4.4.2 Quantitative Methods

Incorporating quantitative methods helped bridge the macro- and micro-levels in the research. Quantitative methods were of great value for the aspects of my research that explored in/security understandings at the macro-level. While quantitative methods tend to be employed by scholars working from positivist epistemologies, as Sjoberg and Horowitz (2013) argue, there is nothing inherent in quantitative methods that assume the existence of objective, value-free, knowledgeable, and discrete variables. I used quantitative methods for two specific purposes, namely to allow for a deeper exploration of macro-level understandings of in/security, and to aid the selection of research sites. As briefly outlined, my interpretation of in/security understandings at the macro-level is largely based on analysis of public policy and discourse. Yet, I also turned to quantitative methods to look at how these policies and discourses were justified. Much of this justification was found in conflict-related statistics, such as violent acts, IAG numbers, and the number of ‘victims’, to name but a few. Secondly, I made use of statistical data on the main categories of in/security, as defined in national security policy documents, to select the research sites. The reason for doing so was that I wanted to locate the research sites in regions that were of heightened insecurity according to macro-level interpretation of in/security. These are the areas towards which state security practices are directed and, thus, allowed for a thicker understanding of the way in/security is co-constitutive between two asymmetrical levels.

4.4.3 Visual Methods

The statistical data referred to above was used to create in/security hotspot maps. The use of visual methods – specifically, GIS-based maps – for exploring how security is understood and the implications thereof, is twofold. First, as mentioned, GIS-based maps help identify the geographical sub-national research sites. Relying on large data sets on conflict-related violence, the maps greatly facilitated the identification of in/security hotspots. Secondly, GIS-based maps were used to illustrate the geographic overlap between security-related policies, peacebuilding initiatives and economic development priorities. These illustrations helped inform an analysis of the contradictions between macro-level in/security understandings and practice, and how local communities experience in/security. Applied in this way, the use of GIS helped bridge the macro- and micro-levels on the one hand, and the use of quantitative and qualitative data on the other. Visual methods thus aided in the representation of research data and facilitated my interpretation of the underlying processes that inform understandings of in/security (Knigge and Cope, 2006).
Having set out the research methodology, based on a case study in which I adopt mixed methods, the remaining part of this chapter will set out the three phases of the research. In each phase, I set out how research was conducted, and how data was collected and analysed.

4.5 The Three Phases of Research

In the following sections, I detail the specific research activities conducted. These are discussed through three loosely chronological phases. The research commenced by exploring how areas of critical insecurity are identified at the macro-level. While this feeds into research question one, on how in/security is understood and practised at the macro-level, the purpose of this initial stage was to aid the selection of micro-level target sites. Having identified the micro-sites, research at the macro- and micro-levels overlapped, depending more on logistical considerations than any predefined methodological order. Therefore, in order to provide a level of clarity in outlining the research activities conducted, the following section is subdivided into three phases that are largely based on the methods and data sources used:

1) Selection of local research sites through the mapping of insecurities;

2) Analysis of national security-related policy; and

3) Primary data sampling through interviews.

4.5.1 Phase One: Selection of Local Research Sites

As outlined, to more thoroughly inquire into the relational and co-constitutive aspects of in/security, the sites for micro-level research were selected for being priority regions for state-level security interventions. Priority regions are identified at the state level through a number of security-related statistics. Based on these statistics the defence sector has divided the country into red, yellow and green zones (MinDefensa, 2011). While the statistics that inform this division are classified, security policies and monitoring reports include among the main indicators: homicides, kidnapping, sexual violence, attacks, acts of terrorism, criminal action by IAGs, and indicators pertaining to the drug trade (MinDefensa, 2011, 2015). The research made use of statistics on these and other indicators frequently referred to across national security-related policy. As most data collected by the state on the above indicators is classified, data used came from a non-state source selected based on availability, quality and objectivity of the data.
After identifying and assessing what data sets are available,\textsuperscript{15} I decided to use data provided by CINEP (the Centre for Research and Popular Education/Peace Program), a Colombian non-profit foundation. CINEP has collected statistics on political violence in Colombia since the 1980s, with the stated purpose to provide a detailed documentation of political violence and to measure the impact of the conflict on the population. CINEP uses two primary sources for data gathering: press articles from more than 20 daily national and regional newspapers, and reports produced by human rights NGOs, the local public ombudsman offices and the clergy. The latter two maintain coverage even in the most remote areas of the country (CINEP, 2008). The reason for relying on the CINEP data is that it is the most complete and accessible data set on conflict-related violence, and it has also been positively assessed by a number of scholars for its objectivity. For example, Restrepo and Spagat (2005) conclude, ‘our team has spent many months pouring over CINEP’s raw data and performing extensive quality checks, and we are convinced of the integrity of the raw database’ (pg.133). Holmes et al. (2006) commend the data for its detailed categorisation and the attribution of responsibility. Other research positively evaluating CINEP data include Albertus and Kaplan (2012), Ballvé (2012), Dube and Vargas (2013), Grajales (2011), Leal Buitrago (2011), Rettberg and Ortiz-Riomalo (2013), and Vélez-Torres (2014).

It should be noted, however, that a large number of crimes go unreported. Restrepo, Spagat, and Vargas (2004) point out that ‘many violent actions are often clandestine and many actions, such as threats and kidnappings, are poorly reported’ (pp.406-7). They also caution against measuring threats, which they argue are very difficult to verify. Moreover, and as is discussed in the empirical chapters, there is fear around denouncing crimes, whereas the state institutions responsible for processing denouncements are largely inefficient. This all impacts on the ability of data sets to accurately capture insecurities. For these reasons, the maps that are created are meant to demonstrate tendencies rather than reflect accurate measurements.

\textsuperscript{15} This included statistics from government sources, such as the monthly monitoring reports by the MoD. However, these are very general statistics providing little detail. Other sources include CERAC, a research institute providing analysis on the Colombian armed conflict. While they have a database on conflict-related violence, the data made available is not the raw data, but data which have been modified by CERAC.
CINEP distinguishes between three kinds of political violence: human rights violations, violations to IHL, and social political violence (CINEP, 2008). Human rights violations, and violations to IHL, adhere to internationally recognised definitions and thereby only include violent acts perpetrated by the guerrilla groups or the state. Social political violence, on the other hand, includes violent acts committed by groups not part of the armed conflict, as long as the act has a clear political or ideological motivation. Thus, only violence directed against civilians is included in the database and not that against and/or between armed actors. Within these three kinds of political violence, the data set distinguishes between 15 different categories of violent acts. Where possible, the perpetrator of each crime is identified.

4.5.1.2 Creating the maps

The way the data is structured by CINEP means that acts are, at times, double counted as one act may fall into several kinds of political violence. As such, when processing the data, the different categories of political violence were merged and each crime counted only once. As the data is available only in PDF format, it had to be transcribed into Excel in order to work with the data in ways relevant for the research. The time period covered is July 2012

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16 According to CINEP’s conceptual framework (CINEP, 2008), if the crime is committed by a state agent, or an agent acting on behalf of the state, and it falls under internationally recognised definitions of human rights, the crime is categorised as a human rights violation. Under this category, motivation is not of importance and can thus include political persecution, social intolerance or simply abuse of, or excessive use of, state force. Violations to IHL include the use of illegal means of warfare, the use of illegal methods of warfare, attacks against non-military objects, and the undignified treatment of human beings. Perpetrators must be those of the actors of the armed conflict, which, in the case of Colombia as of 2014, is the state and the insurgents. Finally, bellicose actions are acts that are considered legal acts of warfare according to IHL.

17 Social political violence is defined as violent acts, the purpose of which is to maintain, modify, substitute or destroy a model of state or society; and/or directed to the destruction or repression of a human group (organised or not) identified by their social, political, occupational, ethnic, racial, religious, cultural or ideological affinities (CINEP, 2008). However, kidnappings and acts of social intolerance perpetrated by the insurgents are included in this category, as these acts cannot in their strictest sense be categorised as IHL violations.

18 These are: intentional homicide, torture, injury, attack/ambush, sexual violence, threats, forced disappearance, abduction, arbitrary detention, deportation, hostage taking, child recruitment, human shield, kidnapping, and confinement.
to June 2014, which includes over 6,000 events.\textsuperscript{19} While CINEP data stretches back to the 1980s, the timeframe was chosen in order to give a good overview of the current in/security dynamics (as indicated by these kinds of statistics), while taking into consideration time constraints in transcribing the data. Once data was transcribed into Excel, double counts were eliminated through merging for each category data disaggregated by political violence (human rights, IHL, social political violence). For example, a homicide may be treated as both a human rights violation and a violation of IHL, and thus double counted (see appendix 3, table 1). Each municipality was given a code that coincided with the codes in ArcGIS (see appendix 3, table 2). CINEP data is structured so that each line represents a specific violent act, meaning that the same municipality appears repeatedly if different acts occurred there. I needed all violent acts (disaggregated by category) pertaining to a municipality to appear on one line. For example, all homicides occurring in Barrancabermeja were to be recorded on one line. The reordering of data in this way was done through the creation of pivot tables (see appendix 3, table 3). Thereafter, data was linked to the attribute tables in ArcGIS. This allowed for the visual representation of data at the precise geographical location where it occurred. Maps were created for each category of insecurity, which were then layered to give a graphic overview of where insecurities clustered geographically. With the number of incidents ranging from one to 678 events per municipality, the standard deviation distribution of data (insecurities) was mapped to identify regions with particularly high incidents of violence. Through this process, the Magdalena Medio and Catatumbo regions were identified. While there were other regions where violence clustered, the final selection was partly informed matters of access. The below map illustrates the clustering of in/security dynamics and the two research sites selected.

\textsuperscript{19} Transcribing data manually means that there is always a margin of error, where some entries might have been missed. Moreover, a number of entries did not identify the municipality in which the violation took place, and as such, could not be mapped.
4.5.1.3 Contextual background of the research sites

The Catatumbo region is located in north-eastern Colombia bordering Venezuela. It is a largely mountainous and forested region, rich in oil, carbon and uranium (Defensoria del Pueblo, 2006). While much resource extraction is taking place, the wealth generated is not injected into the municipalities, which are among the poorest and most underdeveloped in Colombia (Salinas, 2014). State institutional presence has ranged from weak to absent in the
region throughout history (FIP, 2013). The local ombudsman’s office argues that the strong presence of IAGs has made the region largely ungovernable (Defensoria del Pueblo, 2006). Unmet basic needs in rural areas of Catatumbo average 71 per cent (DNE, 2012). This compares to the national average (including both urban and rural areas) of 27 per cent. A myriad of IAGs operate in the region. The ELN guerrilla first established a presence in Catatumbo in the 1970s. This was followed by the FARC and the EPL guerrillas in the 1980s. All three guerrilla groups maintain a presence in the region. Limited paramilitary presence in the region has been registered since the late 1980s, though a massive incursion occurred in the late 1990s. The paramilitaries operated with the support of the armed forces and they have been the group that committed most atrocities in the region (CODHES, 2014). Following the paramilitary DDR process, several new IAGs/Bacrim have established a presence in the region (DNP, 2013; FIP, 2013; Salinas, 2014). Its remoteness and abandonment, coupled with numerous clandestine crossings into Venezuela, create an optimal environment for the illegal economy on which these groups thrive (DNP, 2013; FIP, 2013). The region has become a strategic trafficking and smuggling corridor (Salinas, 2014). In 2015, Catatumbo was among the three regions in the country where most coca was cultivated (UNODC, 2016). The dynamics have resulted in a high risk of falling victim to the armed conflict, as estimated by UARIV (see also map 5.5).

While Cúcuta is not part of the Catatumbo region, it is the largest town in close proximity to the region. Similar dynamics occur in Cúcuta as in Catatumbo, in regard to IAG presence and activity (Idler, 2012b). Prior to the paramilitary incursion, the guerrilla groups had considerable militia presence in the marginalised neighbourhoods (barrios) of Cúcuta. The paramilitaries gained substantive control over the city from the late 1990s and through to their demobilisation, during which time more than 10,000 people were assassinated, over 100,000 displaced, and tens of thousands disappeared (CODHES, 2014).

The Magdalena Medio region refers to a stretch of valley along the Magdalena River connecting the northern part of Colombia with the centre, making it an important transport and illegal trafficking corridor (Barreto, 2007). As with Catatumbo, it is rich in natural resources, including oil, gold and uranium. The richness of the region stands in sharp contrast with the poverty of its communities and the high level of unsatisfied basic needs. The level of unsatisfied basic needs averages 63 per cent outside the municipal seats, reaching 94 per cent in some municipalities (DNE, 2012). The strong presence of both guerrilla groups and Bacrim has resulted in constant territorial disputes between the groups (LeGrand, 2016). Whereas coca cultivation and trafficking are the key sources of income for the IAGs in the
Catatumbo region, in Magdalena Medio illegal and informal mining is becoming the dominant source (Aponte et al., 2016; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2015).

The dynamics of the regions have resulted in a high likelihood of civilians falling victim to the conflict. The UARIV provides an index measuring the risk of victimhood in the context of the internal armed conflict, using five categories: high, medium high, medium, medium low, and low (UARIV, 2014). In 2013, the index was high for six of the nine municipalities that make up the Catatumbo region, with the highest index in the country found in one of these municipalities. In the Magdalena Medio region, 24 of the 33 municipalities were in the high or medium high categories.

4.5.2 Phase Two: Analysis of National Security Policy

The second phase entailed the analysis of official policy documents and discourse detailing security policy – or policy with discernible impact on in/security. While this phase contains a certain overlap with the previous phase, the purpose here was to scan for relevant concepts that indicated understandings of in/security at the macro-level. Specifically, I sought to locate how policies and discourse not only reflected, but also constructed, a certain social reality and versions of events. As Bacchi (2009) argues, policies reflect deep-seated cultural assumptions. In my analysis, I make use of Bacchi’s approach to policy analysis, which focuses on how problems are represented and the underlying assumptions. To this end, I see security-related policies as being developed in order to address a specific problem that government action needs to resolve. Policies, therefore, reflect a certain representation of that problem and imply a certain understanding of what needs to change. Through the analysis of policies such as national security policy, territorial consolidation, the VLRL, I look at how the specific security threats are represented, what the underlying assumptions of these representations are, and what forms of prior knowledge are necessary for statements around these threats to be comprehensible. In doing so, I make use of discourse analysis techniques to identify and interrogate binaries, concepts and categories operating within these policies. I will refer to the issue of illegal mining to illustrate the above. In policy, illegal mining is discussed in relation to legal mining, where the former is presented as a security threat – a problem requiring government action. Legal mining, on the other hand, is prioritised and encouraged due to the resources generated, which are foreseen as a main source of financing for the implementation of the peace accords. Yet, simplifying the issue of mining into that of illegal and legal mining greatly simplifies the complex dynamics that occur in the border areas of the legal/illegal, namely that of informal mining. Invariably,
binaries simplify complex relationships. Thus, it is important to locate where they appear in policies and ‘how they function to shape the understanding of the issue’ (pg.7). Similarly, the meanings assigned to the concepts of legal/illegal mining in policies matter a great deal. As Bacchi elaborates, policies are filled with concepts, which are abstract labels that are fiercely contested as people fill them with different meanings. Illegal mining denotes an understanding at the macro-level of mining occurring outside of government-regulated and taxed spheres as a problem of illegality and criminality. It is specifically linked to the activities of the IAGs as a main source of income for these groups and, by extension, a driver of insecurity in Colombia. Thus, illegal mining has come to signify an activity that is enabled by, and enabling, the armed conflict (Presidencia de la Republica, 2015). Finally, security policy assumes that people engaged in this activity pertain to, or actively collaborate with, the IAGs. Resultantly, they are criminalised and branded a security threat. While not oblivious to the existence of informal miners (i.e. subsistence miners without the required legal documents), security policy makes implicit that informal miners have a choice as to which category s/he pertains. By stipulating how informal miners can formalise their status and, thereby, operate legally, not doing so is seen to be a choice by the individual miner. As will be elaborated in the empirical chapters, the use of binaries, concepts and categories gives meanings to problem representations. Taken together, the problem of representations in security-related policy hold important clues to how in/security is understood at the macro-level.

4.5.3 Phase Three: Primary Data Sampling

In this section, I detail how primary data was collected and analysed. Primary data was obtained from interviews at the macro- and micro-levels. In addition, interviews were also held with individuals not representing either level, but who were of importance for the research. Being representatives of local, national and international NGOs, and academia – thus situated in between the macro- and micro-levels – I term these interviews as pertaining to the meso-level.

4.5.3.1 The practicalities of the interviews

In all, 48 interviews were conducted between May 2014 and May 2015 (detailed in appendix 4). The ease of obtaining interviews varied considerably between levels. All interviews but one solicited at the meso-level were granted. At the macro-level, most of the interviews requested were granted, however, interviews within the defence sector proved to be difficult to obtain. Despite having personal recommendations, interview requests were either ignored,
not granted, or cancelled at short notice. While data from this sector would have been useful, I find this ‘silence’ of analytical value. As this happened repeatedly with the defence sector, I interpret this as a reluctance to discuss matters pertaining to in/security. This is perhaps not surprising given that military discourse is traditionally of a confidential nature, surrounded by secrecy (Deschaux-Beaume, 2012), and thus at odds with the main purpose of the research. To compensate for the lack of interviews with the defence sector, I have referred to interviews with retired officers from the armed forces sector published by ACORE.20 It was, however, the interviews at the micro-level that were the most difficult to obtain. The majority were obtained only by recommendation and very few interviews sought without any prior recommendation were granted. From findings in other interviews, I interpret this reluctance to participate as an indication of the precarious in/security dynamics in the region. Many people are unwilling to engage with people unknown to them and to discuss such sensitive topics which my research entailed. However, once interviews were arranged, informants were keen to participate and demonstrated an interest in the research.

All interviews – bar the one held at an IDP settlement – were conducted in urban areas. Although I focus also on rural areas in my research, access difficulties prevented me from conducting interviews in rural sites. These areas are very difficult to reach, as roads are unpaved, and many villages are not connected to the national road grid. Access is also considerably curtailed due to contamination by landmines and a strong presence of IAGs (though, it should be noted that IAGs are also present in the urban areas). As such, arrangements were made to interview people from rural areas in nearby towns. The way I did this was by attending meetings organised by victim organisations, participating in the annual assembly and workshops organised by the farmer associations, as well as setting up interviews at the offices of community-based organisations. I gained access to the Perseverancia IDP settlement by accompanying an INGO conducting outreach activities in the settlement. While the staff introduced me to the inhabitants, they did not participate in any of the interviews and had no influence over whom I spoke to during this visit.

Most of the interviews were conducted individually and in a secluded setting. A number of interviews could not, however, be conducted in this way – notably those conducted in Perseverancia and in IDP shelters – which had a direct impact on how interviewees spoke and the issues they spoke of. In Perseverancia, a focus group discussion (FGD) was held in the abandoned school building (referred to in 1.1), whereas in the IDP shelter the interview

20 ACORE is the national association for retired military officers.
was held in an office shared by several persons and with people frequently running in and out. While these interviews resulted in less direct information on matters of in/security, they provided valuable insights into actual security dynamics. It also provided a telling contrast with the interviews from similar communities conducted in secluded settings, enabling me to visibly confirm accounts of social control, state abandonment and other forms of insecurity narrated in these interviews. At the same time, IAG infiltration had an impact on the interviews in the sense that it generated a level of caution on my part. At times, persons not part of the interviews would join the conversation. On some occasions, it was not clear why such third party had joined, nor was permission to join asked. While this might have been a case of common curiosity around my visit, due to the particular in/security dynamics in the settlement, it affected what questions I asked. At times, the presence of an additional person changed the way the other interviewees spoke. Nevertheless, on these occasions I decided it was preferable to continue the interviews, though adjusting the questions according to the changed situation.

In the light of the sensitivity of the issues discussed, interviews were not tape recorded as this would have provided a direct identifiable link between the individual and the research. Instead, notes were taken during the interviews. As notes were written in a mixture of languages and abbreviations, the notes were transcribed straight after each interview. While I took detailed notes, it was often not possible to write the precise wording used by the interviewee. For this reason, I do not include in the empirical chapters large amounts of direct quotations; instead, narratives are paraphrased. Interviews lasted approximately one hour, apart from the visit to Perseverancia, where I conducted a longer FGD. After each interview, reflections were recorded, which also made up part of the fieldwork diary. All interviews were conducted in Spanish. This means that quotations from the interviews in the following empirical chapters have been translated. Certain expressions are not possible to translate literally, in which case they are included also in Spanish.

4.5.3.2 The ethics of the interviews

My research relies on the involvement of human participants and, thus, adheres to standard ethical principles pertaining to participants’ safety, rights, dignity and well-being. These include ensuring participation is voluntary and based upon detailed information around the purpose and scope of the research. My research was granted ethical approval by the UREC ethics committee on 17th July 2013.
Researching in/security in the context of an armed conflict introduces specific ethical concerns. Seeking out narratives from the margins by definition involves the inclusion of research participants who navigate the borderlands where the legal and illegal meet – as the account from Perseverancia illustrates. What I mean by borderlands here are situations, like that of Perseverancia, where individuals to a varying degree live under the social control of the IAGs. Or where they are perceived – although not officially declared – to be illegal by certain segments of society (including at the macro-level), as is the case with Ascamcat. Navigating borderlands makes individuals highly vulnerable. Furthermore, their very inclusion in the research could contribute to another layer of vulnerability (Goldstein, 2014). Being seen talking to an outsider can raise many suspicions, such as the participants are acting as informants. To reduce any such potential vulnerability, all interviewees and places that may act as an identifier of the interviewees in question have been anonymised. While not all interviewees insisted on such anonymisation, such as the two farmer associations, I have decided to anonymise all interviewees. On the one hand, anonymising all interviews provides a level of coherence. However, and more importantly, identifying some interviewees could potentially indirectly identify others. The names of the farmer associations, however, are real. By discussing the ZRCs (existing or proposed) run by the associations in the two regions, this identifies the farmer association. However, while the real name of the farmer association is used, there is no information that allows the identification of the individuals spoken to. As an additional means of ensuring anonymity, I relied on verbal as opposed to written informed consent. I also allowed the interviewee to decide on where and when to conduct the interview. During the interviews in Perseverancia, however, this level of anonymity could not be guaranteed. I adjusted to this by making my interview questions less sensitive.

Ethical concerns also pertain to potential distress produced by talking about in/security. All interviewees at the micro-level had suffered direct violent consequences of the armed conflict. While I did not seek out these particular details, many interviewees contributed with the specifics of their own violent experiences. On some occasions, this caused visible distress. A few interviewees sought to use the interview as a way to denounce the crimes that they had suffered. Although I had taken great care at the beginning of each interview to explain the purpose and scope of the research in general and the interview in particular, there was a belief by some interviewees that I – as a foreign researcher – had access to international justice mechanisms. On these few occasions, I sought (often unsuccessfully) to re-direct the interview away from denouncing specific crimes. While I sought to nudge the interviewee
away from certain topics, I came to realise that this was the narrative around in/security that
the interviewee wanted to tell.

4.5.3.3 Grounded theory-inspired sampling and analysis

In collating and analysing interviews, I turned to grounded theory to make use of its
systematic process of data collection and analysis. Grounded theory is concerned with
people’s subjective experiences of everyday life, influenced by broader historical,
geographical and structural contexts (Knigge and Cope, 2006). Therefore, it lends itself
particularly well to exploring derivative understandings of in/security. Central to grounded
theory is the cyclical process of data collection and constant comparative analysis. The aim
is to narrow down the research to the principal concepts and categories emerging from the
data. Following this process, my research was narrowed down so that in/security
understandings reflected the different communities as opposed to straightforward
individualism. Similarly, I sought to draw out understandings representative of the macro-
level, as opposed to the personal opinion of the interviewee. However, as the empirical
chapters demonstrate, boundaries are not always clearly defined.

As alluded to, the first round of interviews targeted the meso-level, focusing on organisations
working at both the national and local level. Throughout the fieldwork period, seven rounds
of interviews were conducted at the meso-level, comprising of 11 individual interviews.
Nine were conducted during the three initial rounds: one round at the national level, and one
in each target region. The purpose of the interviews was to 1) obtain specific information on
the security dynamics in the micro-site regions, including changes over time and place, 2)
establish the initial key concepts around in/security to inform subsequent interviews, and 3)
to find ways to approach communities at the micro-level.

Informed by these interviews, seven rounds of interviews were conducted at the micro-level,
totalling 19 interviews. The three main objectives of these interviews were to 1) collect
narratives indicating how communities understood in/security, 2) explore how
understandings related to identity, context and macro-level understandings of in/security,
and 3) explore how in/security was negotiated on an everyday basis.

At the macro-level, four rounds of interviews were conducted, totalling eight interviews. The
reason behind this slightly lower number of interviews is that most of the analysis on macro-
level understandings of in/security is derived from the public policies, as outlined above.
Interviews were built upon this analysis with the objective to 1) clarify any uncertainties in
policies, 2) assess implementation, and 3) compare and contrast findings from the micro-level. Interviews were held at the executive level of each institution under the assumption that high-level staff would be less constrained in their answers than more junior staff. Including representatives of state entities at both national and local level gave an insight into dynamics between these two levels.

According to the logic of grounded theory, initial data collection targets those sources selected for holding relevant information on the topic on which to ground initial analysis (Baker et al., 1992; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Cutcliffe, 2000; Morse, 1991). Thereafter, data collection is informed by the emerging concepts and categories derived from the data collected – so-called, theoretical sampling. For this reason, the first rounds of interviews were held at the meso-level. Key informants from national and international NGOs and international organisations (IOs) were selected, based on their extensive work both at the macro- and micro-levels. The interviews provided an overview of the main in/security dynamics generally, as well as contacts to initial informants from the macro- and micro-levels. To counter the risk of selection bias pertaining to this form of snowball sampling techniques, where a series of referrals are created within a circle of people who know each other (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997), I had carefully identified which kind of informants to speak to and sought recommendations specifically for this category.

Following the process of constant comparative analysis, data from a community was collected, coded and analysed. Informed by the processed findings, a second round of data collection followed. Each interview was transcribed, and key concepts indicating understandings of in/security were coded. To this end, I scanned for concepts indicating overlapping identity communities, the specific contexts navigated, as well as how the interviewee spoke of ‘the other’, the binaries and the categories used. Data was coded using NVivo, which helped compare items across interviews, narrow down data into concepts, and establish underlying relationships in the data. Each concept was made into a node in NVivo. All data in the transcripts that related to a node was coded at this node. Nodes were aggregated, disaggregated and/or deleted as appropriate as data collection and analysis proceeded. Drawing from Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2011), in this way the use of NVivo increased the rigour of the study.

In order to ensure that this process did not expand in all kinds of directions, data sampling was confined within the boundaries of the general research topic and specific research questions. Within these boundaries, I took great care to avoid any preconceived notions of
in/security. To balance these objectives, that is narrowing down the research to reflect understandings of in/security shared among a specific community, while not enforcing any preconceived notions of in/security, interviews were semi-structured. For each interview, I had several open-ended questions I wanted to discuss (see appendix 5), informed by the continuous coding and analysis process. This cyclical process allowed for identifying the derivative understandings of in/security in the way that the concepts, on which I based my analysis, emerged from the data as opposed to being predefined. This allowed for the focus to fall on the articulation of subjective experiences of everyday life, as influenced by identity, and broader historical, geographical and structural contexts.

4.5.3.4 Interviews as interactional

From the interview data, I sought out concepts that indicated how the interviewee understood in/security. In keeping with the focus on how in/security is understood, rather than objectively defining what in/security is, I did not seek to ascertain the ‘truth’ of the specific narratives. That is, the truth of interviewees’ experiences, sentiments and thoughts. Rather, I sought out how what was perceived as truths were produced, sustained and negotiated (Rapley, 2004). I approached the narratives around in/security as particular versions of events, contingent on the identities the individual constitutes and adheres to and on the context s/he navigates. When exploring the how, it is important to remember that interviews are inherently interactional events, where both the interviewer and interviewee monitor each other’s talk (Blakey, 2013; Rapley, 2004). As such, interview data is very much a reflection of the encounter between the interviewer and the interviewee (Rapley, 2004). How this interaction formed varied considerably between interviews, where issues of trust and expectations had considerable impact. As I only interviewed a person once, as opposed to developing deeper and continuous research relationships, it was important to establish a level of trust from the very start. The way I set about doing so was to be open about my research, what I sought from the interview, and how I would use the interview data. In doing so, I informed interviewees that I was holding interviews also at the state level and the purpose of this was to compare and contrast findings. On some occasions, I noticed that this created distrust instead. In all interviews, I pointed out that I would not refer in any interview to any specific interviewee, or what that person had said. Rather, my approach to compare and contrast was to bring up in the interviews (at both levels) that ‘it has been found…’.

Nevertheless, I gradually refrained from this specific mentioning as, at times, I found it affected the interviewees. On some occasions, and possibly due to the above, there were issues that the interviewees did not want to discuss. One such issue was the re-emergence of
paramilitary forces in the Magdalena Medio region, which had been mentioned in some interviews at the meso-level. The unwillingness to discuss this matter could have been an indicator of a lack of trust, which was not entirely unexpected due to the constant threats to the lives of the interviewees in question. However, as previously outlined, I found these kinds of silence to be of analytical relevance and an indicator of in/security dynamics.

4.5.3.5 Triangulation

Findings from interviews were triangulated using secondary data. To this end, data was used from a wide range of sources, and I also consulted channels through which formal denouncements are made. Channels consulted included the websites of Prensa Rural and CCALP. Prensa Rural is a communication platform that aims to give voice to farmers. CCALP, on the other hand, is a collective of human rights lawyers. Fifty denouncements pertaining to crimes perpetrated in the Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio regions were consulted, spanning the period 2012 to 2015. The denouncements explored (made by individuals not part of the research) largely corroborated in/security dynamics, referred to at the micro-level interviews, and provided more detailed information on the specific kinds of violent acts that occur in the region. Finally, to complement and triangulate findings from micro-level interviews, I also consulted an archive that had recorded the oral history of victims of the armed conflict. The AMOVI archive is placed at the Industrial University of Santander, Bucaramanga. I consulted nine life story transcripts between January and February 2015. The background of the archive is detailed in appendix 6. While the transcripts were anonymised, it was possible to detect that many of the accounts related to the Magdalena Medio region due to references to the proximity of larger towns (not anonymised) and other geographical indicators. The narratives contained many similarities with those narratives that emerged from research at the micro-level. However, as the archive recorded the life history of each individual, it was also possible to detect spatial and temporal changes in in/security dynamics.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the research philosophy that informed my overall research objectives and subsequent research questions. I have argued that a constructivist ontological perspective, combined with an interpretivist epistemological position, provides the most appropriate foundation for researching how in/security is understood and produced, and the implications of contested meanings. From this position, I outlined my research methodology for answering the research questions. My research methodology is that of a single case study.
using mixed methods in a way that allows me to bridge the macro- and micro-levels. Combining qualitative, quantitative and visual methods allowed me to discuss in/security understandings in a relational manner. In particular, in line with the conceptual framework set out in Chapter Two (2.5), the specific research sites were selected for being conflict-affected areas of heightened insecurity, according to macro-level understandings of in/security as indicated in main national security policies. These are thus areas which much in/security-related programmes and practice target. Selecting community groupings present in these areas to constitute the micro-level, allows for researching in/security understandings from the embedded perspective of the subjects of securitising moves. Research was conducted along three loosely chronological phases, each which have been detailed and justified in this chapter. This chapter has also given an account of positionality, ethics and challenges arising when conducting research in a volatile setting. The following chapters present the empirical data of the research.
CHAPTER FIVE: Understandings of In/Security at the Macro-Level

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is centred on research question 1: ‘How is in/security understood and practised at the state level’? In answering this question, I interrogate derivative dimensions, underlying assumptions, and boundaries. Specifically, in line with the conceptual framework, I inquire into how understandings of in/security are derivative of context, with its various dimensions including territorial, political and cultural dimensions (2.5.1). Contextual factors, as argued in Chapter Two, tie in with identity factors, and in interpreting in/security understandings at the macro-level, I consider the performative interplay between in/security understandings, practice and state identity (2.3.2). I use the term macro-level, as Chapter Three details, to capture a cluster of state institutions/entities, with a direct mandate over responding to the armed conflict, while paying attention to how ‘the state’ is invoked in discourse and policy (2.5.2). In doing so, I problematise the paradox that emerges between the projection of a unified state actor, and intrastate tensions, and the implications thereof for security-related policy and practice. This chapter centres on four main arguments, as follows:

1) Macro-level in/security understandings are associated with state territorial control and institutional consolidation, which will enable the state to govern its population and guarantee its constitutional and human rights. Such understandings translate to a spatial sequenced approach to in/security, where violent regions with weak state territorial control are first militarily secured, after which other state institutions gradually consolidate their presence.

2) Security policy and discourse is framed in a rights-based language, which emphasises the security of individuals/communities as a right and the provision of security as an obligation by the state. I term this framing a people-oriented approach, in reference to the broadened and deepened in/security understandings it reflects (see 2.3). However, while discursively promoting a people-centred approach to in/security, this is in fact made conditional on a state-centred military approach to security.

3) The spatial sequenced approach assumes distinct boundaries between the legal and illegal. Yet, boundaries have been purposefully manipulated to enhance state legitimacy and its manoeuvrability over the IAGs.

4) Intra-state power struggles and distrust make the spatial sequenced approach to in/security contradictory.
In developing these arguments, the chapter begins with a discussion on the main in/security-related policies, drawing out the way they represent macro-level understandings of in/security, and how they constitute a spatial sequenced approach. Through GIS-based analysis, as detailed in Chapter Four (4.4.3), I provide a visual illustration of how security-related policies divide the country into consolidated and unconsolidated regions and, by extension, secure and insecure regions. Such mapping also illustrates how people-centred security is conditional on state-centred security. Summarising the spatial sequenced approach, I argue macro-level in/security understandings are underpinned by the main traditional security assumptions, discussed in Chapter Two (2.2).

Following on from this, the subsequent sections trace the way in/security understandings are derivative of context and with ties to a specific state identity. I first provide a brief comparative discussion on the way security-related policies and practices – in particular, representation of armed violence – are oriented towards enhancing state legitimacy, while manipulating the boundaries between the legal and illegal in order to enhance manoeuvrability of the armed forces. In this way, following Campbell’s argument, in/security is performatively constituted, projecting a specific state identity (Campbell, 1998). This identity is formed around the construction of a strong and legitimate state.

In the final sections, I discuss how representation of violence and the approach towards the armed conflict impact on inter-institutional dynamics, specifically the relation between the military and civilian state entities. Such dynamics have important implications for security policy and practice, given the military connotations of the spatial sequenced approach to in/security.

5.2 Geospatial Dimensions of In/Security

Understandings of in/security at the macro-level are associated with state territorial control and institutional consolidation, which will enable the state to govern its population and guarantee the population’s constitutional and human rights. Such understandings of in/security are largely derivative of the protracted armed conflict and the historic inability of the state to assert territorial control, as well as legal and institutional authority throughout its territory. This inability, as Chapter Three demonstrates, is tied to the physical and political geography of the country, historic bi-partisan rivalry and hostility between regional elites and the central government (3.2). In this volatile context, private armies and peasant defence movements were formed to provide protection and aspects of security to different sections of society (3.4). At the same time, the armed forces were kept deliberately under-resourced
due to fears of each party in the National Front agreement, that its opponent would use the military against them (Palacios, 2006). It has been argued that this limited governments’ ability to suppress the escalating growth of the private armies and the guerillas in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Oquist, 1980). As a result, alternative sites of authority were formed, imposing competing projects of rule and local governance structures in the peripheral regions of Colombia. Against this background, a conviction that only a strong state present throughout Colombian territory can provide security to its population was formed – a conviction that continues to underwrite security-related policy and practice.

Such understandings have translated into a spatial sequenced approach to in/security, where violent regions with weak state territorial control are first militarily secured, after which other state institutions gradually consolidate their presence. State presence is thus manifest through an institutional presence, which foments state governance structures in the ‘ungovernable regions’ (UAECT, 2014a). The spatial sequenced approach to in/security is based on an assumption that the country is divided into consolidated and unconsolidated regions, which largely coincides with the centre/periphery division set out in Chapter Three (3.3). According to the logic underlying security-related policy, by extension this division also correlates to secure and insecure regions. The unconsolidated and insecure peripheral regions are characterised in public policy and discourse by a set of mutually reinforcing dynamics, in which weak state presence facilitates the emergence and growth of IAGs. The consolidation of the IAGs in these regions, in turn, further challenges state territorial control, effectively impeding the state from governing and fulfilling its constitutional obligations towards the local population (DNP, 2014b; UAECT, 2014a). Central to the spatial sequenced approach to in/security, therefore, is the gradual integration of the peripheries into the economic, social, and institutional life of the country. The unconsolidated insecure regions are first militarily secured. Thereafter, the police and the civilian state institutions gradually consolidate their presence. Regions are considered consolidated once institutions provide civilians with protection, guarantee their rights and provide basic services, whereas municipalities interchange goods and services (UAECT, 2014a). The following sections set out the main in/security-related policies, the way they represent in/security, and how they constitute a spatial sequenced approach. By mapping the different indexes referred to in the policies, a visual illustration of the consolidated/secure and unconsolidated/insecure divide is provided. Such mapping also illustrates how people-centred security is conditional on state-centred security.
5.3 In/Security Understandings Represented in Policy

The overarching national policy direction is set out in the National Development Plan (NDP), which contains the main policy proposals and strategies proposed by the president and the cabinet for each four-year government period. The current NDP covering the 2014-2018 period was developed alongside the advancing peace negotiations with the FARC, and is strongly oriented towards transitioning the country into the post-conflict period. The government defines the post-conflict period as ‘the period that begins with the signing of a peace agreement between the parties involved and successfully ends with the satisfactory fulfilment of the issues negotiated’ (translated from Spanish) (CONPES 2016, pg.14).

Referring to the definition set out by the United Nations General Assembly (1992), this period includes a national peacebuilding agenda, guaranteeing truth, justice, reparation and the non-repetition of violence through the consolidation of the rule of law. Although a peace agreement had not been reached with the FARC at the time, it is stipulated in the NDP that the reforms which aim to transition the country into the post-conflict period will be implemented, regardless of whether an agreement is reached with the FARC or not. An underlying argument of the 2014-2018 NDP is that the post-conflict context will free up resources previously bound to the war effort, enabling the state to focus its efforts on closing socio-economic breaches. Socio-economic breaches and weak state territorial control are seen as an interlinked factor of the geographic concentration of the armed conflict in the peripheries. The IAGs control these regions to a varying degree, and a main objective of the security pillar of the NDP, therefore, is to re-establish military superiority over the IAGs in these areas. The transition to peace, therefore, is dependent on the armed forces creating and guaranteeing the required security conditions to consolidate peace.

5.3.1 National Security Policy

The in/security-related objectives of the NDP are incorporated into the national security policy, which guides the use of military and police force. Developed and implemented by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the current 2015-2018 national security policy identifies terrorism and organised crime as the main threats to national and citizen security. To ascertain and monitor in/security across the country, the MoD uses a traffic light approach (MinDefensa, 2011). Based on specific measurements of in/security, the country is
categorised at the municipal level into red, yellow and green zones. Red zones are defined as zones of national exception, where state intervention is predominantly military and governed by IHL. Yellow zones are transition zones, where security conditions allow for the police to gradually take over from the armed forces in the provision of security. Red and yellow zones are thus seen as the main conflict-affected areas of the country. Green zones are zones where the state has full territorial control, in which international human rights law applies and where the police is responsible for responding to in/security dynamics in line with citizen security policies, such as the ‘Green Hearts’ policy (MinDefensa, 2011). While data used for complying the traffic light index is classified, indicators include homicide rates, IAG presence, armed confrontations, drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortion rates, armed attacks against civilians, and attacks against critical infrastructure (DNP, 2014b). The emphasis on such quantitative data on high-impact violence produces a particular form of knowledge and truths for defining in/security (see 2.3.1) which, in turn, translate into specific enactments (see 2.3.4) to achieve security (see 2.2.1), as demonstrated below.

Most military interventions against these threats are implemented under the Sword of Honour (SoH) strategy, also termed a war plan. Its main objectives include disarticulating the enemy (initially defined as the FARC) and neutralising its offensive capacities, protecting national economic infrastructure, and gaining loyalty of the civilian population (MinDefensa and Grupo Social y Empresarial de la Defensa, n.d.). It is implemented in 12 peripheral areas, where an estimated 93 per cent of all war action takes place (MinDefensa, 2013a; Vanguardia, 2014). The strategy was originally developed in response to the changing modus operandi of the FARC and its retreat to its historic areas of influence following the losses incurred by the (consolidated) democratic security plan (C/DSP) of the two Uribe governments 2002-2010 (Prieto et al., 2014). As implementation progressed, the strategy has been extended to include the ELN and other ‘terrorist support structures’ (Monroy, 2013). Legislative amendments in 2015 (discussed in a later section), further extended the strategy to include what was until then known as Bacrim – effectively subjecting organised crime groups to IHL. In this way, the remit of the armed forces is continued in the peripheries, while FARC presence has actually demised. The spatial

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21 In the 2015-2018 national security policy, reference is not made to the traffic light approach. However, in several of the macro- and meso-level interviews, it was stated that this approach is maintained (interviews: divisional director B, UAECT, Bogota 11/11/2014; programme officer, UAECT, Cúcuta, 14/15/2015; and regional director, UN agency, Cúcuta, 6/10/14).
sequenced approach thereby extends beyond the FARC and conflict-related political violence.

Map 5.1 illustrates where the 12 SoH sites are located, thus serving as a visual indication of where the armed conflict – as perceived by the MoD – is concentrated.

**Map 5.1. Sword of Honour Sites**

It can be discerned from the map that the main conflict-affected regions are found on, or close to, the geographical border regions. The SoH strategy targets Catatumbo (circled), but not Magdalena Medio, which is noteworthy if one compares the SoH sites with map 4.1 (hotspots), which shows how violence – as measured by the indicators used by the MoD –
is more intense in Magdalena Medio than in Catatumbo (in 2013-2014). This paradox is analysed in the following sections.

The spatial sequenced approach to in/security foresees a transition from the reliance on the armed forces for the provision to security, to an emphasis on civilian state institutions. To this end, security-related policies incorporate components to improve relations between the state and the civilian population in the peripheral regions. It is recognised at the macro-level that state absence, coupled with IAG presence, have eroded confidence in the state among many local communities (DNP, 2014b). Thus, parallel to the national security objective to eliminate the terrorist and organised crime threats, security policy also seeks to restore state-society relations. To this end, the doctrine on integral action aims to complement armed military interventions in the peripheries with non-armed military interventions. The doctrine cross-cuts all security-related policies and strategies, in an effort to catalyse inter-institutional efforts that contribute to territorial consolidation (MinDefensa, 2015). Oriented towards the civilian population, integral action seeks to improve the legitimacy and popularity of the armed forces and, in this way, devoid the IAGs of any voluntary support among the local population in a traditional hearts and minds counter-insurgency fashion. As part of the integral action, the armed forces are conducting activities to foment and improve civil-military relations in the territories where offensive actions take place. These include civic-military days and development support days, which are days when the armed forces conduct health, recreational, and infrastructural improvement activities in the local communities. Gaining the support of the local population, and thereby separating them from the IAGs, it is the armed forces’ intention to encourage voluntary demobilisation of IAG (mainly guerrilla) members. Yet, it is also, as one interviewee at the meso-level argued, a way to identify people and collect information in order to locate guerrilla fighters (interview, two high-level officials, UN agency, Cúcuta 8/10/2014). In this way, the integral action doctrine continues the boundary-producing tendencies of the C/DSP in distinguishing the ‘good Colombians’ who cooperate with the state from those who do not, with the latter perceived as terrorists or with terrorist links (see 3.4.3).

5.3.2 The Territorial Consolidation Programme

Once the armed forces have established the required security conditions, the police increasingly replace the armed forces, while state institutions gradually consolidate their presence to foment governance structures. Facilitating the transition from military interventions to consolidated institutional presence is the purpose of the consolidation
programme, a programme which straddles military and state-building initiatives in the peripheries (UAECT, 2014a). The programme is implemented in nine of the most ungovernable and violent regions of the country. The consolidation programme is based on the premise that, by recuperating institutional authority and integrating the peripheries into the economic, social and institutional life of the country, the threat to national and citizen security will be destroyed. Institutionalisation in the peripheries, according to the government, should be understood not only as the presence of state entities, but also as a set of practices and norms that regulate public life (Jaramillo, 2013). In/security understandings, as represented through the consolidation programme, thus also condition in/security on governability. Epitomising the spatial sequenced approach to security, the programme seeks to consolidate state institutional presence through a gradual and irreversible process along three main pillars: 1) territorial institutionalisation; 2) citizen participation and good governance; and 3) regional integration. Framed through a rights-based people-oriented discourse, initiatives within the programme centre on providing justice, guaranteeing constitutional and human rights, and providing access to services and markets. Institutional consolidation also aims to encourage and facilitate private sector investment, which is deemed to be of prime importance for the integration of the regions in view of the economic, social and institutional life of the country.

The consolidation programme originated as a strategy in the MoD. It was moved to the Presidency’s Social Prosperity Office in 2011, to be implemented by the newly created UAECT. The reason behind the shift was to institutionalise the state’s consolidation efforts, turning it into a permanent state programme as opposed to a military strategy (Isacson, 2012). As with national security policy, progress is monitored through a traffic light approach. However, the categorisation of municipalities into red, yellow or green zones applies only to the nine consolidation regions, and indicators are defined and monitored by the UAECT, as opposed to the MoD and the National Security Council. In addition to measuring high-impact violent acts, indicators also measure the guarantees that the state can provide, such as service provision and the participation in democratic processes (interview, divisional director B, UAECT, Bogotá 11/11/2014). In this way, the UAECT represents a wider people-oriented understanding of in/security than the MoD. Red zones are security recuperation zones, in which state interventions are almost entirely military and implemented under the SoH strategy. Yellow zones are transition zones. Interventions in these zones are principally conducted through rapid reaction programmes, which are high-impact projects that aim to demonstrate a state presence and resolve urgent needs in the communities (UAECT, 2015). Counter-narcotics efforts are among the main interventions
in red and yellow zones, which combines eradication of illicit crops with substitution programmes. Interventions still rely strongly on the armed forces, with military accompaniment of civilian public and private sectors deemed essential. Only in the green stabilisation zones do interventions focus on establishing permanent state presence, democratic governance structures and integrating the private sector. In these zones, security provision has been transferred from the military to the police. Map 5.2 below illustrates the location of the nine consolidation sites (Catatumbo circled), which serves as a visual indication of conflict-affected regions through a wider understanding of in/security. Even through such wider understanding, insecurity is predominantly confined to border regions.

Map 5.2. Territorial Consolidation Sites
Through a comparative reading of the SoH strategy and the consolidation programme, aided by the above maps (5.1 and 5.2), it is possible to argue that the consolidation programme is, in fact, partly an exercise in legitimising a narrow military approach to in/security in the peripheries. Or, to refer back to Abrams’ (1988) notion of the state, an exercise to legitimise the illegitimate, making tolerable the intolerable (2.5.2). Four aspects underpin this argument: 1) the tarnished reputation of the armed forces; 2) implementation sites; 3) the sequenced logic of the consolidation programme; and 4) the lack of progress by the consolidation programme.

Over the past decades, military action in the peripheries has become strongly associated with human rights abuses and infringements of IHL, with the false-positive scandal (see footnote 10) being the strongest evidence of such abuses (Aviles, 2001; Delgado, 2015; Isacson, 2013). As discussed in Chapter Three (3.4.1), the DSP in particular tarnished the reputation of the armed forces. Against this background, framing military operations in a wider state-building narrative such as that of the consolidation programme, which emphasises the rights of the civilians and the state’s obligation in fulfilling these rights, provides an important level of justification for the militarised approach to in/security.

Secondly, official selection criteria for inclusion in the territorial consolidation is based on the environmental and strategic value of the regions, the potential for social and economic development, being situated in areas that have been affected by the armed conflict, illegal cultivation, and weak institutional presence (UAECT, 2012). Nevertheless, actual selection criteria appear to be much narrower and more closely reflect the SoH strategy. In an interview with a director at the UAECT, it was argued that the programme is principally implemented in regions with a strong FARC presence, with the FARC perceived as the main threat to integral state territorial control. As such, many violent regions with dire socio-economic conditions are not included. This is a main reason why the Magdalena Medio region is not part of the Consolidation programme. ‘In Magdalena Medio, the FARC is not disputing territory’ (interview, divisional director B, UAECT, Bogota 11/11/2014), indicating the importance of territorial control to in/security understandings. A comparative reading of maps 5.1 and 5.2, which are layered in map 5.3 below, illustrate the point, clearly showing that the consolidation regions are almost the same regions as the SoH regions.

Thirdly, implementing the consolidation programme and the SoH in the same regions strongly conditions the former on the latter. The consolidation programme and the SoH strategy are two separate initiatives, founded on different criteria, and using different
monitoring and evaluations categories (the two different traffic light systems). As a UAECT official confirmed, there are very few activities the local UAECT can implement, as long as municipalities remain in the red category (interview, programme officer, UAECT, Cúcuta, 14/05/2015). In Catatumbo, the programme has been unable to move beyond the very southern parts of the municipalities as in/security conditions do not allow the programme to progress further.

Finally, the slow implementation of the consolidation programme further illustrates precedence of the militarised approach. By May 2014, almost all municipalities in the consolidation zones were classified as either red or yellow. Only 328 municipalities out of the 4,510 part of the consolidation programme were green (UAECT, 2014b). This means that security interventions in these areas are still almost exclusively military. National security policy, the SoH strategy and the consolidation programme, therefore, all reflect a state-centred and predominantly military approach to in/security. The alignment of the consolidation programme with the SoH strategy, rather than with its stated foundations emphasising people-oriented aspects of in/security, is further illustrated by discussing the consolidation programme against the concept of territorial peace and the VLRL. The latter two purport a strong people-oriented understanding of in/security, emphasising those communities – as opposed to the state – most affected by the armed conflict.
5.3.3 Territorial Peace and the Victim and Land Restitution Law

Against the transition into the post-conflict period, the government adopted an approach to peacebuilding termed ‘territorial peace’, reflecting a people-oriented understanding of in/security. Underpinning territorial peace is a recognition that regions have been affected in different ways by the armed conflict. Essentially, the armed conflict has predominantly taken place in the peripheral rural regions, whereas it has been largely contained in the central urban regions (DNP, 2014b; Jaramillo, 2013). Such perception is in concurrence with maps 5.1-5.3. Because conflict dynamics have varied across regions and over time, a differential and contextual approach to peacebuilding reflecting the economic, cultural and social characteristics of the different territories is required. Territorial peace demands that peacebuilding efforts focus on the regions where the armed conflict has been the most
intense, reflecting the needs of the regions as expressed by their communities. Community participation is deemed essential for improving in/security. As set out by the government’s High Commissioner for Peace, the process must give voice to those who have experienced first-hand the armed conflict, with efforts focusing on restoring their rights. In this way, peacebuilding efforts aim to close the socio-economic development gap between rural and urban Colombia, which is seen as a main factor of the geographic concentration of the armed conflict in rural regions.

While, at the time of writing, the government has not indicated which are the prioritised conflict-affected regions are, the basic unsatisfied needs index compiled by the Department for National Planning (DNP) provides a good indicator of the socio-economic development gap referred to in territorial peace. The maps below categorise the level of basic unsatisfied needs among urban and rural populations in order to 1) illustrate the disparities between urban and rural populations (centre/peripheral division), and 2) illustrate the existence of peripheral urban areas, as indicated by high levels of unsatisfied basic needs.

As can be discerned from map 5.4, the peripheries - as characterised by high levels of unmet basic needs – are predominantly rural, covering vast areas of the country with the exception of the geographical centre, and the narrow corridor towards the western coast. Urban peripheral pockets (see 3.3) are found in both Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio. Territorial peace focuses on narrowing the rural-urban divide illustrated above, and thus extends far beyond the narrowly defined conflict-affected regions, as per the SoH and consolidation programme.
Map 5.4. Percentage of Population with Basic Unsatisfied Needs: Rural and Urban
An important initiative part of the government’s approach to peacebuilding is the VLRL. While it is not a security-related policy per se, it provides important indications of macro-level in/security understandings and the consolidated/secure and unconsolidated/insecure divide. The VLRL is applicable only to ‘victims of the armed conflict’ (art.3) and has two specific aims: 1) to provide reparation to victims of human rights violations and infractions of IHL, and 2) to return stolen and abandoned land (El Congreso de Colombia, 2011). To benefit from the law, victims are obliged to declare the events that caused their victimhood. To this end, the government is actively promoting declarations and denouncements of conflict-related violence. The provision of reparation to victims of human rights violations and infractions of IHL falls on the UARIV. Guiding its work, the UARIV compiles an annual index on the risk of falling victim to the armed conflict in a particular municipality (IRV). The IRV was developed in response to a gap in public policy to prevent displacement, and an objective of the index is to reduce human rights violations that lead to displacement. Thus, the IRV centres on the humanitarian consequences of the armed conflict, also reflecting a wider people-oriented understanding of in/security.

The concept of the victim and violations of rights that underpin the index provide insights into the people-oriented understanding of in/security, including the way it assumes clear boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate victims. A victim of the internal armed conflict, as per article 3 of the VLRL, is any person who individually or collectively has suffered harm as a consequence of IHL infringements or grave and manifest violations of human rights. Eleven specific infringements and violations are defined. The risk of falling victim to the armed conflict is understood as the possibility that a threat in a certain place at a certain time converts to an actual violation of a fundamental right (as per IHL or international human rights legislation). The index is compiled using data from a variety of state institutions, including the MoD, forensic medicine, the national, regional and local ombudsman’s office. Municipalities are graded on a five-level scale, from low to high-level risk.

22 1) Terrorist acts/attacks/combat/confrontations/harassments; 2) Threats; 3) Sexual violence; 4) Forced disappearance; 5) Forced displacement; 6) Homicide/massacre; 7) Antipersonnel mines/unexploded munition and improvised explosive artefacts; 8) Kidnapping; 9) Torture; 10) IAG recruitment of children and adolescents; 11) Forced dispossession and/or abandonment of property.
Map 5.5 below illustrates the risk of falling victim to the armed country, as defined by the UARIV. Purple and red municipalities are those where the risk is the greatest, whereas, in yellow and green municipalities, the risk is the lowest. In this map, therefore, the purple and red municipalities may be considered to represent the unconsolidated/unsecure/peripheral regions, whereas the yellow and green are the consolidated/secure/centre regions.

**Map 5.5.** Risk of Falling Victim to the Armed Conflict in 2015
When comparing map 5.5 above map 5.4 (basic unsatisfied needs), it can be discerned that, with few exceptions, the areas where the risk of falling victim to the armed conflict is the highest, are also areas of high levels of unsatisfied basic needs. The two maps thus clearly support the premise of territorial peace, that the armed conflict has mainly affected peripheral regions. It should be noted however, that areas with high levels of unsatisfied basic needs, are not necessarily areas where the risk of falling victim to the armed conflict is high.

The IRV index is compiled by various sub-indexes. These include the presence of IAGs (the FARC, the ELN, and Bacrim), armed confrontations between IAGs and the armed forces, and IAGs attacks against the civilian population. Based on these sub-indexes, the following maps (5.6 to 5.9) illustrate in/security dynamics over a 10-year period, as represented by IAG presence, armed confrontation between the armed forces and the IAGs, and IAG attacks against civilians. The two highest levels, high and medium high, are visualised. These three maps are thereafter layered to illustrate the unconsolidated/unsecure/peripheral regions, as per the definition of these regions as violent, and with a high presence of IAGs.

A comparative reading of map 5.7 (confrontations between IAGs and the armed forces), with map 5.1 (SoH sites) and map 5.2 (territorial consolidation sites), illustrate that such confrontations largely coincide with the SoH and the territorial consolidation regions. Yet, when comparing map 5.8 (IAG attacks against civilians) and map 5.5 (risk of falling victim to the armed conflict) with map 5.2 (territorial consolidation sites), it is clear that the consolidation programme excludes large areas where conflict-related violence predominantly affects the civilian population. Moreover, many of these regions are regions with heightened levels of basic unsatisfied needs (map 5.4), also a stated priority indicator of the consolidation programme. A reading of the above maps thus reinforces the argument that the consolidation programme – with its stated people-oriented in/security approach targeted at the conflict-affected population – is, effectively, a legitimisation of the militarised approach to in/security.

Map 5.6. IAG Presence  Map 5.7. Confrontation between Armed Forces and the IAGs
A fundamental initiative to reduce the socio-economic development gap is the restitution of stolen and forcefully dispossessed land. The unequal distribution of land and high levels of
land concentration, exacerbated by forced displacement, are commonly perceived as a main underlying cause of the armed conflict (see 3.3), for which reason land restitution is a critical element in the peacebuilding efforts of the government. For this reason, as discussed further ahead in this chapter, the government argued that land restitution must commence despite the continuation of the armed conflict. Land restitution is nevertheless conditioned on state-centred security, with its military connotations, and provides for a persuasive role of the MoD and the armed forces. The decisions on which areas to prioritise are taken by the National Security Council, based on information provided by the MoD pertaining to in/security and the identification of risks within the respective geographical areas. Within these so-called macro-focalised areas, the URT is responsible for identifying the communities, hamlets or even individual farms that will be subject to restitution. This process is known as micro-focalisation. However, micro-focalisation is also dependent on security assessments and approval by the MoD, the armed forces and the security services, operating through different committees tied to the land restitution process. Ultimately, land restitution can only be implemented in areas in which security conditions allow (interview, high-level official, URT Norte de Santander, Cúcuta, 20/03/2015). Since May 2016, the entire country has been macro-focalised. Nevertheless, by August 2017, restitution orders covered only slightly more than 4,000 land parcels, out of more than 94,000 land parcels for which restitution had been sought (URT, 2017). A main reason for the lack of restitution orders is that many requests pertain to land in regions not yet micro-focalised (CSML, 2016; URT, 2017), and thus land restitution becomes conditional on narrow state/military oriented in/security understandings.

The above maps have illustrated the geographical division between what, at the macro-level, is conceptualised as the unconsolidated and insecure peripheries and the consolidated and secure centre. The peripheries are characterised by a high presence of IAGs (map 5.6) and high levels of violence, including armed confrontations between IAGs and the armed forces (map 5.7), and against the civilian population (map 5.8). Resultantly, the risk of falling victim to the armed conflict is high (map 5.5). These same regions are also characterised by high levels of unsatisfied basic needs (map 5.4). The central consolidated and secure regions, on the other hand, largely correspond to the Andean centre, with low IAGs presence and few armed confrontations. The risk of falling victim to the armed conflict is low, and the regions also have the lowest levels of socio-economic poverty.

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23 For a detailed overview of the macro- and micro-focalization process, see (Amnesty International, 2014).
Security-related policy and practice (principally the SoH and the Consolidation programme), however, largely target regions where IAGs pose a threat to the state rather than to the civilian population. The aim of these initiatives is to gradually integrate these regions into the consolidated/secure regions of the country, by first eliminating militarily identified security threats, and to ensure state territorial control and consolidated institutional presence. Both the SoH and the Consolidation programme are framed in a wider people-oriented security language; yet, as illustrated above, people-oriented security – including land restitution – is conditional on state-centred territorial control and institutional consolidation. Thus, a spatial sequenced logic is discerned, in which territorial control is seen as a prerequisite for institutional consolidation, whereas institutional consolidation is seen as a prerequisite for the state to be able to fulfil its obligations (in terms of protection, rights, and service provision) towards its citizens. It can be concluded from the above that macro-level understandings of in/security harbour several realist and liberalist assumptions. These will be discussed in the following sections.

5.4 State-Centred Foundations

The spatial sequenced approach to in/security effectively places the state as the referent object of security. This means that security policies and practice are oriented towards eliminating threats to the state – which, in turn, provides security to its citizens as the state is the main security provider for citizens (see 2.2). The reliance on the armed forces to establish the security conditions deemed necessary for consolidating a state institutional presence establishes a hierarchy, where narrow security – in terms of military superiority of the state – is a prerequisite for wider security in terms of people-oriented security. Territorial control is conditioned on the successes of the armed forces, thereby giving in/security a significant military connotation and assuring a persuasive standing of the armed forces. Echoing realist approaches, discussed in Chapter Two, security becomes synonymous with the accumulation of coercive power (2.2.1). Insecurity, on the other hand, becomes synonymous with state weakness – that is, the inability to assure territorial control and govern its population. The approach to in/security thereby rests on the assumption that state weakness is the principal underlying cause of insecurity. As macro-level policies and discourse confine state weakness to the peripheries, the peripheries are associated with insecurity. Only by assuring state territorial control and institutional consolidation – and, therefore, governance over the population – can security be extended to the population in the peripheries.
The reliance on the armed forces to generate minimum levels of security was significantly increased following the breakdown of the Caguán peace negotiations and the parallel strengthening of the FARC (see 3.4.1). The prominence given to the armed forces in generating security is in no small part demonstrated by the substantial strengthening of the armed forces since the Caguán breakdown. Between the time of the Caguán peace talks and 2015, the size of the armed forces almost doubled – from 250,000 in 2000 to over 470,000 in 2015 (MinDefensa, 2015). The priority given to narrow security is also reflected in the high proportion of GDP devoted to military expenditure. Colombia has been the country with the highest military expenditure in GDP in the Latin American region over the last ten years, ranging between three and four per cent (SIPRI, 2015). It has also consistently been the country with the largest share of government expenditure devoted to military expenditure in the region over the same period, ranging between 11 and 14 per cent. This compares to an average of six per cent for the region if excluding Colombia (SIPRI, 2015). The imbalance between institutional budgets has been highlighted by the UN Human Rights Council (2014), which has drawn attention to the fact that the combined annual budgets of the five key institutions mandated with assisting the conflict-affected population, investigating crimes, and reducing poverty, amount to just under 2.2 billion Colombian pesos. This compares with the annual budget of the security forces of 15.4 billion – seven times more. The high military spending has been justified against the threat to the state posed by the FARC. In the words of President Santos, referring to the security dynamics around the turn of the millennium (see 3.4), ‘If we do not strengthen our armed forces we will never achieve peace’ (speech by Santos, 27/7/2016, Presidencia de la República 2016).

While state-centred in/security is largely understood in narrow military coercive terms, wider people-oriented security is framed in a rights-based discourse bearing strong connotations to liberalist security theories. Liberalist theories, as discussed in Chapter Two (2.2), fundamentally equate in/security with legitimate democratic systems and the principle of the rule of law. Echoing these assumptions, people-oriented security is focused on the state guaranteeing the constitutional and human rights of its citizens. Strong state institutions are seen as guarantors of these rights, as well as being entities for mitigating conflict (UAECT, 2014a). Community participation is an important aspect of people-oriented in/security in the post-conflict transition, which also functions to project an identity around

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24 The institutions are: the National Ombudsman’s Office the UARIV; the Procurator General Office; the Attorney General’s Office; and the Department of Social Prosperity.
the legitimate state. Indeed, encouraging bottom-up processes in the context of rebuilding war-torn societies is increasingly perceived as a more normatively legitimate and sustainable approach to peacebuilding (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013). The projection of the legitimate state is further emphasised in the way the spatial sequenced approach to in/security is also a promise of security in the future. Such promise, as argued in Chapter Two, in turn serves to legitimise both the state (2.5.2) and, as illustrated by the consolidation programme, the militarised approach to in/security. The conditioning of people-oriented security on narrow state-centred security makes security a promise in the future (2.3.2) in the peripheries. The security of the people in the regions cannot be assured until the IAGs have been eliminated and state institutional presence consolidated. Reference to the legitimate state fulfilling its constitutional and human rights obligations to its citizens (discussed in the following section) justifies the spatial sequenced approach and its strong reliance on the armed forces. The continued inability to eliminate the IAGs, which partly results from a combination of interstate contradictions and tensions (discussed in a later section) and the adaptive capacities of the IAGs (see 3.4.1), makes people-oriented aspects of security a future goal to be achieved in the peripheries. Moreover, against the advancing peace process, security threats to state territorial control and institutional consolidation have been redefined (discussed in a later section), which effectively maintain the spatial sequenced approach to in/security. The approach to in/security in this way closely mirrors Campbell's (1998) argument, that it is in the promise of security that the state is legitimised and its identity constructed and, thus, for the state, security lies in the inability to establish security (2.3.2; 2.5.2).

The state centrality of the spatial sequenced approach, which harbours several key assumptions of the traditional approaches, similarly assumes distinct boundaries between the legal/illegal, and – as the following section will argue – political/criminal. This includes clearly demarked categories distinguishing ‘the state’, ‘the civilian population’, ‘the IAGs’, as well as the distinction between legitimate political grievances and illegal criminal greed-driven objectives. Only through such distinction can the military approach to eliminate in/security threats to the state – and, by extension, the civilian population – be justified and the pursuit of state legitimacy enhanced. In the next section, I provide a brief comparative discussion on the way security-related policies and practices are oriented towards enhancing state legitimacy.
5.5 The Strong Legitimate State Identity

Security-related policies and practices – in particular, representations of armed violence – are oriented towards enhancing state legitimacy while manipulating the boundaries between the legal and illegal in order to enhance manoeuvrability of the armed forces. In this way, following Campbell’s argument, in/security is performatively constituted, projecting a specific state identity. This identity is formed around the construction of a strong and legitimate state.

5.5.1 Increasing State Legitimacy

Representation of armed violence has functioned as a political tool for the purpose of bestowing legitimacy on state security policy and practice, and extending state manoeuvrability vis-à-vis the IAGs. One of the most significant national security-related initiatives of the Santos government was to recognise the existence of an armed conflict. During the two preceding Uribe governments, IAG-perpetrated violence against the state was conceptualised as a terrorist struggle, thereby denying the existence of an armed conflict in Colombia. Santos framed the justification of his decision to recognise the internal armed conflict within a rights-based discourse, emphasising the plight of the victims of the armed conflict. According to Santos, the recognition of the armed conflict was made in favour of its millions of victims (Cancillería Colombia, 2011). Crucially, recognising the existence of the armed conflict in Colombia would enable the government to fulfil its obligations towards the victims and their right to recognition, reparation and compensation.25 Underscoring the emphasis of the rights of the victims, the official (re-)recognition of the armed conflict was first articulated in the VLRL. In announcing the VLRL, Santos repeatedly referred to the debt – both moral and legitimate – that the state holds towards society in general, and the victims of the armed conflict in particular (Sistema Informativo del Gobierno, 2011). Through recognising the armed conflict, the state was assuming its constitutional obligations and responsibilities towards its population. By issuing the VLRL, the government furthermore committed itself to the provision of transitional justice amidst the ongoing armed conflict. The commitment to transitional justice without prior political change, which commonly precedes transitional justice (Summers, 2012), was deemed necessary due to the pressing insecurity faced by the victims. Their right to justice had been denied through the

25 Victims of the armed conflict were entitled to reparation and compensation also under the Uribe governments, though the criteria for claiming reparation and compensation was much more restricted, with many human rights violations excluded.
denial of the armed conflict by the previous two Uribe governments. As interviewees at both the URT and UARIV elaborated, the urgency in Colombia did not allow for the reparation of victims to wait (interview, URT official, Cúcuta 20/03/2015; high-level official, UARIV, Bogotá, 10/11/2014). The VLRL was thus presented as a ‘historical commitment by the government towards the victims’ (speech delivered by R. Palomini, Director of the National Police, Foro ‘Defensores de Derechos Humanos, Su Aporte a la Paz, Bogotá, 20/08/2014).

The subsequent decision to engage in peace negotiations with the FARC was justified in a similar rights-based framing. By seeking peace through negotiations with the FARC, Santos argued that he was fulfilling his presidential duties towards the population (Presidencia de la Republica, 2011a). Parallel to the rights-based framing, Santos also reiterated a projection of the strong, powerful state. State security discourse maintains that the armed forces have irreversibly weakened the FARC to a position where it can no longer pursue its stated objective to overthrow the state (MinDefensa, 2011, 2015). Juxtaposed against the perceived weakness of governments in previous attempts at negotiating with the FARC, Santos stated that the Havana negotiations would not be accompanied by any ceasefire or any ceding of territory to the FARC. Throughout the four years of official negotiations with the guerrillas, the government maintained and periodically stepped up its military offensives against the guerrillas. In the words of the president, not one inch of territory would be ceded to the FARC (Presidencia de la Republica, 2011a).

Furthering state legitimacy against the peace process with the FARC, the government is projecting a ‘new Colombia in peace’, governed by the principles of the rule of law as opposed to being characterised by the human rights abuses, marginalisation and wars of the past (DNP, 2011, 2014b). The new Colombia is depicted as a country where the state, having eliminated the principal threats to its consolidated territorial control, will prioritise social development, modernise infrastructure, improve the quality of education, and guarantee health and security (DNP, 2014b). This projection of a new Colombia in peace is tied to economic growth and prosperity, with the aim to eliminate the socio-economic gap – in particular, between the consolidated and unconsolidated regions (DNP, 2014b).

5.5.2 Increasing Manoeuvrability over the IAGs

A much less publicly emphasised aspect of recognising the armed conflict was the legitimacy such recognition bestowed to national security policy and practice by triggering the application of IHL. Although the existence of a non-international armed conflict is
determined by objective factors\textsuperscript{26} and not the subjective declarations of the parties involved (Otálora Lozano and Machado, 2012), governments have repeatedly resorted to such declarations to either trigger or prevent the application of IHL. For Santos, it was imperative that the armed forces operated under the ambit of IHL and not under that of international human rights law. Operating under IHL, Santos argued, provides greater flexibility and increases the manoeuvrability of the armed forces vis-à-vis the FARC. By denying the existence of the armed conflict, on the other hand, the remit of the armed forces becomes more restricted and, more importantly, most of the operations carried out by the armed forces so far against the guerrillas would be illegal (Presidencia de la Republica, 2011b). Through invoking IHL, Santos sought to distance the actions by his government from the actions by the previous Uribe government, which were coming under increased scrutiny for violating human rights and IHL (see 3.4.1; 3.4.3)

The recognition of the armed conflict in 2011, and the subsequent applicability of IHL, occurred before the government officially embarked on peace negotiations with the FARC. Four years later, against the advancing negotiations, IHL was reinterpreted in a way that maintained the spatial sequenced approach to in/security should the armed conflict officially end. As a peace agreement would officially end the armed conflict between the state and the FARC, IHL would no longer be applicable. This, in turn, would greatly limit the use of the armed forces for internal security operations. While the peace agreement would not end violence in Colombia due to the continued presence of other IAGs, IHL would not necessarily be applicable to confront these groups as they are not conceptualised as armed groups part of the armed conflict.\textsuperscript{27} Decree 0003 of 2015 reinterprets the applicability of IHL, concluding that a group can be considered an armed group subject to IHL without professing any ideological or political motivations. Moreover, the existence of an armed conflict is not required to confer such special status (Fiscalía General de la Nación, 2015). The decree was followed by Directive 15 of 2016, which redefined what was, until that point, known as Bacrim (criminal bands), and which largely fell under the remit of the police, into armed organisations or organised criminal bands. The decree defines the three main Bacrim groups operating in Colombia as armed organisations. The remaining Bacrim are defined as organised criminal bands under the United Nations Convention against Transnational

\textsuperscript{26} Including the requirements stipulated in the second additional protocol and common article 3 to the Geneva Conventions.

\textsuperscript{27} The exception being the smaller ELN guerrillas, currently engaged in peace talks with the government.
Organised Crime (UNCTOC), known as the Palermo Convention. Taken together, Decree 0003 of 2015 and Directive 15 of 2016 allow for the armed forces to target Bacrim in the post-conflict context with similar force as used against the guerrillas in the context of the armed conflict. This effectively allows for the continued military elimination of security threats.

Reconceptualising the IAGs has also been used as a strategy to bestow legitimacy on the state. To further state legitimacy, in particular in the peripheral regions, governments have strategically acknowledged or denied the political rationale of the guerrillas. The guerrillas were formed on a platform of social justice against the violent displacement of farmers by the state and the rural elite, as discussed in Chapter Three (3.4). Their discourse continues to centre on agrarian and political reform, in favour of the rural peasantry. The Santos governments have acknowledged and emphasised the importance of the correlation between socio-economic poverty and support for the guerrillas. This notwithstanding, Santos explicitly denied bestowing any degree of legitimacy on the guerrillas. The recognition of the armed conflict in 2011 did not change the conceptualisation of the guerrillas as a terrorist organisation – a conceptualisation made by Uribe and which had been a main justification for denying the existence of an armed conflict. The same section of the VLRL, where the armed conflict is first recognised (article 3), clearly stipulates that the recognition of victims of the armed conflict in the law does not, in any way, mean recognition of the political rationale of terrorist groups and/or illegal armed groups, which have caused the harm referred to as the victimising act.

5.5.3 Armed Violence as a Terrorist Threat

The recognition of the armed conflict by President Santos served to increase the legitimacy of the state, and the manoeuvrability of the armed forces and legitimacy of their operations. Yet, these were precisely the same reasons why the preceding Uribe government denied the existence of an armed conflict. The DSP framed armed violence in Colombia as that of a terrorist threat to the legitimate state (Presidencia de la Republica and Ministerio de Defensa, 2003). In such context, IHL did not apply as, according to Uribe, an armed group attacking a democratic state does not constitute an internal armed conflict (Uribe, n.d.). The denial of an armed conflict did not, however, prevent the government from prioritising the military elimination of the guerrillas – in the DSP defined as narco-terrorists. On the contrary, the DSP greatly extended the remit of the armed forces to eliminate the terrorist threat. Justifying the military approach in the absence of an armed conflict, the fight against the IAGs was
situated in the US-led WoT (Rochlin, 2010). Partnering with the USA in the WoT greatly expanded the role, mission and authority of the Colombian military, with the US endorsing a strategy of overwhelming military power (Gootenberg, 2012). In doing so, the manoeuvrability of the state was increased by justifying the use of military force while circumventing the distinction between combatants and civilians, as demanded by IHL. In fact, civilians were actively made part of the government’s fight against the insurgents through the so-called ‘soldiers of my town’ programme (see footnote 14) and through participation in the various informant networks (see 3.4.3). The involvement of civilians in the government’s fight against the IAGs was justified through Uribe’s conceptualisation of the armed conflict as a democratic society facing a terrorist threat. In such context, Uribe argued, there can be no neutrality among citizens against crime, such as narco-terrorist groups, including the FARC. Similarly, there could be no distinction between police and citizens. In the logic of Uribe, as citizens were the principal victims of the FARC and ELN, they should take sides and actively position themselves against the IAGs by collaborating with the armed forces or acting as informants (Semana, 2005).

The acknowledgement or denial of an armed conflict in Colombia has been used by different governments for the same purpose – to strengthen the state in its fight against the IAGs and to legitimate its actions pertaining thereto. The different representations of armed violence, the reinterpretation of IHL and reconceptualisation of the IAGs, effectively manipulate the borders between the legitimate and illegitimate, and the included and excluded, in a boundary-producing performance. The way boundaries are manipulated to enhance manoeuvrability of the armed forces and legitimacy of the state also constitutes a purposeful construction of context to justify violence (Dalby, 2010). The peripheries, the locations of which were illustrated in the maps 5.1-5.9, constitute a context where state-perpetrated violence is justified through their representation as having no or a weak state presence, ravaged by IAG-perpetrated violence contesting state territorial control and authority. In this context, state-perpetrated violence in terms of coercive action by the armed forces is justified by reference to bringing the state to the regions, in order to provide security to, and govern, the population living under IAG control. Such invocation of the state represents a claim for domination (Abrams, 1988) and reinforces the understanding of the state as the security provider, which violent elimination of security threats is justified in the quest to fulfil its constitutional obligations towards the population.

Yet, as argued in Chapter Two (2.5.2), outside the discursive practices of security policy, boundaries are less sharp. Important dynamics lie in these elusive boundaries.
Representation of violence and the approach towards the armed conflict reflect power struggles not only between governments, but also impact on inter-institutional dynamics, specifically the relation between the military and civilian state entities. Such dynamics have important implications for security policy and practice, given the military connotations of the spatial sequenced approach to in/security.

5.6 Distrust Among the Armed Forces

The military connotations of macro-level understandings of in/security have, as argued earlier in the chapter, provided the armed forces with a primary role in achieving security. The peace process with the FARC, nevertheless, has a direct impact on the persuasive standing of the armed forces. The peace agreement foresees that the FARC transitions itself into a non-armed political movement, which effectively means that the main long-standing national security objective of the armed forces is eliminated. This, in turn, requires a revised role of the armed forces, which has provoked considerable distrust and discontent within sections of the armed forces. The revised role, which is tied to the reinterpretation of IHL and reconceptualisation of the Bacrim groups referred to in the previous sections, needs to be understood against power struggles within the state, specifically between the presidency/government and the armed forces.

Active duty officers in the armed forces are constitutionally barred from expressing political opinions. However, opinions expressed by retired military officials through ACORE (4.5.3) point towards considerable levels of opposition against the president and the peace negotiations within the armed forces. Retired military officers have publicly critiqued the peace negotiations and expressed significant levels of contempt towards the government. Although expressed by retired officials, ACORE is ‘regarded as de facto mouthpiece for the political opinions of active-duty officers’ (Isacson, 2016). The current president of ACROE, General Brigadier Jaime Ruiz Barrera, who has served more than 30 years in the armed forces, has repeatedly critiqued the peace negotiations, warning that Santos is steering the country towards conditions similar to Venezuela (Ruiz, 2017).28 According to Ruiz, the armed forces are the only institution that offer tranquillity and peace to Colombian citizens, whereas the high courts and magistrates are corrupt, persecuting soldiers who are at the

28 Referring to the prospect of FARC forming a political party that would propagate policies in line with Hugo Chávez and Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela, to which they attributed the current crisis in the country.
forefront of maintaining security in the country. Similar opinions are expressed by Manel Jose Bonett, a retired general and former commander of the national army, who holds that the armed forces are well received among and supported by the local population, while asking ‘what can we expect from the State?’ (Bonett, 2015). Bonett’s rhetorical question referred to the perceived inability of the government and the civilian state institutions to fill the void left by IAGs as the military successfully eliminates these actors. The armed forces can and should fill this void, Bonett argued, provided the government increases the resources devoted to the military. Similar findings have been reported by Delgado (2015), who argues that the armed forces are permeated with a stab-in-the-back anxiety and are highly suspicious of President Santos due to Santos breaking away from the hard-line offensive policies he promoted as defence minister in the Uribe government. Not only are many in the military deeply distrustful of FARC’s intentions, but, as Delgado argues, there are fears that the end of the conflict will lead to the prosecution of soldiers for war crimes. The peace agreement will facilitate denouncements and claims that cannot presently be voiced (interview, Bishop, Cúcuta, 4/12/2014). The peace process thus risks revealing the elusive borders between the legal and illegal, in a similar way that occurred within the peace process with the AUC and the resultant revelation of the parapolitics scandal, discussed in Chapter Three (3.4.2). As one interviewee, with extensive experience in negotiating with various state institutions on behalf of the victims of the armed conflict, maintained, ‘There is a lot of rejection of Santos within the armed forces. For this reason, Santos is making certain concessions to the armed forces in order for them to stay calm. Santos knows he has certain institutions against him due to the peace process and they could oust him’ (interview, Catalina, lawyer, Bogotá, 14/11/2014).

Throughout the peace negotiations with the FARC, Santos made frequent reassurance to the armed forces that the negotiations would not involve matters pertaining to the role, size and funding of the armed forces (Presidencia de la Republica, 2016a). Moreover, the importance of the armed forces for peacebuilding has been assured by the president and is set out in the current national security policy (CGFM, 2015; Presidencia de la Republica, 2016a). The 2015-2018 national security policy, which was developed alongside the advancing peace negotiations, also provides the armed forces with an increasing remit in rural modernisation and in assisting national, commercial, industrial and agricultural development. To this end, special energy and road battalions have been created in regions where large-scale energy and mining projects are implemented (MinDefensa and Grupo Social y Empresarial de la Defensa, n.d.). The extended remit is also framed in an environmental security parlance, which emphasises the environmental threat posed by, for example, illegal mining, as well as
the adequacy of the armed forces to respond to environmental disasters. In this way, the long-standing counter-insurgency objective (in its various framings) of the armed forces is being readjusted to the post-conflict context.

The readjustment of national security policy, the reinterpretation of IHL, and redefinition of Bacrim reflect a contentious interplay between the presidency/government and the armed forces. Effectively, drug trafficking, organised crime and criminal mining assure the role and position of the armed forces. As the commander of the military forces argued, ‘[t]he military forces will not dissolve or be reduced, nor will the country lose its soldiers, because drug trafficking, criminal bands and illegal mining remain present in some areas of Colombian territory’ (El Tiempo, 2016). The reconceptualisation of Bacrim, and the underpinning reinterpretation of IHL, reflect such views and maintain the spatial sequenced logic in which people-oriented in/security is contingent on the armed forces, generating the required conditions for the rest of the state to consolidate its presence in the peripheral regions. Further concessions towards the armed forces include a bill by Congress proposing changes to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), which was being debated at the time of writing. The bill effectively reinterprets transitional justice mechanisms in a way that prioritises state-centred security and protects the armed forces at the expense of people-oriented security. The amendments create avenues that allow military commanders to avoid responsibility of their subordinates involved in war crimes, or from having to divulge through transitional justice mechanisms any details about war crimes that took place under their command. Organisations including HRW and WOLA argue that the amendments are inconsistent with IHL and foment impunity, while denying victims of their right to truth (Human Rights Watch, 2017; Isacson and Sanchez-Garzoli, 2017). Thus, despite levels of distrust and discontent between the armed forces and the government, developments favour the continuation of the spatial sequenced approach to in/security, with its military connotations in the transitions towards the post-conflict period.

5.7 Inter-Institutional Tensions along the Centre-Periphery Divide

The approach to in/security, in which a minimum level of military security is a precondition for the establishment of integral state presence, demands inter-institutional coordination and collaboration. Specifically, between central and local state institutions. However, faltering inter-institutional coordination and collaboration has created important hurdles to spatial sequenced approach to in/security. Distrust between institutions along the central-peripheral divide, extending beyond that of the armed forces and the government, as detailed above,
was found to be a main underlying factor for the lack of collaboration and coordination. Inter-institutional distrust is, in turn, exacerbated by a centre-oriented premise of policies and programmes to address territorially specific conditions. These dynamics cause contradictions in the macro-level approach to in/security and constrain the government’s effort to improve security in the peripheries.

Ensuring inter-institutional coordination and collaboration in some of the most demanding regions is a main objective of the consolidation programme, as discussed in section 5.3.2. Within each consolidation region, the local UAECT is tasked with coordinating all state entities operating there. Yet, despite this mandate, coordination and collaboration with state entities has been problematic. A complicating factor is that each state entity comes with its own plans for specific projects in the region, which are conflictive at times, as they tend to focus on thematic subjects, such as the displaced, children, or women, to name a few. This impedes the more holistic approach steered towards sustainability and the specifics of the regions as advanced by the consolidation programme (interview, divisional director A, UAECT, Bogotá 11/11/2014). In Catatumbo, coordination and collaboration have been particularly problematic due to the intensity of the conflict, meaning that most state intervention in the region is limited to the military elimination of the IAGs. While being careful not to single out the armed forces among other state institutions, an interviewee from the local UAECT for Catatumbo held that state institutions reject what they considered being ‘forced into’ coordination demanded by the UAECT, and the programme has been met with considerable resistance (interview, UAECT programme officer, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). As the interviewee continued, some joint action occurs between the consolidation programme and the armed forces, but this is mainly limited to the MoD providing the local UAECT with information on regional in/security dynamics, which allows UAECT staff to determine when and how to access communities. Importantly, the consolidation programme is separate from the SoH strategy over which the UAECT holds no mandate.

The UAECT official was reluctant to provide concrete examples of the lack of coordination with the armed forces. Interviews were sought on two occasions with the armed forces in Catatumbo, yet these were cancelled at short notice and further rescheduling was not possible (see 4.5.3). Nevertheless, an indication of collaboration difficulties with the armed forces was provided by international humanitarian agencies. As detailed by UN officials, there is a tendency of the armed forces to ‘highjack’ the activities of the UN. The way this happens is that, when UN agencies organise activities with the community, the armed forces will announce that a civic-military day (as referred to in 5.3.1) will be held with that
community at the very same day as the UN-planned activity. This forces the UN to withdraw in order for it not to be associated with the military and lose trust among the population (interview, two high-level officials, UN agency, Cúcuta 8/10/2014). Several international agencies working in Catatumbo also referred to the case of Las Mercedes, a rural village in Catatumbo, as an indication of the tension between the armed forces and the civilian state institutions, expressed through the conflict between the MoD and the Supreme Court. In Las Mercedes, the police station has been consistently attacked by the FARC. The placement of the police station in the village centre – in between the church and the primary school – places the civilian population directly in the centre of armed combat. The communities have argued that, since the police operate more in line with the armed forces than that of a civic police force, the presence of police stations in urban settlements contravenes IHL as they convert the civilian population into military objects (interview, regional director, international organisation, Cúcuta, 06/10/2014). The supreme court ruled in favour of the community, ordering the relocation of the police station to a place where it does not constitute a danger to the life and security of the population in general and of children in particular (Corte Suprema de Justicia, 2013). The MoD has refused to comply, and the police station remains (interview, regional director, UN agency, Cúcuta, 06/10/2014). Similar court sentences have been made against police stations in the departments of Arauca and Putumayo, which the MoD has failed to comply with, as pointed out by the UN interviewee.

In addition to horizontal inter-institutional coordination and collaboration difficulties between institutions at the local level, vertical dynamics between institutions at the local and central level further impede the spatial sequenced approach. For the consolidation programme in Catatumbo, obtaining resources from the central UAECT has been of particular concern. A number of institutions are required to contribute to the financing of the consolidation programme, though financing has not been forthcoming due to the intensity of the armed conflict in the region. According to a divisional director at the UAECT in Bogotá, Catatumbo is the least advanced region of the nine consolidation regions (interview, divisional director B, Bogota 11/11/2014). As elaborated by one of the regional advisors of the programme, institutions do not want to prioritise Catatumbo, favouring instead other regions of the consolidation programme where the armed conflict is less intense. ‘Catatumbo is too complicated. In other zones, it is easier to demonstrate results and value for money’ (interview, regional advisor, UAECT, Bogotá 11/11/2014). Coupled with the origins of the consolidation programme in the MoD, many state institutions continue to perceive the consolidation programme as a military policy and are thereby reluctant to get involved (interview, divisional director, MoJ, Bogotá 14/11/2014). Resultantly, as the local UAECT
for Catatumbo lamented, there has been a decrease in the number of projects approved by UAECT in Bogotá for Catatumbo, as well as the amount of resources given to the programme each year (interview, UAECT programme officer, Cúcuta 14/05/2015).

Similar concerns over inter-institutional collaborations were expressed also at the local URT. URT is mandated with leading the restitution process, which is conditional on local in/security dynamics as defined by the defence sector (as discussed in section 5.3.3). The dependency on collaboration with the armed forces and MoD principally pertains to: the monitoring of regional in/security dynamics to determine whether a region can be micro-focalised; and the accompaniment of the restitution process, providing protection to land restitution officials, restitution judges and restitution claimants. Nevertheless, as expressed by a director at the URT for Norte de Santander, such collaboration has not occurred (interview, URT official, Cúcuta 20/03/2015). As the URT interviewee elaborated, the institutions that were to be involved in the land restitution process were given one year from that of the law coming into force in 2011 to prepare for implementation. The majority, however, did not comply. The process has been particularly affected by the insufficient adaptation of the armed forces to accompany the process. Such accompaniment was deemed to be of fundamental importance, since land restitution commenced prior to any peace agreement being reached with the FARC, meaning that land restitution takes place in the midst of the ongoing armed conflict. Officials involved in the land restitution process face great threats to their integrity and life due to the intensity of violence and the presence of IAGs in the regions earmarked for restitution. The insufficient level of accompaniment by the armed forces in the context of intense conflict-related violence was a main reason given for why land restitution has been so slow in the few micro-focalised regions in Catatumbo URT, as pointed out by the URT official. Thus, the impact of land restitution, as well as the consolidation programme – both cornerstones of the government’s expressed territorial emphasis to reduce the centre-periphery gap – have been undermined by the lack of interstate coordination and collaboration.

5.7.1 Centralised Policies and Contextual In/Security Dynamics

The territorial emphasis proclaimed by the government and underlying territorial peace is further contradicted by the centralised nature of the policies and programmes. As demonstrated in previous sections, there is strong recognition across the government peacebuilding approach and security-related policy of the need for a differential approach aligned to local economic, social and institutional dynamics, prioritising the worst affected
regions. Summarising the underlying logic of the differential approach, a director at the UAECT reiterated that ‘a differential approach is provided in order to not create any further breaches between the regions’ (interview, divisional director A, Bogota 11/11/2014). Yet, policies and programmes, such as the VLRL and the consolidation programme, are largely developed and monitored at the central level. Local public officials argued that policies meant to address highly contextual problems were developed without taking into account local contextual dynamics and differences (interviews: URT official, Cúcuta 20/03/2015; former public official Cúcuta Mayor’s Office, Cúcuta, 4/12/2014; high-level official, Regional Human Rights Ombudsman Office, Cúcuta, 07/10/2014). As the URT official lamented, it’s a one-size-fits-all policy.

The centralised premise to address territorially specific conditions was largely confirmed at the central level. As an interviewee at the UARIV in Bogotá elaborated, Colombia is a highly centralised country, despite the constitution proclaiming the opposite. Therefore, all major decisions are always taken in Bogotá, including the decisions on the formation and implementation of the VLRL. The processes under the VLRL are highly centralised and local authorities have little influence on the decisions. The decision on who qualifies as a victim, for example, is taken by the UARIV in Bogotá and not in the regions where denouncements are made. The decision is based on the relation of the reported crime to the armed conflict and the way in which the armed conflict is expressed in each region. To this end, the UARIV rely on information provided by their regional offices and intelligence provided by the armed forces. ‘As such, we [the Bogotá headquarters of the UARIV] have a very complete picture of the armed conflict in each region and are therefore well placed to make the decision on whether a claimant can be classified as a victim’ (interview, UARIV official, Bogota 10/11/2014). Regarding the consolidation programme, the National Security Council decides on which zones to include in the programme (interview, UAECT divisional director B, Bogota 11/11/2014). The regional consolidation units are thereafter responsible for developing the different projects that form part of the consolidation programme, in conjunction with local communities. These projects, however, must be approved by the UAECT in Bogotá. As findings from the Catatumbo region discussed above demonstrated, many projects are rejected due to the increased cost-effectiveness of implementing projects in more consolidated regions.

Another way the centralised nature of the consolidation programme undermines the aim of the programme is found in the sub-programme on the eradication of illicit crops. Eradication efforts include alternative development strategies to help farmers transition from illegal to
legal cultivation. Yet, as the former director of the illegal crops eradication programme of the consolidation programme explained, alternative development strategies are developed at the central level and are often not aligned to local socio-economic realities. As a result, alternative development projects are often unable to replace coca cultivation. Moreover, mass-eradication programmes are exacerbating local conflict dynamics. This is seen both in the way eradication impacts on the economic interests of the guerrillas, causing retaliatory action such as increased use of landmines to protect cultivations, and in the way farmers are left without any livelihood opportunities – which, in some regions, increases the social capital of the guerrillas (interview, divisional director, MoJ, Bogota 14/11/2014).

The centralised premise of in/security-related policies is partly justified against corruption at the local level. The consolidation programme rests on the assumption of institutional weakness and corruption in the peripheries (UAECT, 2014a). The few institutions that are present in the peripheries are largely perceived to have been co-opted by the IAGs. ‘Since institutions have not been institutionalised by the state, the IAGs have institutionalised the institutions’ (interview, divisional director, MoJ, Bogota 14/11/2014). This kind of co-option is evident in the workings of the mayor offices. In regions where the FARC has consolidated power, it will name the mayors and other public officials. In that way, when the mayor speaks, the population knows that it is the FARC speaking (interview, programme director, INGO, Cúcuta, 8/10/2014). It is believed that mayors in municipalities such as San Calixto, El Tarra and Hacarí in Catatumbo can only act with the support of the guerrillas. Any candidate for mayoral posts requires the backing of the guerrillas. The result is that mayors in places like Catatumbo are reluctant to collaborate with state security initiatives, such as the consolidation programme, as the guerrillas fiercely oppose any state action. ‘Mayors can either challenge or oblige with the wishes of the guerrilla, needless to say, very few will challenge’ (interview, UAECT programme officer, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). Similar dynamics occur in the health and education sector. Officials occupying these posts in guerrilla-controlled areas can only work with the approval of the guerrillas (interview, regional director, international organisation Cúcuta 6/10/2014). In the more urbanised areas of Catatumbo, such as the municipal towns of Ocaña and Tibú, as well as the departmental capital Cúcuta, institutions have, to a varying degree, been infiltrated by the neo-paramilitaries. An official at the Regional Ombudsman Office in Cúcuta openly confirmed that, ‘it is well known that the IAGs have infiltrated state institutions in some cases’, referring specifically to the Office of the Attorney General, the regional Ombudsman’s Office, and the municipal Ombudsman’s Office (interview, Ombudsman Office official,
Cúcuta 7/10/2014). One way such infiltration becomes manifest is through the leaking of denouncements back to the IAGs (discussed in the following chapter).

The centralised premise of policies and programmes was also partly explained by the limited capacity of local state institutions. ‘Local authorities are weak, with budget problems and low technical capacity’ (interview, UARIV official, Bogota 10/11/2014). As the UARIV interviewee elaborated, officials have little or no knowledge in designing projects and budgets and, in some instances, are not computer literate. Resultantly, few local authorities have the capacity to develop viable proposals, and raise the funds that the VLRL requires them to do. As the UARIV official continued, ‘there is a lot of waste, mismanagement and unreasonable ideas. Therefore, the central level takes the lead’ (interview, UARIV official, Bogota 10/11/2014). The centralised processes of the UARIV were further justified against the negative experience of attending to victims through decentralised processes by the past governments. Referring to Acción Social, which was the predecessor to UARIV, the UARIV official held that, when the decision on victimhood was made at the local level, the process became hugely corrupted. Decentralisation was seen to encourage corruption. As the interviewee continued, ‘When the process is decentralised, there is much greater scope for corruption. During this time [when Acción Social was responsible for attending to the victims], 38 per cent of claims did not appear on the official register. Today the figure is one digit’ (interview, UARIV official, Bogota 10/11/2014). While careful to emphasise that local capacity deficiencies were, to a certain extent, a generalisation, meaning that there are also highly competent local authorities, the key problem that has arisen with the VLRL is how to strengthen competence in the regions.

There is a recognition in the regions of the need for institutional strengthening. Nevertheless, among local state entities attending to the victims, central institutions were perceived to be out of touch with reality. One state entity receiving denouncements by victims of the armed conflict is the Ombudsman’s Office. At the regional ombudsman’s office covering part of the municipalities that make up the Catatumbo region, an interviewee concurred that there are problems of institutional weakness and corruption at the local level. Yet, a main problem with attending to victims is that policies that are to be implemented in the vastly disparate regions of Colombia are developed in Bogotá (interview, Ombudsman Office official, Cúcuta 7/10/2014). Unrealistic obligations are placed on local authorities, which are required to raise the funds needed to attend to the victims. Often, it is the poorest municipalities that have the largest number of victims, yet these local authorities are not given any additional resources. In terms of the VLRL, the municipal mayor office is responsible for providing the
three months of emergency aid to cover housing and food needs of the victims, which greatly strains the already limited resources of these municipalities, the Ombudsman official continued. Moreover, the centralised process has created extensive bottlenecks at the UARIV in Bogotá with resultant delays in the decision-making procedure. The UARIV is required to make a decision on a claim within three months of the claim being made, during which time the claimant receives emergency aid. However, as the ombudsman official maintained, few claims are settled within this time period. Once the three-month emergency aid ends, many victims have little choice other than to settle in the informal or illegal settlements in the outskirts of the larger towns, such as Cúcuta. Not only does the situation cause resentment among victims against local authorities, but the settlements ‘then become hotbeds for violence’ (interview, Ombudsman Office official, Cúcuta 7/10/2014), referring to how victims become a threat to the IAGs through the denouncements that they make as well as vulnerable to recruitment by IAGs in these same settlements.

According to a former officer responsible for victim response at the Cúcuta mayor office, the VLRL foresaw that much of the funds for reparation would come from the assets of the perpetrators. However, although many of perpetrators have large assets (in terms of both land and funds), these are not easily expropriated. Often, assets are not in the name of the actual perpetrator. Neither are they given up easily, which the law assumed. The situation has arisen, according to the interviewee, since the issuing of the law was done in haste and without any ground studies – a view that was shared also by the regional URT and Human Rights Ombudsman Office. Important factors around implementation in the territories, including conflict dynamics, were not taken into account. ‘There is a lack of public policy around assistance and a general lack of knowledge within the government of the issues facing victims’ (interview, ex-official Cúcuta Mayor’s Office, Cúcuta 4/12/2014). An example of the above given by the interviewee was how one of the most pressing issues for victims is that of recognition. ‘Even if they are included in the UARIV register, this does not amount to recognition’ (interview, ex-official Cúcuta Mayor’s Office, Cúcuta 4/12/2014). Victims registered with the UARIV continue to face discrimination on the part of state officials, caused by a lack of training of officials attending the victim population. ‘There is a need to educate on the concept of the victim as there is a lot of ignorance and misconceptions /…/ Yet, the government has done very little in this area’ (interview, ex-official Cúcuta Mayor’s Office, Cúcuta 4/12/2014).

At the UARIV in Bogotá, the unit responsible for deciding on each claim submitted, it was recognised that the process had been slow. This notwithstanding, a UARIV official argued
that unrealistic expectations were created by the VLRL (interview, UARIV official, Bogota 10/11/2014). The VLRL is an enormous undertaking, with close to 7 million victims registered by 2014 – only three years after the VLRL came into force. Victims thus make up approximately 14 per cent of the population. From a comparative perspective, of 31 countries implementing similar processes, the percentage of the population registered as victims never exceeded two per cent (Sikkink et al., 2014). The government incorrectly assumed that reparations, including land restitution, could be achieved within a ten-year period (interview, UARIV official, Bogota 10/11/2014). However, when the VLRL was issued, the peace process had still not been announced. Had this been known, the UARIV official concluded, the processes under the VLRL would have been different, as would the budget allocations. In addition to budgetary constraints, as argued by the URT official, there is little precedence for implementing land restitution processes in the context of armed conflict and, thus, little experience to learn from. This led to unrealistic expectations on the institutions at both national and local levels. ‘There was no real understanding of the magnitude of the undertaking’ (interview, URT official, Cúcuta 20/03/2015).

Based on the above findings, it is possible to conclude that the lack of inter-institutional collaboration, the disconnection between central and local state authorities, and the centralised premise of government policies, make the spatial sequenced approach to in/security contradictory. The approach assumes that the state can effectively be constructed in the unconsolidated regions, yet policies targeted at the problematics of the regions increase the burden on the few local authorities present. At the same time, resources and decision-making power are not transferred to the regions, under the pretext of structural weakness and corruption, thereby obstructing the contextual approach and institutional consolidation. While mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the different institutions present in, and policies targeting, the regions have been created, institutions fail to comply. The resultant fragmented efforts at institutional consolidation thereby exacerbate institutional deficiencies and fail to generate the desired transformation of the peripheries. The lack of transformation, coupled with the redefinition of Bacrim and reinterpretation of IHL, maintain the reliance on the armed forces for the provision of minimum levels of narrow security. Thus, the promise of people-oriented in/security continues to be a promise in the future.
5.8 Conclusion

This chapter sets out to critically examine how in/security is understood at the macro-level, interrogating underlying assumptions, boundaries and the derivative aspects of understandings. Evidenced by policies, discourses and empirical findings, the chapter took forward four main arguments. First, I argued that understandings centre on a spatial sequenced approach. The spatial sequenced approach gives in/security important geospatial dimensions, where the unconsolidated, insecure and peripheral regions are juxtaposed against the consolidated, secure and central regions. At the same time, the approach assumes an ordered logic and inter-institutional functions in the quest to integrate the unconsolidated peripheral regions into the consolidated centre. Unconsolidated and insecure regions are first to be militarily secured. Once a minimum level of security has been generated by the armed forces, remaining state institutions gradually consolidate their presence. Only by assuring institutional consolidation can the state govern the regions and fulfil its constitutional obligations towards, and thus assure the constitutional and human rights of, its citizens.

Secondly, the spatial sequenced approach is framed in a rights-based language, which emphasises the security of individuals/communities as a right and the provision of security as an obligation by the state. However, the approach generates a hierarchy in in/security understandings, which effectively conditions people-oriented security on state-centred security – the latter harbouring strong military connotations. The state is the main referent object, yet the centrality of the state is justified against a rights-based people-oriented framing. In this way, macro-level in/security understandings incorporate the main assumptions of traditional realist and liberalist theories.

The third argument taken forward in the chapter holds that the spatial sequenced approach, which effectively seeks to bring the state to the stateless regions, assumes distinct boundaries between the legal and illegal. This includes the assumption of sharp boundaries between the legal-illegal, and the political/criminal and clearly demarked categories distinguishing ‘the state’, ‘the civilian population’, and ‘the IAGs’. Only through such distinction can the military approach to eliminate in/security threats to the state – and, by extension, the civilian population – be justified and the pursuit of state legitimacy enhanced. Yet, boundaries have been purposefully manipulated to enhance state legitimacy and its manoeuvrability over the IAGs. This includes representation of armed violence in Colombia, the reinterpretation of IHL and reconceptualisation of the IAGs, which effectively manipulates the borders between the legitimate and illegitimate, and the included and excluded, in a boundary-producing
performance. The manipulation of boundaries reflects power struggles not only between governments, but also between institutions and along the centre-periphery divide.

This relates to the fourth and final argument of the chapter, which hold that intra-state power struggles and distrust make the spatial sequenced approach to in/security contradictory. The approach assumes that the state can effectively be constructed in the unconsolidated regions, yet policies targeted at the problematics of the regions are highly centralised, whereas there is considerable distrust between central and local state entities. Resources and the decision-making power are not transferred to the regions, under the pretext of structural weakness and corruption, thereby also obstructing the contextual approach and institutional consolidation.

The lack of transformation of in/security dynamics in the peripheries continues the reliance on the armed forces for security provision. The next chapter discusses how in/security is understood at the local community levels in the peripheral regions, where the spatial sequenced approach to in/security seeks to establish state territorial control and consolidate institutional presence. The focus on Catatumbo, as a region targeted by the SoH strategy and part of the territorial consolidation programme, and Magdalena Medio, which is not included in these state in/security practices, provides insights into how different security policy and practice that make up the spatial sequenced approach impact on local communities.
CHAPTER SIX: Understandings of In/Security at the Micro-Level

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shift focus to the micro-level, centring on research question two: ‘How is in/security understood and negotiated among local conflict-affected communities?’ The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I analyse how in/security is understood among two farming communities in the Magdalena Medio and Catatumbo regions, and how these communities navigate in/security dynamics. In the second part, I conduct a similar analysis into two urban conflict-affected communities in Barrancabermeja (Magdalena Medio) and Cúcuta (close proximity to Catatumbo).

In this chapter, I use the term neo-paramilitaries to talk about the post-paramilitary demobilisation groups which, in the official discourse, are labelled Bacrim. I do so because this was the dominant term used by the interviewees across all four sites. This is not a question of mere semantics, but is a purposeful term used by the interviewees to manifest that Bacrim is, in fact, the continuation of the paramilitaries. Secondly, and for similar reasons, I use the terms state abandonment. Across all communities, this term was used to indicate an absence or scarcity of public services and governance structures. It was also used to indicate a lack of access to certain services that were physically available, but which communities could not access. In this way, state abandonment is indicative of the centre-periphery divide, as set out both in Chapter Three and Chapter Five.

Part one focuses on in/security understanding as expressed by farmers, and begins with a discussion on how the campesino identity was constructed against historic violence and stigmatisation against farmers in the region. This brief historic account is followed by current dynamics, including the presence of the guerrillas and encounters with state actors and entities. Thereafter, the way the past violent and exclusionary practices are continued is discussed. This is discussed through a focus on how farmers perceive the government’s approach to post-conflict rural development reinforces underlying exclusionary structures, which has been the cause of much violence in these peripheral regions.

Part two focuses on in/security understandings as expressed by urban communities, and begins with a discussion on the way contextual and identity factors affected the way interviewees spoke of in/security. From the accounts regarding in/security, it was possible
to detect two interlinked contextual settings and a collective identity constructed within these settings. The two contextual settings can be summarised as 1) areas controlled by the neo-paramilitaries, and 2) areas with limited state institutional and governance presence. In terms of identity, interviewees repeatedly self-identified as victims. In a co-constitutive manner, narratives around in/security centred on being victims of neo-paramilitary control and violence, as well as being unprotected and abandoned by ‘the state’. The remaining sections discuss how narratives essentially demonstrated an understanding of in/security centring on prevention, protection, vulnerability and risk, thus closely mirroring the IRV conceptualisation of in/security.

PART ONE: In/Security from Farmers’ Perspective

6.2 An Intertwined Rural Context and Identity

Contextual and identity factors had a significant impact on how farmers spoke about in/security and the issues they spoke of. The campesino (peasant farmer) identity was actively and purposefully constructed against conflict dynamics and insecurity pertaining thereto. The campesino identity served as a prism through which to understand and explain the persistent violence perpetrated against these communities, yet it was also actively promoted as a means to negotiate in/security. The contexts navigated by the two farming communities shared many characteristics. Both regions have been affected by multiple and competing claims to the right to rule by the IAGs, operating with or against state officials and institutions. The process has been violent and unstable, with communities frequently attacked for being the supporters of one group or the other. Interviewees in both regions related how they have been consistently exposed to guerrilla violence, paramilitary and state counter-insurgency violence, violence generated from the illegal economies (specifically the drug trade) and state action against these economies. These violent attacks have led to periods of profound humanitarian crises, characterised by mass displacement, blockades on food items, medicines and agricultural supplies, and the destruction of the social fabric.

Active conflict regions suggest a strong presence of both guerrillas and the national army. Indeed, state-level in/security discourses frequently point to a strong guerrilla presence in these regions, specifically in Catatumbo, as the previous chapter showed (5.3). Yet, interviewees spoke very little of living in guerrilla-controlled regions. Guerrilla presence was spoken of mainly in relation to the state, in terms of the state response to the guerrillas. The main insecurity, therefore, that guerrilla presence posed to farmers related to the counter-insurgency efforts part of the national security policy (5.3.1), and the stigmatisation...
and violence against farmers under the pretext that they are guerrilla members or supporters. In particular, farmers emphasised the way the quantitative result-oriented focus of security policy, which awarded soldiers for each guerrilla members neutralised, led to numerous extrajudicial killings in the regions, as well as the use of civilian installations by the armed forces in their offensives against the guerrillas (interviews: Jorge, Acvc, Barrancabermeja, 15/03/2015; Alva, Acvc, Barrancabermeja, 5/03/2015; and Paula, Ascamcat, Cúcuta, 21/03/2015).

The silence around the implications of living in guerrilla-controlled areas, a threat forcefully promoted in macro-level security discourses, can be interpreted as a rejection precisely of such dominant discourses. As discussed in the previous chapter, much national security policy and practice is centred on, and justified by, guerrilla presence as the main threat to security and development. The farmers’ silence around guerrilla presence can be seen as a way to promote a narrative that clearly separates farmers from the guerrillas, against the background of the persistent stigmatisation of farmers as guerrilla members or supporters. Thus, boundaries are also produced by silences.

With regard to the above, it is not to say that communities do not live under varying degrees of guerrilla control. Insights from interviews with representatives from organisations working closely with the communities in Catatumbo provided an important contrast to narratives by the farmers. Many of these representatives firmly held the view that the guerrillas exercised strong control over the communities. The guerrillas impose restrictions on movement and behaviour, including dress codes, the use of mobile phones, food items that could be brought into the region, and the percentage of farmland that must be dedicated to coca cultivation (interviews: programme director, INGO, Cúcuta 8/10/2014; and Bishop, Cúcuta 4/12/2014). Control is violently imposed, including the use of bombs and landmines to restrict access. People tend not to denounce crimes perpetrated by the guerrillas, due to both lack of trust in state authorities and out of fear of being seen talking to the authorities (interview, regional director, international organisation Cúcuta 6/10/2014). As a UN representative argued, in Catatumbo all typical guerrilla dynamics take place, including child recruitment, attacks on infrastructure, community leaders, or public officials, the planting of mines and other explosive devices within civilian installations, and restriction of access of humanitarian assistance (interview, regional director, UN agency, Cúcuta, 6/10/2014).

A conclusion by the representatives at the meso-level regarding the complex relationships between communities and the guerrillas was that the guerrillas were both accepted and
feared. With three different guerrilla groups active in Catatumbo, relations are thought to vary considerably. Yet, much of the population have family members, or are friends with those, who are guerrillas and many share a similar discourse. Such ties were recognised by the farmers themselves. As Alva, a farmer woman from the Magdalena Medio region, explained, farmers and guerrillas originated from the same geographical areas, with some being family members. The guerrillas have been in the region (Magdalena Medio) for a long time and served as protectors at times for farmers, something which the state has not done (interview, Alva, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015). Speaking of whether farmers share a certain ideology with the guerrillas, Paula, a farmer woman from Catatumbo, held that many of the proposals regarding land reform, such as the one discussed in the Havana peace negotiations, have been proposed by farmers.

‘It is not a proposal by the FARC, even if it is the FARC that is taking it forward /…/ What is important for Ascamcat is that this reform takes place and if the FARC wants to buy in to this, then that is not a problem’ (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015).

While it was made clear that it was not a question of the FARC representing farmers, thereby making a sharp distinction between farmers and the guerrillas, Paula concluded that, in the end, ‘FARC are farmers like the rest of us and have many similar grievances’ (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015). Even where there are no such ties, the fact that almost all farmers cultivate coca places them in proximity with the guerrilla (interviews: clergy offical, Cúcuta, 4/12/2014; two high-level officials, UN agency Cúcuta 8/10/2014.; Alejandro, Cúcuta 4/12/2014). Against the historic underdevelopment of the region, coca cultivation is the only viable means of survival for many farmers. It is the guerrillas who make coca cultivation possible, supplying farmers with the means for production and purchasing their harvests.

Within this context, characterised by active confrontations between the national army and the guerrillas, coupled with the complex relationships between communities and the guerrillas, farmers are actively constructing and preserving what interviewees referred to as a campesino identity. Peasant farming is conceptualised as more than a straightforward profession. Instead, it is associated with farmers’ historic struggle for and relationship to land, as set out in Chapter Three (3.3). As elaborated by Acvc, the notion of the campesino identity is linked to the concept of farmer rights. It refers to the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the habitants in the regions. Against the violent
history, security and any notion of peace is tied to farmers’ rights and the recognition of the historic violation of these rights. Alva spoke of the main insecurity facing farmer communities as being that of the government not recognising the situation in which farmers live. Security, Alva therefore argued, would be related to ‘a recognition of all the deaths of farmers trying to claim a right’ (interview, Alva, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015). Such recognition, it is argued, would offer real protection for farmers and legitimise their struggle.

6.3 Violent and Exclusionary Practices

Accounts around in/security had strong past and future connotations. The way farmers spoke of in/security derived from their historic struggle for land, paramilitary violence and state-led persecution (see 3.4.1; 4.5.1). Many of these issues were discussed in the recently concluded peace negotiations. Notably, the peace agreement creates mechanisms for providing land to landless farmers, or to farmers with insufficient land. While this outcome was deemed important, farmers nevertheless expressed great concern over the government’s approach to post-conflict rural development. The approach, they argued, effectively prolongs the way farmers for so long have been excluded, stigmatised and criminalised. Farmers spoke of the government’s approach as a neoliberal economic model, fundamentally promoting rural competitiveness. The market is placed at the centre of development and, resultantly, development becomes measured through economic growth and integration into regional, national and international markets. This perception is, to a certain extent, confirmed in the last two national development plans, which hold that economic growth is a necessary condition for closing the breach between rural and urban Colombia (DNP, 2011, 2014b), and the projection of a new Colombia in peace (see 5.5.1). The lack of market access and the resulting economic difficulties are, indeed, main grievances expressed by farmers in both regions. Yet, they resent the way market integration is promoted through policies prioritising export-oriented agricultural production, resource extraction and the production of fuel (these policies are further discussed in Chapter Seven). Development of this kind favours industrial monoculture, cattle-ranching, and industrial resource extraction, while failing to improve the livelihood of farmers. As Ernesto, a farmer from Catatumbo, argued, it ‘promotes privatisation and hands over the resources of our region to the multinationals’ (interview, Ernesto, Ascamcat, Cúcuta, 20/03/2015). Such claim was supported by farmers from Magdalena Medio, who argued that in the process, the traditional farming community is destroyed, whereas local and traditional forms of life and relations with nature are seen as poor, underdeveloped, premodern and peripheral (interviews: Alva, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015; and Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015).
Monoculture and cattle-ranching are problematic to farmers, not only because they squeeze out small-scale peasant farming, but also for their association with latifundistas and paramilitary incursions. The historic alliances between the political elite, latifundistas, and the paramilitaries blurred the borders between the legal and illegal, generating particularly violent dynamics which continue to impact on how farmers understand and speak of in/security. Both Acvc and Ascamcat detailed how one of the purposes of the paramilitary incursions was to displace farmers to make way for monoculture and cattle-ranching. Farmers refer to this process as the paramilitary counter agrarian reform, in which paramilitaries violently forced farmers to sell their land for a fraction of its value (interview, Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015). The process forced through important changes to landownership, as the paramilitaries – in partnership with sectors of the armed forces, latifundistas, the political elite, and oil multinationals – accumulated large swathes of land. Against this background, farmers argue that rural reform promoting monoculture and cattle-ranching only continues the illegitimate and exclusionary form of development in the regions. Such development has been the cause of atrocious violence, including homicides, violent expropriation and displacements.

Land restitution, as provided for in the VLRL, is one of the means through which the government aims to restore land appropriated in this way. Although farmers are largely supportive of the peace process and the way farmers’ access to land and land restitution is being increasingly recognised and prioritised (see 5.3.3), many argued that the law does not go far enough. Specifically, it offers no guarantees for farmers who, through the VLRL, have sought to return to their land. Neo-paramilitary groups continue to operate in these regions, threatening and displacing farmers who seek to return to their land (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015). Such dynamics have furthermore been increasingly reported by both human rights organisations and scholars alike (see for example, Amnesty International, 2014; Elhawary, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2013; Thomson, 2011a).

Tied to the organisation and use of land is the issue of resource extraction. Resource extraction is prioritised by the government as one of the key economic motors of the country (DNP, 2011). It is perceived that a large part of the resources required for implementation of the peace agreement will be generated by this sector (DNP, 2014b). Farmers, however, identified two main ways in which the government’s approach to resource extraction exacerbates insecurity. On the one hand, resource extraction impedes land titling (which is

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29 For an in-depth account of this process, see Ballvé (2013) and Grajales (2011).
discussed in the next chapter), whereas, on the other, it leads to further militarisation of the regions.

6.3.1 Increased militarisation

The increasing importance of resource extraction has been accompanied by military protection of the sector, which farmers perceived as a main in/security. Militarisation of the regions tied to resource extraction is the outcome of several interlinked factors. As discussed in Chapter Four, it relates to aligning the role of the armed forces to the post-conflict period (MinDefensa, 2015), a discursive commitment to environmental security (Government of Colombia, 2016a), resource extraction as an ‘economic locomotor’ and for financing the peace accords (DNP, 2011, 2014b), and shifting dynamics of the illegal economies (Presidencia de la Republica, 2015). Both farmer associations emphasised the two latter factors for increasing militarisation of the regions, which is having a detrimental impact on in/security dynamics. Illegal mining is now widely considered to have replaced the drug trade as the main economic activity of IAGs, and attacks against the sector are increasing (Garzon et al., 2016; Rettberg and Ortiz-Riomalo, 2013; Ronderos, 2011). As stated in Chapter Five (5.6), special energy and road battalions have been created in regions where large-scale energy and mining projects are implemented. In total, 68,255 troops are involved in the protection of the energy-mining and hydrocarbon and road security (MinDefensa and Grupo Social y Empresarial de la Defensa, n.d.), a significant proportion of the 204,000 troops (MinDefensa, 2015) that make up the armed forces (excluding the police). The heavy militarisation in a region that requires socio-economic development has caused much resentment among the population. Moreover, it erodes loyalty sentiments towards the state. As expressed by Ascamcat:

‘How can there be [so many] soldiers in Catatumbo, when there are no doctors or teachers. The region is suffering a crisis, but there is lots of money for the war /…/ The only state action, apart from military, is taking resources away from the region’ (interview, Ernesto, Cúcuta 20/03/2015).

Militarisation was seen as a pressing in/security for all farmers interviewed, due to past and present abuse by the armed forces against rural communities. Farmers’ associations have made continuous denouncement of incidents where farmers are targeted by the national
armed forces, often under the pretext of belonging to the guerrillas. According to Ascamcat, ‘the army has committed many massacres of farmers, accused of pertaining to the guerrillas’ (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015). Farmers from Ascamcat related in detail how, against such accusations, the army facilitated the paramilitary incursion in Catatumbo in the early 2000s and stood quiet in the face of the mass slaughter of the communities by the paramilitaries. Once the paramilitaries left, the army took their place, causing further violence against and displacement of the farming communities. Many IHL and human rights violations, such as false-positive cases (see footnote 10), occurred in Catatumbo (interviews: Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015, and Ernesto, Cúcuta 20/03/2015). Similar accounts were told by Acvc concerning the Magdalena Medio region.

Persecution by the army has continued under the auspices of the SoH strategy and the consolidation programme, implemented in Catatumbo since 2011. Despite the aim of the programme to consolidate civilian institutional presence, it was predominantly perceived by farmers as a military programme and a main cause of the detrimental in/security dynamics in the region. Despite its state-building premise, the only component implemented so far, Ascamcat stated, is the military component. Moreover, Ascamcat strongly rejected the way the consolidation programme effectively authorises the military to conduct projects that ought to fall under the remit of civilian state institutions (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015). Referring to both the civic-military days and the rapid reaction programmes (see 5.3.1; 5.3.2), it was argued that not only should such actions not be implemented by the army, but of more critical concern is how these activities draw civilians into the conflict. The military is used to ‘point us out’ (señalarnos) and is the cause of many human rights violations, Paula continued. As Daniel, a farmer and victim leader from Catatumbo, argued, ‘the military is taking photos and in other ways identifying civilians’ (interview, Daniel, Ascamcat, Cúcuta, 14/05/2015). Such accounts were confirmed also by international humanitarian organisations. As the regional coordinator of one of the UN agencies elaborated, it is not uncommon for the army to use these civic-military days to identify people and collect information, followed by an army attack a day or two later against the communities. As a result, the civic-military days have been the cause of many deaths and

30 These can be accessed via Prensa Rural (ww.prensarural.org), and the home pages of various lawyers’ collectives.

31 According to the government and the UNHCHR, no false-positives have occurred in Colombia since 2012, though this is contested by other sources, such as CINEP (Isacson, 2013).
they go against IHL precisely because they involve the civilian population in the armed conflict (interview, regional director, UN agency, Cúcuta 6/10/2014). It is not only the armed forces that are responsible for attacking civilians. There is a tendency also for the guerrillas to place mines around the area where these events are programmed to take place, and to kill both police and civilians, including minors (interview, regional director, international organisation, 06/10/14). For all the above, as one farmer from the region concluded, ‘the consolidation programme is a war programme /…/ with the military principally targeting farmers’ (interview, Ernesto, Cúcuta 20/03/2015). Such comment, moreover, is indicative of the way communities perceive that the consolidation programme and the SoH strategy are effectively the same, despite their different foundations and stated aims.

6.3.2 Delegitimisation of farmers

Both farmer associations held that the armed forces continue the practice of targeting farmers under the pretext that they belong to, or support, the guerrillas. One way in which this occurs is through the counter-narcotic efforts part of the consolidation programme (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015). In Catatumbo, and to a lesser extent Magdalena Medio, as previously stated, the majority of farmers cultivate coca due to the lack of alternative livelihood opportunities. While agreeing that the illicit crops are financing the armed conflict, farmers argued that the most disturbing way the drug trade drives the armed conflict is through the strengthening of the armed forces. Plan Colombia (see footnote 8), Jorge argued, served to finance and strengthen the war capacity of the armed forces, while doing little to address the underlying structural problems that make coca cultivation the only viable livelihood opportunity for many farmers. Moreover, as Jorge continued, the drug trade brings the ‘mafia’ to the region who, in turn, finance politicians. Resultantly, the drug trade is financing public policy (interview, Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015). However, as both farmer associations confirmed, rather than addressing corruption of this kind, the state is responding by stigmatising farmers for having ties to the guerrillas due to coca cultivation. According to Ascamcat, ‘the army tends to arrest farmers that they find in coca fields who are often imprisoned on drug-related charges or for belonging to the guerrillas’ (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015). Farmers from Acvc expressed similar concerns, with one interviewee arguing that ‘farmers are increasingly being jailed, accused of belonging to the guerrillas’ (interview, Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015). As will be discussed in the following Chapter Seven, comparable dynamics occur around informal mining, with informal miners becoming increasingly targeted by the armed forces against the growing strategic importance of illegal mining for the IAGs. As one interviewee argued, the way that
farmers are being arbitrarily detained by the armed forces is a way of criminalising poverty by targeting the weakest link in the illegal trafficking chains (interview, regional director, international organisation Cúcuta, 6/10/2014).

Interviewees argued that accusing farmers of being guerrilla supporters is also a highly effective way of delegitimising farmers’ demand for development, their struggle for land, rights and recognition. It’s a way of preventing social organisation, according to Acvc (interview, Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015). Similar dynamics occurred in Catatumbo. Farmers organise as a way of protection and to make their voices heard – although, as pointed out by Ascamcat, ‘organising is a dangerous activity’ (interview, Ernesto, Cúcuta 20/03/2015). One reason for this is because organisations, like farmer associations, have been forceful in exposing dynamics that incriminate the state. Farmer associations often exert strong social leadership and have been active in denouncing crimes, including those perpetrated by the armed forces, as well as the lack of progress of the implementation of policies and laws. As Daniel elaborated,

The government argues that many advances have been made, such as the issuing of new laws. Although the legal framework might be comprehensive, there is very little transformation. Since the government finds these groups uncomfortable due to their critique, they are accused of being leftists, i.e. guerrillas (interview, Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015).

Acvc announced that its entire executive committee was detained on false charges of rebellion.32 ‘There are a lot of judicial set-ups (montajes judiciales) against farmers as well as motivated selective assassinations’ (interview, Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015). In explaining such set-ups, one interviewee detailed how ‘the state is increasingly burdening farmers with papers and sending them to jail’ (llenarlos con papel y mandarlos al carcel), (interview, Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). This referred to how false charges are levied against farmers, which become impossible for them to disprove without access to lawyers or knowledge of judicial processes.33 These practices are perceived to have intensified under the Santos government, dynamics which farmers tie to the peace process with the AUC. The AUC served to repress dissent through its dirty war campaign, which it conducted on behalf

32 See also Orjuela Cubides (2015), who has detailed these events.

33 Further denouncement of these kind of practices can be found at Prensa Rural, http://prensarural.org/spip/.
of the state. The official elimination of the AUC curtailed such resort to violent repression of dissent. In this changing context, critical voices are instead silenced through arbitrary detentions and judicial set-ups. Several of the UN agencies and international organisations working in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio confirmed such accounts, and held that arbitrary detentions were on the increase (interviews: regional director, UN agency, Cúcuta 6/10/2014; regional director, international organisation Cúcuta 6/10/2014; programme director CINEP, Bogota 22/08/2014). A regional director of one of the UN agencies working in Catatumbo spoke of a new form of false-positive phenomenon, in which civilians are forced by the military to communicate with the guerrillas and thereafter arrested on charges of belonging to the guerrillas. As the interviewee elaborated:

[One example is that of] a campesino who was forced to transmit a message from his radio calling for a meeting with the guerrillas. The campesino was accused of being a guerrilla due to his connection with a radio transmitter. It is a case of illegal captures, under the pretence that they are guerrillas, rather than killing them as happened before. (interview, regional director, UN agency, Cúcuta 6/10/2014).

The increase in arbitrary detentions and false accusations is one way in which insecurity in the regions is becoming less visible, as homicides and extrajudicial killings are on the decrease. Another way is through the indirect displacement through purposeful underdevelopment, as discussed in the next section.

6.4 Purposeful Underdevelopment

Stigmatisation and persecution of farmers, as detailed above, coupled with the lack of development, is perceived by farmers to be a purposeful strategy of the government to depopulate the regions. By keeping these regions inhospitable, farmers are forced to leave the area. The reason behind this, it was argued, is to make way for the extractive industry. It was perceived that state policy, with its focus on wealth generation, fundamentally seeks to do away with peasant farming, despite its discursive commitment to this population, as articulated in both the NDP and territorial peace (see 5.3.1; 5.3.3). In the past, such persecution often took the form of displacement through paramilitary violence. Today, however, displacement is less violent and indirect. It is thereby also less visible, yet it has the same purpose as in the past; to neutralise dissent and exclude opposition. The Acvc referred to the lack of education opportunities as one such form of indirect displacement. With no secondary education facilities in most rural areas, youth are forced out of the region
if they want to attend school. The lack of healthcare in rural areas was seen as a similar deliberate strategy to depopulate the region by all farmers interviewed. Healthcare is made more urgent due to the contamination of the regions by fumigation of coca cultivation and by the resource extraction industry, which has had a detrimental effect on the health of the inhabitants. Yet, as Jorge stated, there are few health centres, access is often denied to people due to them not being in possession of the right papers, while the centres are poorly equipped and supplied. ‘If there are no health systems then the farmers have to go to urban areas, either because they themselves are ill or to take care of sick family members’ (interview, Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015). Both associations also illustrated how the ZRC entity had been persistently stalled by state authorities. For Ascamcat, this has taken the form of state authorities not signing off the creation of the ZRC. However, for Acvc, the reserve was suspended between 2002 and 2011 under the pretext that it was a safe haven for the guerrillas.34 Both Alva and Jorge elaborated on how once reinstated, Incoder has not complied with its commitments around technical assistance, financing and other forms of support. Both associations argued that underlying this lack of political will was the desire to attract investment in the extractive sector. The government does not want to sign off, they argued, as there are many natural resources in the region which the government wants to exploit (interviews: Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015, and Ernesto, Cúcuta 20/03/2015).

6.5 Tensions and Resistance

In light of the above dynamics, farmer associations are a way to ‘resist these dynamics, resist the neoliberal economic policy, privatisation, and the handing over of the resources of the region to the multinationals’ (interview, Ernesto, Cúcuta 20/03/2015). Protests, marches and strikes have been staged by the farmer associations in both regions, which, the farmers argue, have been violently repressed by the armed forces, often stating that such actions are being organised by the guerrillas. Ascamcat referred to a recent mass-march in Catatumbo in 2013 as being the latest example of such violent repression, where four farmers were killed and five captured under charges of carrying explosives. Over 200 were wounded by the police (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015). In fact, public statements by both President Santos and the director of the national police were made at the time, claiming that the marches were being invoked or infiltrated by the guerrillas (Vanguardia, 2013a, 2013b).

34 For a detailed documentation of the suspension of the Acvc ZRC, see Molina Portuguez (2011).
The situation has generated a deeply engrained distrust of the state, and a perception of the state as illegitimate and not acting in the interest of communities which oppose the neoliberal model. In response, farmers seek to navigate persistent in/security dynamics through the promotion of a rural farming economy by the implementation of ZRC and constitutional recognition, similar to that of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. What farmers seek through the rural farming economy is to make peasant farming a dignified livelihood opportunity. Interviewees defined the rural farming economy as small-scale production, which balances political, economic and environmental dimensions. The aim is to ensure distributive equality, environmental responsibility and to generate a sense of belonging. Fundamentally, it ‘places the human needs at the centre of development, not the need to create wealth’ (Acvc General Assembly, Barrancabermeja, April 24-26, 2015). Farmers spoke of the rural farming economy in opposition to what they saw as the neoliberal model for economic development, promoted by the state. The rural farming economy is promoted as an alternative political and economic model, adapting to the dynamics in the regions. The farmer associations have adopted the ZRC status as the most adequate instrument for pursuing the rural farming economy and, thereby, guaranteeing their rights and confronting the violent dynamics of the regions. It is furthermore a means through which farmers seek to resist displacement. Through the creation of ZRC, farmers also seek to open up space for political participation. Political participation in this context does not refer to traditional party politics, but to being able to take forward an alternative approach to development. As Paula explained, ‘What we seek is a new way of making politics by the very same rural population that policies need to work for’ (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015). To this, she added that the farmers should be able to engage in politics with guarantees – which, in the context of Catatumbo and Magdalena Media, means without being stigmatised, persecuted or killed.

In this way, the farmer associations are also a form of voluntary marginalisation, as set out in the conceptual framework in Chapter Two (2.5.1), as farmers actively resist integration into other dominant modes of rural income-generating activities. The peasant farming communities that were part of this research did not want to become integrated into large-scale wealth-generated agriculture, but sought to maintain small-scale traditional farming methods and practice. For these reasons, in/security understandings had strong links to the different dimensions of territory (2.5.1). The ZRC constituted territory that was inhabited collectively by farmers adhering to, and actively constructing, a campesino identity. The ZRC – either as a formally established territory (as in the case of Acvc), or as a de facto site negotiated by farmers but unrecognised by the authorities (as with Ascamacat) – also served as a space through which to engage in politics and demand their rights. It became a medium
for ideological struggles, with strong ties to past violations of farmers’ rights, and a site of resistance of present and future security-related policy and practice – including post-conflict development projects that seek to integrate farmers into the structures and processes that effectively forces them to renounce their campesino identity.

PART TWO: Insecurity Perspectives from Urban Conflict-Affected Communities

6.6 An Intertwined Urban Context and Identity

In this second part of the chapter, I discuss in/security understandings as expressed by urban conflict-affected communities in Cúcuta and Barrancabermeja. Like narratives expressed by the rural farming communities, contextual and identity factors had a significant impact on how interviewees spoke about in/security and what they spoke of also in urban settings. Nevertheless, being much more diverse communities forced together as a result of displacement, their narratives were not centred around a shared history, nor a future alternative approach to post-conflict development. Instead, narratives around in/security were, to a much greater degree, oriented around the present context which they navigated on a daily basis. The following sections discuss the contextual settings and the collective victim identity that emerged therefrom. The remaining part of the chapter discusses the way in which interviewees displayed an understanding of in/security as based on risk, vulnerability, prevention and protection.

6.6.1 Neo-paramilitary control

Neo-paramilitary control is both a contextual setting and an articulated in/security. As a contextual setting, it refers to the presence and power of neo-paramilitary groups in the barrios and settlements. The level of control varies from barrio to barrio, and affects individuals differently. In the main, as a local NGO official summarised, neo-paramilitary control is characterised by the groups’ ability to commit atrocious crimes and move around freely without anyone taking action against them. In the barrios, they move drugs, arms, money and people, and exercise power through extortion and control of movements (interview, Jairo, local NGO, Barrancabermeja, 5/03/2015). Eduardo, living in a neo-paramilitary controlled barrio in Cúcuta, explained how the neo-paramilitaries impose rules on movements, dress codes, hairstyles and the use of piercings (interview, Eduardo, IDP, Cúcuta, 9/10/2014). Olga, from a barrio in Barrancabermeja, stated that the neo-paramilitaries threaten women into assuming a submissive role (interview, Olga, IDP, Barrancabermeja, 18/03/2015). Edgar, also from Cúcuta, detailed how movements are constantly monitored and restricted (interview, Edgar, IDP, Cúcuta, 5/12/2014). Even
outside of the barrios, movements of individuals are monitored. Marcela, whose son was killed by the neo-paramilitaries and who reported attempts on her life for attempting to organise victims in the barrio, dared not to move around in the central areas of Cúcuta as she feared she would be abducted and killed by the neo-paramilitaries operating in the centre (interview, Marcela, IDP, Cúcuta, 5/12/2014). These accounts confirm an observation by CINEP, in speaking of its work on reporting political violence, that ‘the movement of people is recorded [in these barrios], if anyone goes somewhere, this will be known’ (interview, programme director CINEP, Bogota 22/08/2014).

The way interviewees spoke of neo-paramilitary control in the Perseverancia settlement differed from the other accounts. Interviewees from the settlement held that the neo-paramilitaries did not control the community. While it was recognised that neo-paramilitary control was common in most of the surrounding settlements, Perseverancia was different, they argued, because most of the inhabitants had work and were, therefore, occupied (FGD, Perseverancia IDP settlement, Cúcuta, 20/03/2015). While interviewees were reluctant to expand further on the matter, this statement was contradicted at a later point when participants told of how many were unemployed. Moreover, and as elaborated upon in the research excerpt in Chapter One (1.1), the setting and dynamics of the interviews pointed towards a degree of neo-paramilitary control. In addition, interviewees’ negation of such control was contested by Diana, the INGO representative who accompanied me to the settlement. While Diana was cautious about confirming that the neo-paramilitaries controlled the settlement, she did confirm that the settlement suffers from high levels of violence and micro-trafficking, with threats causing many displacements. ‘As is the case with most barrios and settlements like this, victims are cohabiting with the perpetrators’ (interview, Diana, INGO official, Cúcuta, 20/03/2015). Specific dynamics at play in the settlement added to these silences. As outlined in Chapter One, within this setting characterised by abject poverty, expensive vehicles would circulate during my visit. During the interviews, it was mentioned that ‘some people have cars’, but no more was said when following up on this comment. Thus, in the Perseverancia settlement, neo-paramilitary control was evidenced in the contradictions and silences.

35 ‘While I sought to ask further questions around neo-paramilitaries control, I noticed a shift in the group dynamic and participants did not elaborate to the same extent on these questions as they had on my previous questions. Thus, I decided to change the subject’ (notes from fieldwork diary, pg. 39).
6.6.2 State abandonment

A main enabling factor of neo-paramilitary control over communities is the peripheral characteristics of these settings (see 3.3). Interviewees referred to these structural and political characteristics as a ‘lack of state presence’ (la falta del Estado). As with neo-paramilitary control, the lack of state presence is both a contextual setting and an insecurity per se. In terms of contextual setting, interviewees referred to the lack of public and social services, such as health, education, and connectivity (to sewage systems, electricity grid, drinking water). While some services are available in the barrios, as Luisa, from a barrio in Barrancabermeja, argued, the high cost of utility services means that many go without water and electricity and ‘people are actually begging on the streets for water. There is no state help, utility companies are private and if you don’t pay, they will disconnect services’ (interview, Luisa, IDP, Barrancabermeja, 18/03/2015). Schools are found in some barrios, but quality is dismal and classes sporadic and irregular, Luisa continued. Ana, who had worked many years in education projects in the barrios of Barrancabermeja, argued that, as a result, many children in 10th and 11th grade do not know how to read or write (interview, Ana, IDP, Barrancabermeja, 18/03/2015). In summing up the situation, Alejandro, IDP and trade union leader, held that ‘communities are completely forgotten. There is a lack of everything’ (interview, Alejandro, IDP and trade unionist, Cúcuta, 4/12/2014).

The situation is more acute in the Perseverancia settlement than in the barrios. The settlement has no electricity and, thus, no light. Water arrives in a hose, is rationed and only accessible in the lower parts of the settlement. There are no nurseries or schools. According to one interviewee, the local education authority had claimed that such facilities could not be provided since there was no light in the settlement. Inhabitants of Perseverancia contested this claim, arguing that the lack of coverage is because the settlement is illegal and, therefore, the local government will not provide anything (FGD, Perseverancia, 20/03/2015). In a similar manner as the farmers had argued, this was thought to be a purposeful neglect in order to drive away the community from the land which was being earmarked for housing projects.

Against the lack of public services in the barrios and settlements, encounters with the state in these settings largely took the form of the police incursions, either in the pursuit of neo-paramilitaries, or conducting the needs assessment part of the national protection scheme (discussed further on). However, as interviewees from organisations working in the barrios added, there are numerous barrios in Cúcuta and Barrancabermeja in which the police cannot
enter due to neo-paramilitary control (interview, Sergio, director local CBO, Cúcuta, 5/12/2014).

6.6.3 A collective victim identity

In these settings, a variety of overlapping identities came into play. As the majority of people residing in the barrios and settlements are displaced from elsewhere in the country, communities are highly heterogenous. Many are farmers displaced from rural regions, some have been displaced from other urban settings, while others have lived in these settings for so long that they no longer consider themselves to be displaced (see 4.3.1). This heterogeneity was reflected in the interviews. Interviewees spoke from the perspective of a displaced person, a community leader, a woman, a parent, a human rights defender, and a campesino, indicating the fluidity of identity categories. Nevertheless, one collective identity emerged through the accounts around in/security, which was that of being a victim (víctima). The way interviewees self-identified as victims needs to be understood against the context they navigate.

The victim identity was constituted against the reinforcing context of neo-paramilitary control and state absence. The victim identity related to victimising acts that took place in the contextual settings, that is of neo-paramilitary violence and control, and state absence. In this sense, it took on the character of the underlying political context (Jacoby, 2015), where neo-paramilitaries had ‘power over’ (Dahl, 1961) the communities, whereas the state exercised non-coercive power (Lukes, 2005) through exclusion and marginalisation. In this narrative, the neo-paramilitaries were frequently defined as the perpetrators and victimisers, whereas state officials were spoken of in terms of neo-paramilitary collaborators. The construction of the victim identity also had historical connotations, related to the events that led to their displacements. In this sense, some were the victims of guerrilla or paramilitary violence that took place in the rural areas. All interviewees spoke of being victims of discriminatory and stigmatising practices, of wider society in general and of ‘the state’ in particular, due to precisely their status as a victim. In this way, the collective identity that emerged through the in/security-related accounts was founded on grievance and trauma, thus negative experiences.

The self-referral as a victim did not, in the main, reflect a notion of passivity or weakness. Rather, communities were well informed about their rights, such as their entitlements provided via the VLRL, and framed the victimising events in a human rights discourse. In fact, many of the interviewees also self-identified as human rights defenders. It was not clear
exactly what this identity entailed. The term ‘human rights defender’ is often used in the Colombian context by professionals with legal training, frequently working in lawyer collectives or with human rights NGOs. For the interviewees from the barrios, it appeared to denote a form of activism, organising and leading local communities of victims in claiming their rights and entitlements. Individuals organised in victim organisations have greater success in claiming their entitlements, according to Eduardo – a representative of a victim organisation in Cúcuta – who also argued that victims are increasingly organising in response to inefficient state services (interview, Eduardo, Cúcuta 9/10/2014). Thus, the victim identity ties in with conclusions by Jacoby (2015) around the victim identity as a means for accessing resources and influence, as discussed in Chapter Two (2.3.4). It should be noted, however, that the majority of interviewees do not organise and prefer to live in silence (interviews: Eduardo, Cúcuta 9/10/2014; Sergio, Cúcuta 5/12/2014). It was believed that many of those who do not organise are unaware of their rights and entitlements, both Eduardo and Sergio argued.

### 6.7 In/security as Risk and Vulnerability

In the context of neo-paramilitary control and state abandonment, communities in the barrios of Cúcuta and Barrancabermeja – interviewed outside the barrios, and thus able to speak more freely – spoke of highly violent dynamics in the barrios and surroundings. In these barrios, the communities were the victims of neo-paramilitary violence. Living side-by-side with the neo-paramilitaries was spoken of as one of the main insecurities facing these communities. As Marcela recalled:

> two neo-paramilitary groups are present in the barrio. They make a lot of threats, they know where one lives and where one’s family live and their movements. They say they will kill first your parents, then your children and then you. (interview, Marcela, Cúcuta 5/12/2014)

A similar account was told by Alejandro, who had been displaced three times and whose two siblings had been killed by the IAGs. ‘People cohabit with death, they go to bed with death/.../ I don’t know when they will come after me, when they will launch a bomb or a grenade into my house’ (interview, Alejandro, Cúcuta 4/12/2014). These, and other similar accounts, indicate that a violent act has not yet taken place, but that the risk of the threat materialising is perceived to be high. The fear expressed of an imminent attack was interwoven with narratives on the experiences of the wider community. In articulating their fears, interviewees referred to how other inhabitants had been displaced, disappeared, killed or
tortured. Fear was also related to having lived through the paramilitary era a decade earlier and the way they perceived the neo-paramilitaries being the continuation of the paramilitaries. As Marcela stated, when asked how violence had changed over the last ten years, ‘the situation is the same, victims are disappeared /…/ there are many disappearances’ (interview, Marcela, Cúcuta 5/12/2014). In addition to disappearances, Alejandro spoke of how the neo-paramilitaries – just like their paramilitary predecessors – were engaged in repopulating barrios with people supportive of their activities. Thus, living in the barrios was associated with a heightened risk to the life of the inhabitants and their families and, coupled with the lack of the state, heightened vulnerability towards this risk. In this way, interviewees spoke of being victims of neo-paramilitary control and state abandonment.

Although interviewees spoke of a continuity between the paramilitaries and the armed groups in control of the barrios today, several interviewees argued that the neo-paramilitaries are a greater security threat than the paramilitaries. While many held that the paramilitaries had been more violent, the neo-paramilitaries were perceived as a more critical threat due to their invisible structures.36 ‘No one knows who is who, who belongs to an armed group. Today, the dynamics of the armed conflict are more camouflaged’ (interview, Julieta, IDP, Barrancabermeja, 18/03/2015). Such narratives indicate complex dynamics in the barrios, where the neo-paramilitaries are visible through the way in which they exert control through violence and threats. On the other hand, their structures are much more hidden than that of the paramilitaries and, as a consequence, a pressing security threat is that it is not known who might belong to these groups. Resultantly, a number of interviewees expressed that there is a lack of confidence and trust within communities (interviews: Olga, Barrancabermeja 15/05/2015; Diana, Cúcuta 20/03/2015).

A second difference between the paramilitaries and the neo-paramilitaries is the importance for the latter of the local level.37 This shift has generated specific in/security dynamics, associated with a heightened sense of vulnerability and risk. The majority of interviewees

36 Interviewees emphasised the way in which neo-paramilitary structures are significantly more obscured than the visible and hierarchal structure of the paramilitaries. The only visible structures within the communities are the local foot soldiers. It is believed that the members themselves often do not know each other, whereas local figureheads constantly change, due to internal rivalry or external aggressions against the groups.

37 This relates to the way the neo-paramilitaries are more forcefully involved in micro-trafficking and micro-extortion (such as, of local corner shops, taxi drivers, etc.), as opposed to the paramilitaries, which predominantly focused on trafficking drugs out of Colombia, and extorting large businesses. These dynamics were related in detail in the interviews, and have also been analysed by, for example, Prieto (2013).
expressed concern over micro-trafficking (interurban drug trafficking). Micro-trafficking and the associated increased drug abuse in the barrios are generating violence, threats and disappearances, in particular when community members are seen as obstacles to these business interests (interviews: Marcela, Cúcuta 5/12/2014; Edgar, Cúcuta 5/12/2014; Alejandro, Cúcuta 4/12/2014; and Ana, Barrancabermeja 15/05/2015; AMOVI transcript 7). It should be noted, however, that micro-trafficking extends into the rural areas as well, with similar consequences of drug addictions among youth (interview, Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015). Tied to these dynamics, interviewees in Barrancabermeja referred to an emerging loan-business, taking advantage of the pressing needs of the inhabitants (interview, Olga, Barrancabermeja 15/05/2015). This was referred to also in the AMOVI transcripts, such as transcript 8 which held that the failure to repay the full amount and on time is the cause of much violence, where even young children are killed for failing to repay small amounts of money owed (AMOVI, transcript 8).

In this context, a recurrent narrative was the vulnerability of children and youths. Many of the women interviewed expressed how they felt unable to prevent children from joining neo-paramilitary groups (interviews: Ana and Olga, Barrancabermeja 15/05/2015; Marcela, Cúcuta 5/12/2014; and Silvia, director local CBO, Barrancabermeja, 5/03/2015; AMOVI transcript 1, 6). Both Ana and Olga highlighted the dismal quality, or complete absence, of nurseries and schools in the barrios and settlement meant that children were left unattended for most of the days. This makes children and youths extremely vulnerable to the neo-paramilitaries, who are actively recruiting among this group. A local NGO officer, working closely with marginalised communities in Barrancabermeja, explained how youths from the barrios are the local footsoldiers of the neo-paramilitaries, and are also the ones who commit most of the crimes. They are contracted to kill people, collect debts and distribute drugs, lured by a mobile phone, motorbikes, a gun or a small salary (interview, Jairo, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015). Creating drug addiction in these settings is perceived to be a purposeful strategy of the neo-paramilitaries. Ana detailed how young boys, often paid with drugs, are used to recruit their peers into drug consumption and thereby into the power of the neo-paramilitaries. Young girls, on the other hand, are lured into prostitution. The increase in child recruitment into neo-paramilitary groups has led to a situation where many of the perpetrators today are very young (interview, Marcela, Cúcuta 5/12/2014). An implication of such practice is the blurring of boundaries between victims and perpetrators. However, while many interviewees spoke of the violence generated by the neo-paramilitaries, there was a recognition of the victimisation of children and youths, who, through victimisation, had become the victimisers. As Marcela continued, many of today’s
perpetrators are the orphans of paramilitary violence in the past, who have been completely abandoned by the state. Attention must be paid to this group in order to avoid the problem reproducing. Silvia added to this, in that there are no proposals for this group that generate opportunities to include them in the wider economic and social infrastructure (interview, Silvia, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015). However, it should be noted that precisely because local youth constitute an important part of the IAGs, the IAGs also provide a level of protection for the communities due to family ties (interview, regional coordinator, UN agency, Bucaramanga, 13/08/2014).

The above dynamics have been the cause of multiple and interurban displacement (interviews: Alejandro, Cúcuta 4/12/2014; Olga, Barrancabermeja 15/05/2015). Multiple displacement was argued to be an increasing occurrence, generated by the extensive networks of neo-paramilitary groups which enable them to remain informed about the whereabouts of the victims (interviews: Alejandro, Cúcuta 4/12/2014; coordinator, IDP shelter, Cúcuta, 19/03/2015; programme director, INGO, Cúcuta 8/10/2014). The integrated neo-paramilitary networks are able to identify people who have fled from one area and, through threats, forcibly displace them again (interview, coordinator IDP shelter, Cúcuta 19/03/2015). Increasingly, landowners have sought the support of the neo-paramilitaries to dislodge the IDP settlements from their land, bearing chilling resemblance to the paramilitary era (interview, Sergio, Cúcuta 5/12/2014). Regarding a possible return of paramilitarism as the private armies of landowners and other powerful individuals, Silvia argued that this is not only a risk but an actual fact. It is also ‘very much on the increase’ (interview, Silvia, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015). It should be noted, though, that the inability to displace was also held to be a pressing, but much less visible, insecurity. Individuals threatened by the neo-paramilitaries argue that, precisely due to threats and the interconnected networks of the neo-paramilitaries, displacement was not possible. As Marcela repeatedly reiterated during the interview, security would be ‘to take me away from where I live’ (interview, Marcela, Cúcuta 5/12/2014).

By controlling the movements of communities, the space for negotiating in/security becomes severely curtailed. There is much fear within the communities when it comes to talking about the violence of the past, because of the continuation of the illegal structures created by the paramilitaries (interview, Ivonne Suarez, director of the AMOVI archive, Bucaramanga, 21/01/2015; AMOVI transcript 1-9). This has resulted in a ‘rule of silence’ within many communities (interview, coordinator, local foodbank, Cúcuta, 5/12/2014). As recorded by AMOVI in relation to living in neo-paramilitary controlled contexts, ‘one needs to become
invisible, live in silence’ (AMOVI, interview transcript 1). ‘People must live in silence because life comes first’ (AMOVI, interview transcript 3). In the neo-paramilitary controlled context, organising and denouncing crimes are dangerous activities (interview, Ana, Barrancabermeja 15/05/2015). Marcela, referring to community leaders organising victims, stated ‘they [the neo-paramilitaries] want to silence leaders because of what victims know, victims and leaders are aware of everything that goes on’ (interview, Marcela, Cúcuta 5/12/2014). Such arguments were confirmed also by many of the community-based organisations working in the barrios. Denouncing crimes, which is actively encouraged by the government (5.3.3), is difficult and dangerous as the neo-paramilitaries control the means of communication and movement. As Alejandro continued, ‘there is a lot of fear around denouncing. Many times, the victims and the perpetrators know each other, the perpetrator knows the whereabouts of the victims and his family’ (interview, Alejandro, Cúcuta 4/12/2014).

6.8 In/security and State Legitimacy

The way communities spoke about the difficulties in denouncing crimes furthermore manifested a deep-rooted lack of confidence in state institutions. Distrust of state authorities is tied to the contexts of neo-paramilitary control and state abandonment, and also has ties to the history of the paramilitaries (see 3.4). The majority of interviewees held that the paramilitary infiltration into state authorities continued with the neo-paramilitaries, albeit to a lesser extent. As Eduardo argued, the unwillingness of victims to denounce crimes is linked to neo-paramilitary infiltration in authorities (interview, Eduardo, Cúcuta 9/10/2014). This was echoed by Edgar, who related how he had made a denouncement at the Office of the Attorney General (la fiscalía) and received death threats the following day for making ‘noise’. ‘How could they [the neo-paramilitaries] possibly know that a denouncement had been made and what had been said?’ (interview, Edgar, Cúcuta 5/12/2014). Such sentiments were expressed not only by interviewees from the barrios, but also by organisations working with IDP communities. As the investigative process commences, anonymity breaks down (interviews: two high-level officers UN agency Cúcuta 8/10/2014; coordinator, IDP shelter, Cúcuta 19/03/2015; high-level official, international organisation, Bucaramanga, 5/09/2014). Denouncing thus continues to be a dangerous activity, which is, as Edgar stated, is why so few crimes are denounced.

Another important factor underpinning the lack of confidence in state authorities is the lack of results. It was perceived from the interviews that this stemmed from a lack of political
will, manifested by high levels of impunity and the way in which authorities diminished the accounts of victims. This was partly tied to the centralised process of the VLRL, as discussed in the previous chapter (5.7.1), which resulted in many claims being denied by UARIV, in addition to the long period of time it takes for the UARIV to reach a decision. Claims and denouncements are often denied on the basis that the crime is a common crime and not part of the armed conflict. Interviewees indicated that state officials purposefully manipulated boundaries in order to exclude legitimate claims and thereby evade their responsibilities towards these communities. As Eduardo put it, ‘there is a tendency by local authorities to say that the violence is not related to the conflict but to other factors and, thus, outside their remit’ (interview, Eduardo, Cúcuta 9/10/2014). Meanwhile, Marcela, referring to how she sought state protection due to the threats and attempts on her life, told how her requests had been rejected under the argument that it was ‘an ordinary risk (riesgo ordinario) /…/ but how can it be, when people are threatened and killed?’ (interview, Marcela, Cúcuta 5/12/2014). Edgar elaborated on how, following his denouncement of the torture and murder of his son, the UARIV had taken a year to decide on his case, which was furthermore rejected under the argument that it was a case of common crime. ‘How can it be a common crime? He was even registered as an IDP /…/ UARIV are ‘evaluating as if mad’ (evaluando al loco) /…/ The state is insulting us’ (tomando el pelo) (interview, Eduardo, Cúcuta 9/10/2014). As narrated by AMOVI, ‘why do the IAGs have the right to kidnap and kill? The government, instead of helping the victims, has made them have to fight’ (AMOVI, transcript 7). Through such inaction and lack of results, as Alejandro argued, ‘the state is sending a message that crime pays. Impunity rules (impunidad es la reina)’ (interview, Alejandro, Cúcuta 4/12/2014).

The accounts around the lack of confidence in state authorities are intertwined with accounts on discrimination and stigmatisation. While not expressed as strongly and specifically as in the interviews with the farmer associations, generalising comments were frequently made. These included statements such as victims being considerably stigmatised. Interviewees who self-identified as community leaders and/or human rights defenders spoke of how they were frequently branded as trouble-makers, leftists and guerrilla sympathisers (interview, Eduardo, Cúcuta 9/10/2014). A leading human rights activist and lawyer from the Magdalena Medio region argued that the state fears human rights defenders, as they have been successful in bringing the armed forces to justice. Due to their work, members of the military have ended up in prison and practices such as the false-positives have been exposed (interview, Catalina, Bogota 14/11/2014).
Other ways in which communities talked about discrimination as a source of insecurity were through being denied their rights. In particular, this related to access to services and humanitarian aid that they were legally entitled to (see 5.3.3; 5.7.1). Interviewees spoke of discriminating practices at health facilities. A young woman from Perseverancia detailed how her mother had died unnecessarily as she had difficulties in providing the right papers upon entering the emergency unit (FGD Perseverancia, 20/03/2015). To this, other interviewees in the settlement added that doctors will not communicate with ‘this population’ (esta gente) and give no explanation of the treatment provided. Nor do they provide any real examination of the patient. Insurance should cover for healthcare, but it does not. Most women give birth at home – which, in addition to not being attended by trained professionals, was further complicated by the lack of electricity. An interviewee from a barrio in Barrancabermeja added to this, in that, while communities are entitled to subsidised services, clinics often do not comply, stating that the authorities have not provided the clinics with the supplies required to provide subsidised services (interview, Julieta, Barrancabermeja 15/05/2015). All nine AMOVI accounts furthermore confirmed the discriminatory practice of service providers. As related in transcript number 7, ‘the person has to die first in order to get into the hands of a doctor’ (pg.19). Such discriminatory and exclusionary practices are not only a tangible insecurity, but erode state legitimacy as perceived by the communities.

In the context of neo-paramilitary control and state abandonment, communities expressed feeling unprotected. Protection, it was argued, was the responsibility of the state, but the state is not assuming this responsibility. While there is a national protection programme for individuals who are particularly exposed and threatened, it was argued that the way protection is conceptualised by the National Protection Unit exacerbates insecurity. A number of the interviewees were covered under the national protection programme. Nevertheless, they all argued that the scheme increased their vulnerability to the very same threats it was meant to provide protection against. Depending on the level of risk and the kind of work undertaken by the individual in question, the protection scheme ranges from the provision of a mobile phone and/or a bullet-proof vest, to armed escorts and armoured vehicles. Yet, this overwhelmingly militaristic and materialistic approach to protection not only fails to protect individuals navigating contexts of IAG control and state abandonment, but crucially generates more insecurities. It makes the person more visible while being inappropriate to the context the person navigates. As Alejandro explained, in assessing the situation of a person requiring protection, the police will do home visits. However, this is extremely dangerous for individuals living in neo-paramilitary controlled barrios, as being
seen to talk with the police evokes suspicions that the person is informing on these groups (interview, Alejandro, Cúcuta 4/12/2014). Similarly, a bullet-proof vest, as Daniel from Ascamcat – who acted as the regional coordinator for the victim participation table – argued, is associated more with risk than protection. ‘One cannot go on the bus with a bullet-proof vest as one would immediately be singled out, which is very dangerous’ (interview, Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). A mobile phone, while beneficial in some respects, is rendered useless when people cannot afford to put credit on the phone. As Marcela explained, ‘they [the authorities] gave me a phone, but took away the credit’ (interview, Marcela, Cúcuta 5/12/2014). To this, she added that one cannot make a phone call while being attacked. However, Daniel argued that having a phone did generate a sense of security, precisely for being able to call someone when finding oneself in a critical situation.

Armoured vehicles and escorts were equally controversial. Many victims and human rights defenders under the protection scheme live and work in the barrios or other marginalised areas. Maintaining a low profile is essential for their work and security. However, entering these areas in an armoured vehicle marks these people out to potential perpetrators, while generating distance towards the communities in which they work. Furthermore, what is perceived to be a militaristic weapon-based protection scheme contradicts the work of most human rights defenders, who are promoting a non-militarised approach to security. Meanwhile, Silvia talked about the additional insecurity through stigmatisation that the scheme generates for women. Should a woman be seen to have an armed escort or wearing a bullet-proof vest, this would stigmatise her in the community. She is perceived to be ‘a dangerous woman’. This strongly impacts on her social relationships, which tend to break down. It also impacts on relationships with partners, as a woman under the protection scheme is not a woman to be seen with. For men, however, it is the opposite – having a protection scheme makes him more attractive (interview, Silvia, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015).

Through the accounts around the lack of confidence in the state, conflicting images of an ideal, actual, and past state emerged – expressed among all communities. The ideal state, expressed in the accounts, ties in with what Tate (2001) terms an aspirational state. Interviewees articulated a desire for a legitimate state providing guarantees for victims. The aspired state was spoken of in contrast to the past state, which was associated with atrocious human rights abuses and other forms of violence (much of which correlate to the background dynamics of the centre-periphery divide, as discussed in Chapter Three). Most of their encounters with the ‘actual state’ – that is, with public officials of different state institutions and units – continued to be largely negative, in the sense that they were discriminated,
stigmatised and made into a target by the armed forces. Furthermore, different state entities were perceived to be co-opted by the neo-paramilitaries which constituted a significant insecurity. The perception of, and encounters with, ‘the state’ caused many victims of displacement to believe that returning to their land would never be possible (interviews: Edgar, Cúcuta 5/12/2014; FGD Perseverancia, 20/03/2015; AMOVI transcript 2 and 5) A certain preference for informality was also displayed, illustrated by accounts around how interviewees found that public services – when provided by the authorities – are expensive and, thus, expressed a preference for informality, such as water arriving in a hose in the Perseverancia settlement (interviews: Sergio, Cúcuta 5/12/2014; Julieta, Barrancabermeja 15/05/2015; and Alejandro, Cúcuta 4/12/2014). This notwithstanding, through the narratives around state absence being among the most pressing insecurities, calls were made for a strong state presence.

6.9 Conclusion

Contextual and identity factors were found to strongly influence the way communities in both rural and urban peripheries spoke about in/security. A context shared across all communities was that of competing claims to rule (Krupa and Nugent, 2015), where weakened state governance structures (Idler, 2012a), and the lack or scarcity of public services, facilitated the consolidation of IAG control over communities. Across all communities, the context of state abandonment and communities’ relations to the state were paramount for how communities spoke of in/security. In both rural and urban peripheries, interviewees largely spoke of in/security in relation to their perception of, and experiences with, ‘the state’. Interviewees articulated how they perceive the state to work against them, either through direct military and police attacks, or through exclusion, discrimination and stigmatisation. The farming community in Catatumbo spoke of direct military attacks, either directly against the communities or against the guerrillas, but which placed communities in the centre of armed hostilities. These accounts tie in with the SoH strategy and territorial consolidation programme, analysed in the previous chapter, and which both target Catatumbo (5.3.1; 5.3.2). The farming community in Magdalena Medio held that armed attacks against this community continued, but not at the scale as some years back (ACVC assembly, 24-26/04/2015). This correlates to the fact that Magdalena Medio is not targeted by the SoH or the territorial consolidation programme. However, farmers in Magdalena Medio instead emphasised how communities continued to be criminalised and attacked under accusations of pertaining to the guerrillas, whereas the acute underdevelopment of the region was seen as a deliberate attempt to force farmers off their land.
Both rural and urban communities felt that their marginalisation was a purposeful strategy by the state, despite a discursive/policy commitment to the contrary. This purposeful marginalisation was argued to be motivated by an approach to development to which these communities became obstacles. For farming communities, it centred specifically around the perceived neoliberal approach to rural development in which peasant farming has no place. For both rural and urban communities, it was perceived to be largely motivated by a desire to silence communities for what they know – in terms of illegal state practices, as well as the deficiencies in the VLRL. The most effective way of stigmatising, delegitimising and silencing communities, it was argued, is to accuse them of pertaining to – or supporting – the guerrillas.

Stigmatising through associating communities with the guerrillas also evidences the way the macro-level perceives the guerrillas to be the main driver of the armed conflict and insecurity in Colombia. Though most interviewees held that the neo-paramilitaries were the most critical IAG, yet the threat posed by them was persistently downplayed by the state. Many believed this was partly due to the continued collusion between the neo-paramilitaries and certain state entities, in particular the armed forces. A common way of diminishing the threat posed by the neo-paramilitaries was to declare violence suffered by the communities in the hands of the neo-paramilitaries as being that of ordinary crime. In this way, communities were moreover denied protection, compensation and reparation provided for in the VLRL. Though even when protection was provided, the militarised and materialistic approach to protection often exacerbated insecurity. All the above has contributed to a deeply engrained distrust of the state, while somewhat paradoxically, demanding greater state presence and a more forceful confrontation of the neo-paramilitaries.
CHAPTER SEVEN: In/Security in Continuum

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I bring together the way in/security is understood at both the macro- and micro-levels discussed in the two previous chapters, centring on research question three: ‘In what ways do the contested meanings of in/security between the state and community levels impact on (post)conflict in/security dynamics?’ A continuation in the approach to in/security is discerned as the country transitions from the five decades of armed conflict into the post-conflict phase.

The chapter is divided in two parts. In the first part, I analyse how understandings of in/security generate certain truth claims, and how these claims relate to local in/security dynamics and lived experiences. The chapter begins with a discussion on how macro-level understandings of in/security, together with specific outcomes of the spatial sequenced approach, have allowed the government to claim that a juncture in in/security dynamics has been reached. The juncture has promoted a discursive transition towards wider people-oriented in/security, as conceptualised in Chapter Five (5.3.3; 5.5.1). I thereafter juxtapose this juncture in in/security against in/security dynamics in Magdalena Medio and Catatumbo, and the lived experiences as narrated by the rural and urban communities.

The second part of the chapter illustrates how there is a continuation in the approach to in/security, where wider people-oriented security remains contingent on state-centred security. While state-centred security largely correlates to territorial control and institutional consolidation, in the post-conflict period it is increasingly related to a specific kind of economic development in the rural peripheries. To illustrate the continuum, I discuss the in/security implications of the strategic importance of the resource extraction sector in the Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio regions, and the contentious interplay between the sector and the armed conflict. Both Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio are strategic energy resource and mining regions, where resource extraction is identified as the main driver of post-conflict development and its focus on reducing the centre-periphery gap. The strategic importance of the resource extraction sector for post-conflict development, with its aim to eliminate the centre-periphery divide, has continued exclusionary dynamics in the peripheries. The importance of resource extraction for both legal and illegal actors alike has furthermore justified the continued reliance on military security provision in the regions. The final
sections of the chapter discuss the continuation against how people-oriented security continues to be contingent on state-centred security through a multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in various macro-level strategies, which effectively manipulate the boundaries between the legal and illegal, the political and criminal.

PART ONE: Truth Claims and Lived Experiences

7.2 Macro-Level Truth Claims: A Juncture in In/Security Dynamics

The way in/security is understood at the macro-level, together with specific outcomes of the spatial sequenced approach, have allowed the government to claim that a juncture in in/security dynamics has been reached. This juncture is manifest through a reduction in high-impact violence that culminated with the signing of the peace agreement in late 2016, producing a temporal division between the violent past and the new Colombia in peace. Policy and discourse have sought to project a particular rendering of the armed conflict as having been contained, through making references to successive improvements in reducing high-impact violence. Important improvements can indeed be demonstrated through the way in which in/security is monitored and assessed. As Chapter Five argues, security-related policies make use of mainly quantitative indicators on high-impact violent crimes in order to monitor progress and evaluate in/security across the country. Official statistics demonstrate important reductions in a number of key indicators, as Table 7.1 illustrates.

Table 7.1. Reduction in High-Impact Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Homicide Rate</td>
<td>48/100,000</td>
<td>25/100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnappings Cases</td>
<td>1440</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorist Acts</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidents of IAG Action</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MinDefensa 2013b; MinDefensa 2017.

Similarly, the issuing of the VLRL and the implementation results of its first five years have allowed the government to claim that unprecedented efforts are being made towards the victims of the armed conflict (see 5.5.1). Supporting such claims include the registration of over 8.4 million victims with the UARIV, of which over 6.3 million victims are receiving some kind of attention (UARIV, 2017b). Regarding land restitution, the whole country has
been macro-focalised (5.3.3) and, in 2015, there was a surge in micro-focalisation following the unilateral ceasefire declared by FARC. That year, over 9 million hectares were micro-focalised, compared to just over 5 million hectares in the preceding 33 months (2012-2014) (CSML, 2016).

Yet, the strongest indicator of the juncture in in/security dynamics pertains to the peace process and the subsequent peace agreement with the FARC. The peace agreement has allowed the government to claim that five decades of armed conflict have ended (Presidencia de la Republica, 2016b). As the introduction to the peace agreement states, this ends the enormous suffering that the conflict has caused and opens a new chapter in Colombian history (Government of Colombia, 2016b). This new chapter is characterised by greater social inclusion, the strengthening of democracy throughout national territory, and the fomentation of institutional channels for resolving social conflicts. A temporal division is thus produced, with official discourse around the peace agreement constructing a binary narrative between the violent past and a ‘new country in peace’ (DNP, 2014b). While this division gained force with the advancing peace negotiations (see 5.5.1), it was significantly enhanced by the signing of the peace agreement. The peace agreement, Santos argued, allowed the Colombian population to leave behind a sad past and open the doors to a better future, with happiness and optimism (Presidencia de la Republica, 2016b). With the peace agreement dependent on the approval by the Colombian electorate in a subsequent referendum, Santos framed the vote as a decision between the suffering of the past and the hope of the future; between the tears of conflict and the tranquillity of peaceful coexistence; between war-induced poverty and the opportunities brought by peace. In acknowledging important shortcomings of the agreement, Santos urged the population to support an imperfect agreement that saves lives over a perfect war that brings deaths and pain to the country and its families.

7.2.1 Implications of the juncture in in/security dynamics

The juncture in in/security dynamics set out above produces three interlinked implications. First, it validates the spatial sequenced approach to in/security, which produced tangible improvements in high-impact violence. Fundamentally, the approach allowed the armed forces to eliminate the most persistent security threat to the state and its citizens, that of the FARC (MinDefensa, 2015; Presidencia de la Republica, 2016a). In this way, the narrative around the juncture in in/security dynamics projects what David Campbell describes as ‘a particular story of how we got here’ (Campbell 1990, pg.264). Secondly, the juncture in
in/security dynamics has been framed in a way that enhances the legitimacy of the state (see 2.5.2). The negotiations and agreement have been presented as the victory of the rule of law, of the constitution and of the system of governance in Colombia; in short, a victory of democracy, which FARC throughout its existence has opposed (Presidencia de la Republica, 2016a). Thirdly, juncture in in/security dynamics ushers the transition from narrow state-centred focus on in/security to a wider, people-oriented focus. As the government seeks to transition the country into the post-conflict period, there has been a discursive shift from the narrow state-centred focus of in/security, with its military connotations, to that of a wider people-oriented focus. People-oriented in/security in the Colombian context, as Chapter Five details, is underpinned by a concept of a rights-based participatory democracy, where state efforts are centred on closing societal inequality breaches. These aspects underpin the government’s concept of territorial peace, which is integral to the peace agreement and the post-conflict period. Territorial peace focuses on the regions most affected by the armed conflict, that is, the isolated peripheries, promoting a bottom-up participatory approach to peacebuilding (5.3.3).

Territorial peace and the shift towards people-oriented in/security in the post-conflict period translates into a specific focus on the marginalised rural population. Territorial peace recognises that farmers are among those who have suffered the worst consequences of the armed conflict. This recognition is brought forward in the peace agreement, specifically in the sub-agreement on integral rural reform, which aims to eliminate the conditions that have facilitated the persistent levels of armed violence in the countryside. As such, farmers’ access to land is of prime importance, as is the promotion and protection of the rural farming economy. To this end, the peace agreement promotes the formation of ZRCs and recognises the contribution of the existing ZRC to peace. Although other forms of production and use of land are referred to – including investment-oriented and competitive commercial agriculture – the rural farming economy is, at all times, to be supported and protected. The sub-agreement on rural reform emphasises the active participation of the marginalised rural population for the development and implementation of the programmes part of rural reform. To this end, democratic and participative institutional spaces are to be established to ensure farmers’ inclusion in political, economic, social and cultural life in the regions. This projection of a people-oriented approach to in/security in the peripheries, however, is largely contested among conflict-affected rural and urban communities in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio.
7.3 Micro-Level Lived Experiences

The juncture in in/security dynamics, identified at the macro-level and the projection of the post-conflict period, contrasts with the lived experiences at the local level. The temporal division demarcating the violent past and the new country in peace contrasts with the continuity in in/security dynamics at the local level. At the time of the interviews, the peace negotiations were advanced, but no peace agreement had been reached. Macro-level discourse was, at the time, advocating for the peace agreement, while the NDP 2014-2018 stipulated that a post-conflict transition would occur regardless of whether or not a peace agreement was reached with the FARC. Among the conflict-affected communities from Magdalena Medio and Catatumbo, there was much weariness of this discourse and projection. As argued in Chapter Six, in/security understandings at the micro-level across both rural and urban communities were associated with recognition, participation and protection. Interviewees spoke of these aspects to be of prime importance for improving security against the engrained structures of exclusion, stigmatisation and criminalisation.

Essentially, as this section will argue, the results generated by the sequenced spatial approach to in/security were not perceived by the interviewees to bring about the changes in local in/security dynamics in a way that transform underlying structures driving violence and insecurity. This is because 1) other forms of high-impact violence continued, such as extortion and threats, mostly due to the continued presence of other IAGs and the state response thereto; 2) the emphasis on quantitative results by the government has little impact on less visible violence pertaining to the social conflict; and 3) the quantitative emphasis on measuring in/security allows for the manipulation of people-oriented in/security initiatives.

7.3.1 Persistent levels of high-impact violence

The majority of interviewees at the micro-level were indeed in favour of a peace agreement with the FARC, yet critiqued the narrow conceptualisation of the armed conflict by the government that confines it to that of between the FARC and the state (interviews: Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015; and Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). As detailed in previous chapters, the FARC is but one of many IAGs present in the regions. While FARC, during the negotiations, at times declared unilateral ceasefires, which led to a decrease in guerrilla violence, other IAGs maintained or even increased their operations (CODHES, 2017). Of particular concern across all communities interviewed was the lack of state action against the neo-paramilitaries, which most interviewees perceived as among the most critical IAGs. The neo-paramilitaries were believed to be the main perpetrators of the increasing levels of threats.
and extortion (interviews: Alejandro, Cúcuta 4/12/2014; Eduardo, Cúcuta 9/10/2014; and programme director CINEP, Bogota 22/08/2014). Such local in/security dynamics were confirmed also by organisations at the meso-level that work closely with the local communities. An official at one of the international organisations, working closely with both the government and local communities in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio, elaborated how, in these regions, extortion had increased to record levels and that IAG recruitment was up. At the same time, there was increased action by the armed forces; hence, it was argued that the population felt attacked from both sides and did not see any benefits of the peace talks. Instead, the situation for them had worsened (interview, programme director, international organisation, Bogotá, 20/08/2014). An official at one of the humanitarian IOs operating in the Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio concluded that there was a certain incomprehension among conflict-affected communities towards the peace process, as nothing had changed in the communities (interview, high-level official, international organisation, Bucaramanga 5/09/2014). An official at one of the UN agencies working in the Magdalena Medio region, on the other hand, argued that violence had actually become more widespread and intense parallel to the peace negotiations (interview, regional coordinator, UN agency, Bucaramanga 13/08/2014).

A widely acknowledged risk in the post-conflict transition period is that other IAGs would fill any void left by the FARC, or that dissident FARC members would remain in control of the drug trade operations (Ince 2013; Ruiz 2014; Semana 2016b). This risk was reiterated also in some of the interviews (regional director UN agency, Cúcuta 6/10/2014; and programme director, international organisation Cúcuta 6/10/2014). Recent reports on IAG dynamics following the peace agreement and the commencement of the FARC DDR process point to such territorial reconfiguration occurring among the remaining IAGs. In Catatumbo, the ELN and EPL guerrilla groups are rapidly dividing up territory left by the FARC. According to Vanegas et al. (2017), the guerrillas have sought to demonstrate their military strength and territorial presence by increasing kidnappings, attacks against oil infrastructure, blockades, aggressions against social leaders and against the armed forces. In addition, organised crime groups (former Bacrim) are also re-accommodating their presence as a result of the shifting in/security dynamics, although this is affecting mainly urban areas in Catatumbo and Cúcuta.

Vanegas’ findings concur with warnings issued by the Ombudsman Office, since the signing of the peace agreement, of the imminent threats, homicides, terrorist actions and indiscriminate attacks by the IAGs against the civilian population (Semana, 2016b). In the
first few months following the peace agreement, 35 members of the armed forces have been killed by ELN and EPL in Catatumbo (Informe de Riesgo No.039-16 de la Defensoría del Pueblo, quoted in Vanegas et.al. 2017). While similar in-depth research on the immediate post-conflict in/security dynamics in the Magdalena Medio region has not been conducted, a review of denouncements made by human rights defenders and organisations indicate a continuation in violence among the remaining IAGs and against the civilian population.38

7.3.2 Concealing the social conflict

The narrow conceptualisation of the armed conflict by the government, and its focus on quantitative changes in high-impact violence, concealed what interviewees referred to as the social conflict. The social conflict was spoken of in terms of unsatisfied basic needs and underdevelopment, which force communities to engage in illegal activities and to live under direct or indirect control of the IAGs. It was associated with economic poverty, dependency, stigmatisation and violence. As one interviewee summarised, ‘There is a generalised crisis in Colombia where the armed conflict is but one component. There is generalised violence, structural violence, a crisis of values and society inequalities as critical as the armed conflict’ (interview, Silvia, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015). While having ties to the armed conflict, the social conflict was seen as distinct from the official armed conflict between government forces and the IAGs, principally the FARC. In this regard, there is a certain convergence between how local communities spoke of in/security, and how in/security is conceptualised in existing people-oriented initiatives to in/security, such as the VLRL. Nevertheless, initiatives such as the VLRL do little to address the dependence of communities on illegal structures, a dependence which further exacerbates the communities’ exclusion, stigmatisation and criminalisation.

The issue of coca cultivation illustrates the point. Coca cultivation is fundamental to the survival of many peripheral farming communities, as discussed in Chapter Six (6.3.2). In macro-level policy, it is conceptualised as a problem of national security and public order due to its links with the IAGs and wider drug trafficking (MinDefensa, 2013b, 2015; UAECT, 2014a).39 Consequently, the government’s approach predominantly focuses on

38 See, for example, Cahucopana (2017); ACVC (2017).

39 It should be noted that the peace agreement includes a sub-agreement on illicit cultivation and the approach to eradication of illegal crops is being modified, which partly relates to the concerns expressed in the interviews.
confronting the IAGs driving the trade and eliminating coca cultivation through different eradication strategies. Although eradication efforts are accompanied by initiatives to assist farmers to transition to legal cultivation, what the approach fails to do, as Ascamcat argued, is to recognise coca cultivation as an indication of the social conflict. One interviewee from Catatumbo spoke of how the coca plant effectively substituted the ‘Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Social Prosperity’ (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015) due to its importance for the survival of farmers in regions totally abandoned by the state. The quantitative focus on eradication and substitution within national security framing fundamentally does little to change the dependency by farmers on coca cultivation. The inadequate approach by the government can partly be explained by the lack of inter-institutional coherence and the centralised premise of policy which, as Chapter Five (5.7) demonstrated, leads to a contradictory and conflictive policy framework.

Furthermore, the continued reliance on illegal economies provides avenues for certain sectors at the macro-level to persecute critical voices under the pretext of eliminating the drug trade. As discussed in Chapter Six, farming communities spoke of arbitrary detentions and judicial set-ups being levied against farmers, perceived by farmers to amount to state persecution of critical voices (6.3.2). However, the state is also ‘guilty of omission’ (interview, Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015), in reference to how it fails to protect community leaders from IAG violence. This has become a critical concern in the immediate post-agreement period, which has seen a surge in killings of community leaders (CODHES, 2017).

7.3.3 Manipulating people-oriented security initiatives

Macro-level truth claims around in/security dynamics in the post-conflict transition were further contested due to the way the quantitative emphasis on measuring in/security allows for the manipulation of people-oriented in/security initiatives. The VLRL was specifically referred to in support of these claims. The VLRL was not perceived to address underlying structures of exclusion, stigmatisation and criminalisation. Moreover, the focus on quantitative results has resulted in the manipulation of the spaces for participation that the law provides for (discussed in a later section). Consequently, the interviewees were equally critical of the government’s claims around its historic commitment to victims. As one interviewee argued, the advances taking place towards victims are happening in the legal system. New laws have been created, such as the VLRL, which set out to benefit the conflict-
affected population, but there has been no real impact for the communities. ‘Victims continue to live under the same dire conditions’ (interview, Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). A similar argument was made by Silvia, who, speaking of the current laws, policies and programmes which aim to benefit the victim population, stated that, ‘For the state, it is all about a nice discourse. But it doesn’t mean anything, it doesn’t translate into anything’ (interview, Silvia, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015). A victim leader in Cúcuta explained this lack of transformation on the tendency by Colombian governments to create new institutions rather than strengthening existing ones. As the interviewee argued, this is an indication of a lack of political will and an easy way for the state to demonstrate that it is responding, although the response generates no real impact (interview, Eduardo, Cúcuta 9/10/2014). Many pointed to the inadequacy of services provided through these channels, fundamentally arguing that state action carried out for the benefit of the victim population was all about generating figures to demonstrate that the government is responding (interviews: Eduardo, Cúcuta 9/10/2014; and Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). As Daniel stated, ‘It’s a way for state officials to say that they have spent x pesos helping x number of families, but the statistics are really empty’ (interview, Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015).

Demonstrating the above, many victims referred to the deplorable conditions of the housing provided through the VLRL. Speaking of specific tower blocks in Cúcuta built for this purpose, interviewees spoke of critical cohabitation problems. Problems included families being cramped together into very small areas and forced to share toilets or bathrooms with other flats. The toilets and bathrooms became spaces of violence and insecurity. Much tensions are also generated between occupant groupings, which include not only the victim population, but also retired police and army personnel, as well as demobilised IAG members (interviews: coordinator local foodbank, Cúcuta 5/12/2014; and FGD Perseverancia, 20/03/2015). As one interviewee from the Perseverancia settlement concluded, the armed conflict is being transferred to the housing blocks. To illustrate the deplorable conditions, the interviewee continued, ‘The fact that people prefer to live in settlements such as this one is very telling of the state-provided housing’ (FGD Perseverancia, 20/03/2015). Similar accounts of state-provided housing in the Magdalena Medio region were detailed in the AMOVI transcripts, emphasising how many people are cramped together in highly unsanitary conditions (AMOVI transcript 2). A further problem with the housing provided under the VLRL is that, although housing is to be provided free of rent, it comes with high taxes and utility bills, which many beneficiaries cannot afford to pay (interview, Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). As the inhabitants in the Perseverancia IDP settlement detailed, they
become displaced again as a result of not being able to pay and end up in the unofficial/illegal settlements (FGD Perseverancia, 20/03/2015).

The focus on quantitative results of the VLRL, moreover, allowed for manipulation of the participation spaces that the law provides for. The law creates avenues for participation in policy for victims, called the Mesa de Participación (participation tables). Several interviewees argued that these structures are little less than a rubberstamping exercise for the state. As Daniel held, ‘There is a lot of manipulation of the space created for victims, such as the participation tables’ (interview, Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). Such sentiment was shared by several victims’ organisations, who illustrated how local authorities use these assemblies for their own purpose, to sign documents and agreements demonstrating that victims have been consulted, although no real consultation is taking place (interviews: Sergio, Cúcuta 5/12/2014; Eduardo, Cúcuta 9/10/2014; and Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). The relationship, Sergio argued, is very much one way where the authorities access the victim population when needed, whereas channels for victims to access the state are blocked. In Cúcuta, the situation is particularly critical. Victims’ organisations have become corrupted, bought by politicians to form so-called ‘processing networks’, which are networks that charge victims for accessing their rights which, by law, are required to be provided for free. These processing networks then become important electoral capital for local politicians. A lack of political will, corruption and insufficient funds at the local state level were believed to enable this kind of manipulation of participation.

Many of the concerns raised at the micro-level, regarding the quality and impact of the policies and programmes targeting the conflict-affected population, have been confirmed in an official evaluation of the VLRL conducted in 2016 (CSML, 2016). Halfway through its implementation, the government has compensated less than 10 per cent of the victims registered with the UARIV and who are entitled to compensation. The report also issued a strong critique against the inadequate means for assessing the situation of victims, which determines the minimum provision of humanitarian aid. Also of great concern was the inability of the law to ensure that victims of displacements overcome their conditions of extreme vulnerability. A main conclusion of the report was that there is little connection between the needs of the victims, the institutional offer and the channels for integral reparation (CSML, 2016).

For all the above, there is little confidence at the local level that the transition into the post-conflict period promoted by the government will lead to any significant improvements in
local in/security dynamics. The claims at the macro-level around a juncture in in/security dynamics were not associated with any security improvement among the local communities. While the peace negotiations with the FARC were seen to be an important step in resolving aspects of the armed conflict, they were not seen to bring about the transformation at the local level needed for security to improve.

PART TWO: A Continuum in the Approach to In/Security

So far, this chapter has looked at how in/security understandings are shifting from a state-centred approach, to a people-oriented approach in macro-level discourse. This was followed by a discussion on perceived in/security dynamics at the micro-level and the distrust among local communities of the shift discursively promoted at the macro-level. By contrasting the way in/security is understood and acted upon at the two levels within the changing context, it is possible to discern a continuation in the approach to in/security in which the spatial sequenced approach to in/security is maintained. What this means is that, despite discursive claims of a transition towards a people-oriented approach to in/security, people-oriented security in the peripheries continues to be contingent on narrow state-centred security. In the two regions, state territorial control continues to be a critical concern at the macro-level, specifically so in the Catatumbo region. Even though the FARC is on course to disarm and demobilise, and thereby cease to exist as an armed group, as discussed above, there are strong indications that other IAGs are beginning to fill the void left by the FARC. The remaining IAGs, and the illegal economies which they drive, continue to be conceptualised in policy and discourse as a threat to state territorial control and institutional consolidation. Therefore, in/security at the macro-level continues to rely to a great extent on the military elimination of these specific security threats, as illustrated by the reconceptualisation of Bacrim (see 5.5.2).

Nevertheless, although state-centred security largely correlates to territorial control and institutional consolidation, in the post-conflict era in/security understandings are increasingly related to a specific kind of economic development in the rural peripheries. Such references to in/security are embedded in the post-conflict peacebuilding narrative and the focus of this narrative on reducing the centre-periphery divide and the socio-economic development gap, set out in Chapter Five (5.3.3). While the reduction of societal inequalities is framed in a people-oriented in/security parlance, reducing these inequalities is tied to economic growth and prosperity. A key role of the state, as identified in policies, is to facilitate and encourage private investments and competitive markets (DNP, 2014b;
UAECT, 2014a) and indicated also in Chapter Five (5.3.1; 5.3.2; 5.5.1). Economic development prioritises wealth-generating industries, specifically resource extraction and industrial agriculture (DNP 2014a) – sectors that have strong geographical and political correlations to the armed conflict (Idrobo et al., 2014; McNeish, 2015; Rettberg and Ortiz-Riomalo, 2013). What this means in the peripheral rural regions – as the following sections will demonstrate – is that underlying aspects of territorial peace, such as inclusion, participation, guarantees and rights, become contingent on the promotion and protection of wealth-generating industries, which are foreseen to generate the resources required for peacebuilding. In this way, the spatial sequenced approach to in/security, with its military connotation and exclusionary tendencies, is maintained, while the government discursively emphasises a shift to people-oriented security. To illustrate the continuation in the approach to in/security outlined above, the following sections discuss the in/security implications of the strategic importance of the resource extraction sector in the Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio regions, and the contentious interplay between the sector and the armed conflict.

7.4 A Continuation in Exclusionary Dynamics

The importance of the resource extraction sector to legal and illegal actors alike, maintains the spatial sequenced approach to in/security in the peripheries. In the official transitions into the post-conflict period, in which a main aim is to eliminate the rural-periphery divide, exclusionary structures and the criminalisation of marginalised sections of society, are maintained

7.4.1 Strategic importance of the resource extraction sector

Resource extraction (which, in Colombia, principally relates to mining, oil and gas) has long been an important industry in Colombia. Towards the end of the second Uribe government (2006-2010), however, the sharp increase in economic resources generated by the sector propelled its strategic importance to the government. Resource extraction was identified as one of the five engines of economic development in the 2010-2014 NDP. The importance of the resource extraction sector has been maintained in the current NDP, which identifies the potential of the sector to generate a large proportion of the resources required for the peacebuilding in the post-conflict period. The NDP particularly emphasises the contribution of the sector to economic growth, rural employment, private investment and infrastructural development (DNP, 2014b). This position is further elaborated in the recent national mining plan, the objective of which is to make the industry more competitive and productive (MinMinas, 2016). Even against the fall in investment and output recorded since 2012, the government has continued to promote the sector (El Espectador, 2017; Stevenson, 2017;
In this way, the resource extraction sector is given a key role in eliminating the societal inequalities that the centre-periphery divide and socio-economic development gap represent.

The government has adopted specific measures in order to enhance the sector and eliminate hurdles to its development potential. This includes the issuing of a CONPES national strategy document in 2013 (no. 3762), outlining the development of specific projects of national economic and strategic interests (so-called PINES).\(^{40}\) To enhance the promotion of PINES, the objective of the CONPES was to resolve specific problems that impeded their development. These problems mainly related to acquisition of land, environmental regulations, the requirement of previous consultation (consulta previa) with communities, relations with the communities in different regions, and inter-institutional tensions. Several of the above requirements were eased.

Indicative of the strategic importance of the resource extraction sector discussed above, its contribution to GDP increased from 9.7 per cent in the 2006-2009 period to 11.2 per cent in 2010-2013 (DNP, 2014b). Applications for mining titles and the number of existing titles also sharply increased; applications rose from around 3,800 in 2005 to over 6,200 in 2010, whereas the number of existing titles increased from around 3,300 to nearly 9,600 over the same years (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2015; Ministerio de Minas y Energía, n.d.). In addition, approximately 20,000 requests for titles were awaiting processing at the Ministry of Mining in 2011 (Semana, 2011). By 2016, 39 mining districts had been created. These are areas created for the purpose of maximising mining potential, while emphasising sustainability and local participation (Ministerio de Minas, 2007).

Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio are both strategic oil and mining regions, and where resource extraction is identified as one of the main drivers of post-conflict development. While oil exploitation is a well-established activity in both regions, Catatumbo is increasingly distinguished for its potential to expand large-scale carbon mining. According to Ingeominas (the public institution that administrates the country’s mining and geological resources), the Norte de Santander department has the third largest carbon reserves in the country – of which almost half are found in the Catatumbo region (Aponte et al., 2016).

\(^{40}\) CONPES stands for the National Political Economic and Social Council, and is the maximum national authority on planning. It has an advisory function to the government in all matters relating to economic and social development of the country.
Magdalena Medio, on the other hand, has important gold deposits, specifically in the municipalities pertaining to the Antioquia and Bolívar departments. In line with the post-conflict development logic set out in the NDP, the departmental development plans promote resource extraction as a driver of post-conflict development – which, in the light of falling prices of oil and gold, prioritise measures to improve competitiveness of the sector (Gobernación de Antioquia, 2016; Gobernación de Bolívar, 2016; Gobernación de Norte de Santander, 2016; Gobernación de Santander, 2016). Map 7.1 shows where mining titles have been granted and where oil exploration and exploitation are taking place in the Magdalena Medio and Catatumbo regions.

**Map 7.1.** Resource Extraction in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio
7.4.2 Exclusions through a conflictive reordering of territory

The emphasis on the resource extraction sector, however, has resulted in a conflictive (re)ordering of territory, in which the transitions to people-oriented in/security are being actively undermined in the peripheries. This is evidenced through the way in which the rapid issuing of mining titles has been conducted in a largely disorganised and often illegal fashion (Semana, 2011). Titles have been granted to mining companies in areas where mining is restricted by law (such as environmentally protected areas, Afro-Colombian collective
territories and indigenous reserves) (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2015; Rettberg, 2013; Vélez-Torres, 2014). Importantly, the resource extraction sector is contradicting the VLRL, specifically land restitution. Due to the geographical proximity of conflict epicentres and mining reserves, many current mining operations take place on land that was dispossessed or forcefully abandoned by farmers due to the armed conflict (Botero, 2016; McNeish, 2015; Rettberg and Ortiz-Riomalo, 2013). Land restitution is restricted in strategic mining areas through a stipulation in the NDP 2014-2018, building on CONPES 3762 (referred to above), prohibiting land restitution in PINES areas. This prohibition thereby subordinates the right of victims to integral reparation to resource extraction, while contradicting the importance of the rights of victims for building sustainable peace, as emphasised in macro-level discourse and policy (see 5.3.3; 5.5.1).

The Constitutional Court ruled in 2016 – five years after the VLRL came into force and halfway through its ten-year remit – that a number of articles in the NDP concerning land restitution and mining were unconstitutional, including art.50, which prohibits land restitution in PINES zones (Corte Constitucional de Colombia, 2016). Nevertheless, the court ruling has not settled the tensions between the resource extraction sector and land restitution. Various investigations in Colombia have found how mining concessions are favoured over land restitution (VerdadAbierta, 2015, 2016), and how land restitution is being undermined by ownership claims pertaining to land and sub-soil resources (López, 2017). Moreover, even in areas where land restitution can take place, the promotion of the resource extraction sector, coupled with the slow pace of land restitution, as discussed in Chapter Five (5.3.3) means that territory is being reordered before conflict-related land claims can be resolved. In addition to the slow pace of land restitution, there has been hardly any progress on the creation of ZRC during the two Santos administrations. This is noteworthy, as the ZRCs are, together with land restitution, important aspects in resolving underlying drivers of armed violence in Colombia (see 5.3.3; 4.3.1) and are recognised in the peace agreement. Nevertheless, despite 29 requests for the creation of a ZRC being filed with the national land agency (Velez, 2016), not one new ZRC has been created since 2011.

Map 7.2 illustrates the scale of land dispossessed and abandoned as a result of the armed conflict, juxtaposed against resource extraction sites (mining, oil, and available areas). It can

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41 The majority of the 78 existing PINES in 2015, pertained exclusively to the resource extraction sector (DAPRE, 2015).
be discerned from the maps that, in many of the municipalities with high rates of dispossessed and abandoned land, resource extraction is now taking place.

**Map 7.2.** Dispossessed and Abandoned Land and Resource Extraction in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio
There was a strong belief among both farmers and miners interviewed, as well as NGOs and CBOs, that resource extraction is favoured among the various competing claims to land (interviews: Alva, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015; Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015; Acvc General Assembly, Barrancabermeja 24-26 April 2015; regional director, international organisation Cúcuta 6/10/2014.; bishop, Cúcuta 4/12/2014). As Alva from Acvc pointed out:

the underlying impediment to [land titling and restitution] is the fact that there are a lot of natural resources in the area which the government wants to exploit. There is also a lot of international interest in exploiting these resources, investments which the government very much wants. /…/ If there is any natural resource on the land, the farmer will not be given a title, even if she had occupied that land for more than 30 years (interview, Alva, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015).

The Maps 7.3 and 7.4 illustrate the different and conflicting land claims in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio, including requests for land restitution and microfocalisation (map 7.3), existing and proposed ZRCs, and indigenous reserve (map 7.4).

As can be discerned from Map 7.3, few sites have been micro-focalised, which stands in sharp contrast to the high number of claims for land restitution submitted to the URT. Microfocalisation, moreover – as Chapter Five illustrated (5.3.3) – does not necessarily mean restitution sentences being issued, authorising land restitution.

Map 7.4 shows the proposed ZRC in Catatumbo, the existing ZRC in Magdalena Medio, as well as other areas protected by law such as indigenous reserves and national natural parks.

Comparing Map 7.3 and 7.4 with Map 7.2 on resource extraction sites, it can be discerned that competing claims are particularly conflictive in Catatumbo, specifically around the municipality of Tibú (circled on the maps), which has the highest number of restitution claims, pertaining to the same areas in which Ascamcat has proposed the formation of a ZRC. The proposed ZRC has been continuously stalled by the authorities, despite all requirements for its creation being fulfilled (interviews: Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015; high-level UN officials, Cúcuta 8/10/2014). Significant resource extraction is taking place, development which Ascamcat believes is a principal reason for why the authorities is stalling the approval of the ZRC.
Map 7.3. Land Restitution Claims and Microfocalisation in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio
Map 7.4. ZRC and Protected Areas in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio

Map by: C. Delgado
Created using data provided by: Molina Portuzuez (2011); Mejia (2017); Ministerio de Tecnologias de La Informacion y Las Comunicaciones (2017)
In addition to the subordination of land restitution to resource extraction, conflicting land claims have furthermore brought about renewed concerns over the resort to privatised violence. As Chapter Three evidenced, the use of privatised violence by regional elites and governments alike is a well-established occurrence in Colombia (see 3.4). Communities in both Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio argued that the conflict between industrial mining and land restitution has led to the formation of local land restitution armies terrorising farmers seeking land restitution (interviews: Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015; Catalina, Bogota 14/11/2014). As Daniel stated when referring to competing land claims in the Catatumbo region, ‘powerful people are putting together armed groups’ (interview, Daniel, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). The main fear this generates, Daniel elaborated, is the return of the paramilitaries as the privatised security, operating on behalf of the rural powerful elite against the farmers, with complete impunity. While threats against land restitution claimants are indeed widely reported and often attributed to existing neo-paramilitaries/Bacrim groups (see, for example, Amnesty International, 2014; Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2013; Nilsson and Taylor, 2017), what stood out in the accounts by the interviewees was the formation of new IAGs by legal actors. This, as one interviewee pointed out, was exactly how the paramilitaries originated (interview, Catalina, Bogota 14/11/2014).

It can be concluded from the above discussion, that the strategic importance of resource extraction is contradicting people-oriented security as promoted in territorial peace and the official transitions to the post-conflict period. The promotion of the resource extraction sector, as argued above, is tied to the government’s peacebuilding efforts, due to its role in generating resources required for post-conflict development, with its focus on rural development and the elimination of the centre-periphery divide. The wider development claims made by the government, including how the industry generates local employment and infrastructural development (DNP, 2014b; MinMinas, 2016), were strongly refuted by the communities. In terms of employment, it was argued that mining companies only offer sub-standard contracts (interviews: bishop, Cúcuta 4/12/2014; Rodrigo, informal miner from Segovia, Barrancabermeja 24/04/2015; peace observer, INGO, Barrancabermeja, 18/09/2014). These include short-term contracts of up to three months, which enable the companies to circumvent social insurance requirements (interview, Rodrigo,
Salaries are often below the minimum wage, whereas working hours are long.

In terms of infrastructural development, there are indications that such development is concentrated around areas where large-scale mining is taking place and, moreover, have little benefit for local communities, as findings from Catatumbo demonstrate. In Catatumbo, most mining and oil exploitation are carried out by national and international companies (Aponte et al. 2016). Infrastructural development, as Chapter Six argued, is a key demand among rural communities. However, the farming community emphasised how infrastructural development in the region favours resource extraction rather than farmers or informal miners. Referring to the construction/improvement of roads connecting resource extraction sites to exportation sites (such as ports on the Caribbean coast), interviewees argued that this kind of infrastructural development does not improve market access for farmers, as the government tends to argue (interviews: Paula, Cúcuta 21/03/2015, and Ernesto, Cúcuta 20/03/2015). Ernesto highlighted the contradiction in the approach to infrastructural development, which enables the extraction of resources from the region, while farming communities remain almost completely disconnected. In Magdalena Medio, however, much mining is done by informal/artisanal miners, and infrastructural development connecting mining sites with the departmental and national road network was a forceful demand articulated by artisanal miners. However, these kind of development projects were not forthcoming, with the result that miners face great difficulties in transporting their produce to the larger town where it can be sold (interviews: Camilo, informal miner, Barrancabermeja, 24/04/2015; and Ernesto, Cúcuta 20/03/2015).

Maps 7.5 and 7.6 illustrate the above accounts on the lack of infrastructural development favouring marginalised communities. Map 7.5 illustrates the level of basic unsatisfied needs, together with the lack of infrastructure connecting population centres, as an indication of the level of underdevelopment of the Magdalena Medio and Catatumbo regions. As can be discerned, many population centres in the two regions are unconnected to the road network (dynamics confirmed also in the interviews).

Map 7.6 compares road infrastructure against regions where extraction takes place. It can be discerned that in the main, roads connect to regions where formal/regulated resource extraction is taking place. However, in regions where much informal mining occurs, such as within the Acvc ZRC, few roads reach into the municipalities.
Map 7.5. Underdevelopment in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio
Map 7.6. Resource Extraction and Road Network in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio
The exclusionary dynamics generated by the strategic importance of resource extraction are exacerbated by the way informal miners are cut off from political participation. Similar to coca-cultivating farming communities in Catatumbo, for informal miners in Magdalena Medio there are few functioning avenues for local participation. Miners spoke of an almost complete lack of consultation between miners and municipal and departmental authorities. No consultation is taking place with the local communities, despite the area being part of a mining district, and which regulation requires community consultation and participation.

Interviewees detailed how the mining community had developed alternative proposals as a way to improve their precarious situation, and repeatedly requested government officials to assess the needs in the communities. Yet, the interviewees lamented that there has been no government response. Mayors frequently argue that the issues raised by miners are outside of their remit (interviews: Camilo, Barrancabermeja 24/04/2015, and Ernesto, Cúcuta 20/03/2015). The lack of consultations has been highlighted by the Ombudsman Office in its evaluation of the mining industry in six regions in Colombia, which found that, in the cases analysed, consultation had only taken place in 10 per cent. Public consultation directly with communities furthermore took place in less than two per cent (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2015). For all the above, the promotion of the resource extraction sector in conflict affected regions, fundamentally maintains exclusionary structures. Moreover, as discussed in the following sections, the strategic importance of resource extraction – for legal and illegal actors alike – has justified the continuation of the militarised approach to in/security in the peripheries where resource extraction takes place.

7.5 The Spatial Sequenced Approach to In/Security Maintained

The increasingly strategic importance of the resource extraction sector over the last decade, as set out above, has affected IAG-related in/security dynamics in the region, and macro-level response thereto. The importance of resource extraction to legal and illegal actors alike has justified the continuation of the spatial sequenced approach to in/security, specifically the continuation of military security provision in the peripheries. The dynamics play out differently in the Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio regions, due to the importance of petroleum in the former and gold mining in the latter.

For the guerrilla groups in Catatumbo, sabotage and extortion of the resource extraction sector provide the groups with important income, whereas theft from oil pipelines provides supplies required for the processing of cocaine (Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2015; MinDefensa, 2013a). Guerrilla attacks against the sector have increased as national policy
has become focused on economic prosperity, as a way for the guerrillas to pressurise the government and hold hostage its development plans (Garzón, 2015; Garzon et al., 2016; Rettberg and Ortiz-Riomalo, 2013; Ronderos, 2011). While official figures are not disaggregated by region, according to the MoD, attacks against oil pipelines across the country rapidly increased in the first Santos government, from 31 attacks reported in 2010 to 259 in 2013 (MinDefensa, 2017). Other research shows that FARC attacks against oil infrastructure in Catatumbo increased from seven attacks in 2012 to 38 in 2013 (Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2015). Although the number of attacks has since decreased, there were still more attacks each year between 2014 and 2016 than in 2010 (MinDefensa, 2017).

The guerrillas have long been extorting the sector and sabotaging its infrastructure. A more recent development, however, is the direct involvement of IAGs in mining (Idrobo et al. 2014; Rettberg 2015; Presidencia de la República 2015a). This is affecting the Magdalena Medio region to a much greater extent than Catatumbo due to its rich gold deposits (interview, regional director, international organisation Cúcuta 6/10/2014). With the rise in international gold prices, whereby the price per gram in Colombian pesos doubled between 2007 and 2011, illegal mining became of increasing importance for the IAGs – guerrillas, neo-paramilitaries and Bacrim alike (Cohen, 2014; Idrobo et al., 2014; Rettberg and Ortiz-Riomalo, 2013). Precise figures for illegal mining are notoriously difficult to establish as there is no certain knowledge of how many illegal mines exist, or the output each mine might produce (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2015). Yet, the Ministry of Mining estimates that more than 60 per cent of mining in the country is illegal (Zapata, 2014). The Colombian Association of Mining estimates that almost 90 per cent of all gold mined in Colombia is believed to be mined illegally (Newsweek, 2016).

Against this background, national security policy has become increasingly oriented towards protecting the resource extraction sector and eliminating threats to the model of economic development in the peripheral rural regions in the post-conflict period. Government initiatives towards protecting the sector suggest that the resource extraction is becoming securitised.42 The 2014-2018 NDP laid the foundations for increasing physical security in those areas where exploration and exploitation investments are taking place. As discussed in Chapter Five, national security policy has provided the armed forces with an expanding remit

42 This argument is supported by research on other mining areas, including Vélez-Torres’ (2014) research on mining regions in South-Western Colombia, and who argues that government policy is founded on an extractivist rationale aimed at securing underground resources for private investors.
in rural development and modernisation, and in assisting national, commercial, industrial and agricultural development (5.6). A role, as the defence minister acknowledges, that goes beyond the traditional focus and objectives of the armed forces (MinDefensa, 2015). To this end, an estimated 70,000 soldiers of the national army are protecting mining and petroleum activities and infrastructure under the SoH strategy (Romero, 2015). In Catatumbo, a significant number of the 9,200 troops active in the region are stationed in the zones where oil exploitation is taking place and along the Caño Limon-Coveñas pipeline (Defensoria del Pueblo 2006; El Espectador 2014). Adding to this, President Santos declared war on criminal mining in 2015 (Presidencia de la República 2015a), with the defence minister stating thereafter that criminal mining was of equal, or even greater, threat than the long-standing drug-trafficking threat (El Espectador, 2015). Parallel to these shifts in the illegal economies and IAG activity, military interventions against criminal mining have increased, as Table 7.2 demonstrates.

Table 7.2. Interventions against Criminal Mining

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interventions by the Armed Forces against unregulated mining</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>2,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrests related to criminal mining</td>
<td>1,272</td>
<td>2,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining equipment confiscated</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>821</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MinDefensa (2017).

The securitisation of the resource extraction sector has nevertheless had a detrimental impact at the local community level. Several parallels can be drawn with the macro-level approach towards the drug trade, in terms of the unnuanced understanding of the complex relationships between local communities and the IAGs, and the implications thereof. There exists a link between artisanal/informal and illegal/criminal mining, the relation being similar to that between coca-cultivating farmers and the guerrillas discussed in Chapter Six (see also appendix 1). The geographical and political correlation between the resource extraction industry and the armed conflict, detailed above, means that many informal/artisanal miners in the peripheral regions are under de facto control of the IAGs. Most interviewees involved in artisanal/informal mining openly admitted that there are many IAGs in the region
controlling mining activities (interviews: Rodrigo, Barrancabermeja 24/04/2015; Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015; Acvc General Assembly, Barrancabermeja 22-24 April 2015). In many cases, miners are forced to pay taxes to the IAGs, in others, IAGs are the owners of the mining equipment and charge miners for its use. Yet, the government’s response to illegal/criminal mining at the local level generally ignores these complexities. As Rodrigo explained,

While it is true that there are IAGs present, there is no direct collaboration with artisanal miners. In the region, it is more about having to pay them taxes. Nevertheless, the state makes no differentiation between informal miners and IAGs. At the same time, industrial miners behave in a very criminal fashion conducting much illegal activity, in collaboration with the police or IAGs. Still the state does not go after them. Why? (Interview, Rodrigo, Barrancabermeja, 24/04/2015).

Informal miners interviewed argued that, due to the fact that most miners (in the Segovia region in Magdalena Medio) are without any mining titles, they are accused of working for the IAGs. Macro-level discourse does emphasise the distinction between artisanal/informal and illegal/criminal mining, and the government has made provisions for artisanal/informal miners to legalise their mining activities (Presidencia de la República 2015a). However, miners who do not legalise their activities fall into the category of illegal mining, which is defined as mining undertaken without being registered in the national mining registry, including artisanal and informal mining (Ministerio de Minas y Energía, 2003). As informal miners from the Magdalena Medio region expressed, in reality the government is making it very difficult for miners to formalise and legalise their activities. Camilo, an informal miner from Carrizal, elaborated on the bureaucratic and complicated nature of the process, which often even local state officials are unfamiliar with. Resultantly, ‘miners are sent from office to office, and required to fill in numerous different forms and collate legal information difficult to obtain’ (interview, Camilo, Barrancabermeja 24/04/2015). The process, Camilo continued, is very time consuming – in no small part due to the physical difficulties travelling between the villages and the municipal towns (as can be discerned also from map 7.6). There is also the matter of cost. While the title in itself is not too expensive, the process to obtain the title is, Camilo held, since it often requires legal services. Rodrigo, an informal miner from Segovia, added that additional obstacles pertain to the permit that miners must have in order to be able to sell the gold mined to the legal buyers. The permit is issued by the mayor’s office and the process of obtaining the permit is often riddled with corruption. Moreover, the
police frequently confiscate the permits in what interviewees perceived as a deliberate persecution against informal miners (interview, Rodrigo, Barrancabermeja 24/04/2015). Resultantly, as Camilo concluded, ‘none of the informal miners in the [local municipal] region have any titles’ (interview, Camilo, Barrancabermeja 24/04/2015).

Without any titles or legal permits to sell gold, artisanal/informal miners are categorised as criminal miners and, thereby, made a target of the armed forces. Miners are being detained, their produce confiscated, and their equipment destroyed (interviews: Rodrigo and Camilo, Barrancabermeja 24/04/2015; and Jorge, Barrancabermeja 15/03/2015). Similar to the macro-level response to the drug trade in the peripheries, the reliance on the armed forces to eliminate criminal mining tends to target the weakest links in the illegal/criminal chain of mining – that is, the local artisanal/informal miners who are unable to legalise their activities (see 6.3.2).

Based on the above discussion on the resource extraction sector, it is possible to argue that the spatial sequenced approach to security, with its reliance on the military elimination of security threats, is maintained in the transition towards the post-conflict period. While state territorial control remains important in national security related policies, protection of the resource extraction sector – with its ties to post-conflict rural development – is of increasing importance. A conflictive dual emphasis on the rural peripheries thus emerges, which maintains exclusionary structural practices as marginalised communities in the peripheries become obstacles to the model of economic development prioritised at the macro-level. While generating the resources required for post-conflict development is clearly a legitimate concern of the government, the effective securitisation of the economic development model replicates rather than subverts many of the underlying structures of exclusion that territorial peace seeks to eliminate. In the process, there is a simultaneous recognition and criminalisation of marginalised communities – who become both beneficiaries and adversaries of government peacebuilding efforts. The way this occurs, as the last part of the chapter demonstrates, is through a multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in various macro-level strategies, which effectively manipulate the boundaries between the

43 Such denouncements can be found also in, for example, Prensa Rural.

44 Similar dynamics between artisanal/informal and illegal/criminal mining have been found in research from other regions in Colombia, such as Vélez-Torres' (2014) research on ethnic mining communities in the Cauca region, and Cohen's (2014) research on artisanal female miners in northeastern Antioquia.
legal and illegal, the political and criminal. The above impact on rural and urban marginalised communities alike.

7.6 Antagonistic Approaches and Rural dynamics

7.6.1 Simultaneous recognition and criminalisation of marginalised communities
As argued in Chapter Five, the spatial sequenced approach to in/security assumes distinct boundaries and clearly demarcated categories in order to justify the spatial sequenced approach to in/security, with its strong military connotations (5.4). Findings from rural farming communities, discussed in Chapter Six, demonstrate that the distinct boundaries assumed in security policies and practice, are highly fluid. In the context of the armed conflict, state abandonment and IAG control, there are no sharp delineations between the legal and illegal, political and criminal. Indeed, even at the macro-level, there is a convincing recognition of these complex relationships and the fluid boundaries between the above-mentioned categories. Policies and guiding concepts, such as that of territorial peace, demonstrate a rather nuanced understanding of the dependency underlying community and IAG relationships as a result of inadequate state presence and acute underdevelopment. There is also a recognition at the macro-level that, in the pursuit of state territorial control, the state has committed atrocious human rights violations and IHL infringements. Indeed, it is based on such recognition that, in the post-conflict period, the government is emphasising the importance of a people-oriented approach to in/security. Many of the grievances expressed at the micro-level were recognised in the interviews with state officials.

While important differences were found among the state entities, overall there was a unanimous recognition of the complete lack of development in the regions and the way this forces communities into engaging with the IAGs and the illegal economies. Speaking of the historic state abandonment of the peripheries, an official at the MoJ declared that ‘the state has a huge debt towards the regions’ (interview, divisional director, MoJ, Bogota 14/11/2014). This sentiment was echoed by an official from the consolidation programme, arguing that ‘state absence and the high level of poverty [in Catatumbo] provide the justification for the guerrillas’ (interview, UAECT divisional director A, Bogota 11/11/2014). Similar arguments were expressed at the local state level, such as the regional ombudsman, who stated that ‘a main problem is the lack of opportunities provided by the state’ (interview, ombudsman official, Cúcuta 7/10/2014).

Yet, what is apparent in macro-level understandings of in/security is that, when people-oriented in/security becomes incompatible with state-oriented in/security, the spatial
sequenced approach becomes insensitive to the boundaries between different community groupings (such as farmers, community leaders, artisanal miners, and human rights defenders) and the IAGs. Findings discussed in Chapter Six demonstrate how, in the quest for state territorial control and institutional consolidation, farmers are frequently targeted by the armed forces under the pretext of belonging to, or supporting, the guerrillas. The involvement of farmers in coca cultivation has persistently been used as the main indicator of this relationship. In the interviews with state officials, reservations specifically began to emerge when communities asserted forms of organised agency, such as through the farmer associations or via the ZRCs. While both national and local representatives of the consolidation unit argued that the farmers’ cultivation of coca does not necessarily mean they support the guerrillas, they were less sympathetic towards the farmer associations. ‘Each guerrilla group has a social, political and legal organisation; this is no secret. For the FARC, it is Ascacmat’ (interview, UAECT programme officer, Cúcuta 14/05/2015). While other entities were less explicit in linking Ascacmat with the FARC, it was argued that they had a close relationship and promoted a similar discourse. ‘They [Ascacmat] project a strong leadership and there are links to the guerrillas. It is questionable to what extent they represent the views of individual families’ (interview, divisional director A, UAECT, Bogota 11/11/2014).

For similar reasons, there was considerable rejection towards the ZRC. While the ZRC was seen as a viable measure for overcoming some of the problems related to the lack of development in rural regions, it was also argued by a number of state officials that farmer associations have unfounded expectations, in particular their demand for political recognition (see 6.5). An official from the UAECT contested that, while farmer associations may be strong organisational bodies, they do not have a strong logic behind such quest for political recognition such as a unified culture, language or ethnicity – which is the case with population groups recognised by the constitution (interview, UAECT divisional director B, Bogota 11/11/2014). Rather, officials expressed a concern over such claims, embodied through the formation of ZRC. As expressed at the MoJ:

They want reserves along the lines of indigenous reserves, where they have complete territorial control. This is a worrying demand. What would be the role of the state, such as mayors, if this was to be the case? Their quest for autonomy is worrying. (interview, divisional director, MoJ, Bogota 14/11/2014)
The ZRC are of concern also among the MoD and MoA, the respective ministers which have forcefully rejected the creation of ZRC (Semana, 2013). The ZRCs have been heavily stigmatised by the armed forces, which perceive this entity to be ‘mini-Caguáns’, due to the demand for the creation of ZRCs by coca-cultivating farmers (Molano, 2010). Juan Camilo Restrepo, the agriculture minister, drew similar parallels, arguing that the creation of ZRC is a way for the FARC to divide and convert the country into a mosaic of small independent republics – referring to the republics in the mid-20th century and to which the origins of the FARC can be traced (see also appendices 1 and 2). The reservations expressed by state officials against organised form of community agency, set out in this section, is illustrative of a simultaneous recognition and criminalisation of local conflict-affected communities. Contradictions thus emerge between what is being promoted discursively and actual in/security practices in the peripheries. In regions like Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio, where territorial control and institutional consolidation remain contested in the post-conflict period, in/security-related practice is found to reject the form of local agency that people-oriented in/security promotes.

7.6.2 Rural development and alternative authorities

The contradictions that emerge in the simultaneous recognition and criminalisation of the peripheral conflict-affected population appear to be influenced by two main factors. The first, a dual emphasis on the rural sector; and the second, a reservation against alternative authorities. Territorial peace and the economic model for development in the peripheries constitute a conflictive dual emphasis on the rural sector. Rural reform, despite being central to the government’s approach to peacebuilding, essentially contradicts the contextual rights-based bottom-up approach underpinning the concept of territorial peace. On the one hand, territorial peace stipulates that peace must be built in the rural regions, resolving landownership while prioritising and recognising the rights of victims who have been dispossessed, or are without formal titles to their land. Yet, on the other hand, these same regions are prioritised for their development potential, including generating the resources required in the post-conflict transition phase. The emphasis on the rural sector for generating the required resources for post-conflict development, in particular the resource extraction sector, is antagonistic to how territorial peace prioritises farmers’ access to land. This is largely because natural resource reserves, as this chapter has shown, tend to be in the same areas as those prioritised for territorial peace.
A number of conflicting land claims thus arise in the rural peripheries, such as requests for mining titles, and demands for land restitution and the formation of ZRCs. This leads to the second influencing factor, namely a reservation against alternative sites of authority tied to contested meanings of in/security. Farmer associations and the ZRCs effectively constitute an alternative site of authority (see 3.4.2). This is not uncomplicated in a context where the state has struggled throughout its modern history to assert its own authority across national territory. The inability of the state to do so, as Chapter Three argued, has facilitated the emergence of various alternative sites of authority, many violently contesting state authority. While the farming community is not violently contesting the state, the historic connection between marginalised farmers and the guerrilla movements has generated an ingrained distrust against these organised forms of community/non-state agency. The connection is exacerbated by the fact that, in four out of the six existing ZRCs – which include the Acvc ZRC – FARC has for decades enjoyed a strong territorial presence and control (Velez, 2016). For this reason, ZRC potentially threatens the integrity of the state, as conceptualised in traditional Weberian terms (see 2.2.2). The geographical correlation, coupled with a similar understanding of rural inequalities between the FARC and farmer associations as discussed in Chapter Three (6.3), have cast a stigma over the ZRC. The reservation against alternative sites of authority, as represented by the farming communities in the research, becomes enhanced when farmers represent an opposing model to rural development in the peripheries through the ZRC to that of the macro-level.

Yet, the ZRCs and the associated rural farming economy, established by Law 160/1994 and reinforced by the peace accords, are precisely what bottom-up approaches to territorial peace may look like. Their legitimacy, in no small part, results from the experiences of the farmer associations in creating spaces of peace and security in the midst of armed conflict. The ZRCs have constituted an important mechanism for participation, recognition and protection for farming communities in the rural peripheries, both in the context of the armed conflict and the wider social conflict (Arboleda Velazquez, 2013; Molano, 2010; Ordoñez Gómez, 2012; Osejo Varona, n.d.). Moreover, the government’s concept of territorial peace is not fundamentally different from underlying aspects of the rural farming economy and the ZRCs, as advocated by the two farmer associations. Farmers lamented the lack of development in the region, the acute poverty and violence, while seeking recognition of their rights – all central aspects of territorial peace.

Nevertheless, the way in which the rural farming economy centres on notions of identity and culture, and preserving peasant farming as a way of life (6.5), clashes with the government’s
approach to rural development. This includes its emphasis on rural modernisation through economic liberalisation and wealth generation, as discussed in this chapter. These efforts, and their ties to institutional consolidation, are strongly associated with militarisation and for being developed in favour of the wealth-generating export-oriented agricultural and extractive industry. When the approaches between local communities and the government become antagonistic, boundaries between the legal and illegal have been manipulated in a way that stigmatises or criminalises opposition to the government’s approach. This largely happens through delegitimisation of claims, as argued in Chapter Six (6.3.2; 6.8), and purposeful underdevelopment of the regions (6.4), the latter discursively justified through the spatial sequenced approach logic, set out in Chapter Five (5.2). The way boundaries are manipulated at the macro-level in different policies and practice effectively prevents political participation – which, for farmers, means the ability to promote alternative models of development, without being stigmatised or criminalised (6.5). As Chapter Six illustrated, this leads to organised forms of resistance, which, in addition to farmer associations and ZRC, include campesino brigades.45 As expressed by an interviewee with extensive experience in working with farmers in Catatumbo, these brigades threaten local democratic development as it is a way of pressuring farmers who are not part of an association (referring to Ascamcat) by force (interview, two high-level officials, UN agency, Cúcuta 8/10/2014). Thus, as the armed conflict is officially coming to an end, both past and present dynamics in the rural peripheries continue to produce contested meanings of in/security and opposing security arrangements. The dual emphasis on the rural sector at the macro-level, coupled with opposing models to rural reform in which competing claims to land accumulate, and where both legal and illegal alternative sites of authority contend, fundamentally impede the ability to move beyond the state-centred and largely military approach to in/security in the peripheries.

7.7 Criminalising Marginalised Urban Communities

The government’s approach to peacebuilding, while to a large extent focusing on rural dynamics, also emphasises urban communities, specifically those who have suffered displacement or Bacrim perpetrated violence (the latter, following amendments to the VLRL). Yet, a simultaneous recognition and criminalisation of marginalised conflict

45 The campesino brigades have been described as a group of farmers armed with clubs who serve as conflict mediators as well as an information network, with the intention of preventing other IAGs from filling the void left by the FARC (León, 2016).
affected communities discerned in the rural peripheries occurred also within the urban peripheries. As demonstrated in Chapter Six, associations between community groupings and the IAGs are levied against leaders and other activists among the urban victim population. Their involvement in exposing human rights violations, and denouncing crimes perpetrated by legal and illegal sectors alike, has led to accusations of them being subversives, communists or general trouble-makers (6.3.2; 6.8). Moreover, the recent reconceptualisation of Bacrim further stigmatises and criminalises the conflict-affected population by blurring the distinction between the legal and illegal, and the political and criminal. The reconceptualisation of Bacrim assumes clear boundaries between the different IAGs, including their structures and motivations. Their reconceptualisation as organised armed groups or organised crime intentionally denies any political character of the groups, while emphasising their economic and criminal motivations, and armed capacity. As Chapter Five argues, such redefinition (together with the reinterpretation of IHL) increases the manoeuvrability of the armed forces over these groups, and ensures a continued role of the armed forces in the post-conflict period.

Although most such groups do not profess any political positioning along the left-wing-right-wing political spectrum, in/security dynamics generated by these groups are profoundly political and linked to the wider armed and social conflict. As argued in Chapter Six, most of the local foot soldiers of the Bacrim/neo-paramilitaries tend to be marginalised youth (6.7). In the context of IAG social control and state abandonment, marginalised youth are easily recruited by the IAGs. These foot soldiers are also the principal target of the armed forces and the police, as they are the most visible level of the largely invisible structures of the Bacrim/neo-paramilitaries (interviews: Jairo, Barrancabermeja 5/03/2015; regional coordinator, UN agency, Bucaramanga 13/08/2014). The local foot soldiers are certainly perpetrators of much Bacrim/neo-paramilitary crimes (Prieto, 2013). Nevertheless, the militarised approach against these groups over a structural approach focusing on matters of marginalisation and exclusions – indeed, fundamental aspects of people-oriented in/security discursively promoted – further stigmatises and criminalises marginalised populations, while doing little to stem the adaptive capacity of the neo-paramilitaries.

MoD’s own figures illustrate the point. Since 2007, the armed forces (including the police) have neutralised nearly 34,000 Bacrim members (MinDefensa, 2013b, 2017). Yet, each year it is estimated that Bacrim comprises approximately 3,000 to 4,000 members (Espitia, 2017; International Crisis Group, 2010; Rettberg, 2015), thus indicating an astonishing capacity of the Bacrim to replace any lost members. The unproblematised approach to Bacrim resembles
the approach taken also to coca cultivation – a conceptualisation of a problem in a narrow state-centred in/security framing, rather than as an indicator of the wider social conflict. An understanding of these groups as armed criminal structures dedicated to profiting from the illegal economies obscures this political dimension of the groups, which includes the intricate relationship between the groups, marginalised communities, the armed conflict and violence, as discussed in Chapter Six. It greatly simplifies the complexities of matters such as micro-trafficking that affect local communities, effectively criminalising poverty and exclusion, while failing to address underlying structures through which violence is recycled.

As a consequence of the dynamics in both rural and urban regions discussed in this chapter, people-oriented in/security continues to be contingent on state-centred in/security and the spatial sequenced approach. The way structures of violence are maintained in the peripheries, despite a reduction in quantitative measures of violence, denote how people-oriented security remains a future promise in the peripheries. In fact, it is possible to argue along the lines of Caroline Hughes and Vanessa Pupavac, that the people-oriented approach to in/security promoted by the Colombian government amounts to little more than local actors taking responsibility for implementing a pre-existing and government-defined set of policy prescriptions (Hughes and Pupavac, 2005).

7.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to illustrate how there is a continuation in the approach to in/security within the changing context. In demonstrating the continuation, I have argued that the shift towards a wider people-oriented approach to in/security, as proclaimed in macro-level discourse, remains discursive. Through the way in/security is monitored and assessed, important security improvements can be demonstrated. Coupled with the peace process with the FARC, these improvements have allowed the government to claim that a juncture in in/security dynamics has been reached. The juncture serves to legitimate the spatial sequenced approach to in/security, and has been presented in a way that enhances the legitimacy of the state. It has also promoted a discursive transition towards people-oriented security, underpinned by a concept of a rights-based participatory democracy, where state efforts are centred on closing societal inequality breaches.

Juxtaposing this juncture against the local in/security dynamics and the lived experiences as narrated at the micro-level, allowed for interrogating the contested meanings of in/security. Essentially, the results generated by the spatial sequenced approach to in/security were not perceived by the interviewees to bring about the changes in local in/security dynamics in a
way that transform underlying structures driving violence and insecurity. This is because violence continued, due to the continued presence of other IAGs and the state response thereto. The emphasis on quantitative results by the government moreover ignored less visible elements pertaining to the social conflict, while allowing for the manipulation of people-oriented in/security initiatives. Resultantly, there was a continued distrust of the state among these communities, with the state perceived as acting against rather than protecting communities in the peripheral margins.

In the official transitions into the post-conflict period, it was thus possible to discern a continuation in the approach to in/security, at both the macro- and micro-level. This continuum in the shifting context was demonstrated against the government’s approach to post-conflict rural development which aims to eliminate the centre-periphery divide. The way in which the government’s approach to post-conflict development relies on resource extraction has resulted in security-related policy and practice being oriented towards the protection of the resource extraction sector and the elimination of threats to the model of economic development in the peripheries. The impact on local communities is the continuation of exclusionary structures, exacerbated by competing land claims which jeopardise the rights, guarantees and participation promoted by the people-oriented approach to in/security. What is apparent in macro-level understandings of in/security is that, when people-oriented in/security becomes incompatible with state-oriented in/security, the spatial sequenced approach becomes insensitive to the boundaries between different community groupings, and the IAGs. In regions like Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio, I argued that this occurs due to a dual emphasis on the rural sector coupled with opposing models to rural reform in which competing claims to land accumulate, and where both legal and illegal alternative sites of authority contend. In this process, underlying structures of exclusion, stigmatisation and criminalisation are maintained rather than supressed. Among urban communities, similar underlying structures of exclusion, stigmatisation and criminalisation are continued through the macro-level approach to Bacrim/neo-paramilitary groups. The centre-periphery divide, identified as a major structural driver of armed violence (5.3.3), is thereby maintained.

Comparing and contrasting in/security understandings at the macro- and micro-level against each other as this chapter has done, points to the relational underpinnings of the way in/security is understood and acted upon, as discussed in Chapter Two (2.3.3; 2.3.4; 2.5.1). In/security understandings at both levels were strongly derivative of past and present dynamics in the peripheries, as well as future aspirations tied to identity and political
participation in its wider sense. In/security understandings and related enactments in response to contextual dynamics – in this chapter, illustrated by the dynamics around resource extraction in post-conflict transitions - also bore connotations to the complex relations between the macro- and micro-levels, and between actors at both levels and the IAGs. Contested meanings of in/security between actors, produced conflictive in/security enactments (2.3.4), with actors at both levels exercising their agency for or against specific in/security arrangements (2.5.1). The wider theoretical implications the empirical evidence presented in this and the two preceding chapters brings, is discussed in the next final chapter of the thesis.
CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This thesis started with an excerpt from a research visit at the Perseverancia IDP settlement in a conflict-affected region in Colombia and a conversation I had with one of its inhabitants. The account was selected as it captured important dynamics that influence the way in/security is understood, as well as the implications of contested meanings of in/security (Bigo, 2008; Wibben, 2016). The basic premise of this thesis is that in/security cannot be understood in isolation, but is always defined in relation to something else (Dillon, 1996; Hills, 2009; Krause and Williams, 1997), while derivative of contexts navigated and identities adhered to (Campbell, 1998; Nunes, 2012; Stern, 2005). In this final chapter, I bring together the empirical findings of my research to outline the way I have answered the research questions and the wider implications of the research.

The chapter is structured as follows. I first summarise the aim of the thesis, how I pursued my research and the main limitations. I thereafter present the main findings of each empirical chapter, after which I return to the main aim of the thesis, to illustrate how the empirical findings answer the overarching research question. The chapter ends with a discussion on the contribution to knowledge that the thesis brings.

8.2 Aim of the Thesis

The introductory account from the Perseverancia settlement pointed to a number of ways in which understandings of in/security are relational and contextual. For Caesar, one of the inhabitants of the settlement, in/security was spoken of in relation to violence suffered in the past, and attempts by the government through the VLRL to resettle his family to state-provided housing. Similarly, the issues he spoke of and how he navigated in/security were strongly related to the contexts he navigated on a daily basis, in particular the dynamics in the settlement and the dual role as a beneficiary and adversary of government policy. Life in the settlement was, in many aspects, life on the margins of society – disconnected politically, socio-economically, and geographically from the main societal organisation. The account from Perseverancia in this way went to the heart of my research project, which aimed to inquire how in/security is understood across asymmetrical levels of society. Asymmetrical levels in my research referred to uneven power constellations, represented by the ‘centre
margin’ (Ackerly et al., 2006; Berents, 2015; Sylvester, 2010). In my empirical case study, the state-level and marginalised conflict-affected communities constituted the asymmetrical centre-margin levels. Through a relational and contextual approach, I inquired into in/security understandings and the implications of contested meanings of in/security at these two levels.

The relational and contextual dimensions of in/security are underexplored in the literature. Wibben (2016) holds that most accounts of in/security place analysis at the level of the elites or subjects of authority. This argument echoes concerns by McDonald (2008), who laments the tendency to focus on articulations of those deemed institutionally legitimate to speak on behalf of a particular collective – which usually results in a focus on the state. As a result, a number of scholars have argued that contextual accounts from the margins are often missing from dominant accounts of in/security, with the effect that little is known about how in/security is understood and experienced in such settings (Eriksson, 2001; Vaughan-Williams and Stevens, 2016; Wibben, 2016). Yet, in concordance with the need for a greater emphasis on exploring in/security in marginal sites, as this thesis sought to demonstrate, accounts from the margins must not be at the exclusion of other, more dominant, narratives. Instead, a multiplicity of narratives need to be understood in relation to each other (Browning and McDonald, 2013; Hönke and Muller, 2012; Vaughan-Williams and Stevens, 2016; Wibben, 2016). The Colombian case study contributed to filling these gaps in the literature. The following section summarises the way I identified the gaps, the conceptual framework I developed to inquire into in/security understandings, and the methodology used to bridge the asymmetrical levels.

In Chapter Two, I brought together the different literatures on in/security to illustrate the evolution of the field and identify where important gaps exist. In doing so, it was necessary to include a vast body of literature, ranging from traditional realist and liberalist theories and their sub-variants, to the many approaches to security that come together under the umbrella term critical security studies. While providing an important overview of the main problematics pertaining to the study of in/security, a limitation of the chapter is that the theories and approaches could not be discussed at any great length. Instead, I focused on the main assumptions that continue to influence scholarly and policy work on explaining in/security. Based on the above review and identified gaps, a framework for studying in/security understandings as a relational and contextual process was proposed. In doing so, I proposed a conceptual framework that shifted the dominant problem formulation from a focus on what in/security is, to how in/security is understood and produced and the
implications thereof. By moving away from a focus on security for whom from what, to approaching the study of in/security through a focus on the relational and derivative dimensions, this rethinks the way the question is posed. It provides alternative means for discussing security, opening up the space for understanding security from a wider range of perspectives. It moves away from a traditional focus on the state as the referent object of security, or a focus on specific preselected actors or subjects, to an approach where multiple understandings of security are related to each other. In doing so, the framework centres on three closely interrelated aspects: 1) an approach to in/security as relational process, derivative of context and with ties to identity; 2) challenging of the hegemony of the state through placing asymmetrical levels of society in the same framework; and 3) the implications of contested meanings of in/security. The framework thereby draws on important insights provided by critical security studies scholars in their critique of dominant realist and liberal theories, while building on this work through addressing the above-identified gap.

To guide the direction of the thesis, an overarching research question was developed:

How are in/security understandings at asymmetrical levels of society relational and contextual?

The overarching research question was addressed through three sub-questions specific to the Colombian case study:

1. How is in/security understood and practised at the state level?
2. How is in/security understood and negotiated among local conflict-affected communities?
3. In what ways do the contested meanings of in/security between the state and community levels impact on (post)conflict dynamics?

I argued that Colombia makes for a pertinent case study due to the changing context as brought about by the peace process to end the armed conflict, which has been ongoing for over five decades. In addition, the focus on Colombia contributes to an engagement with in/security from a non-European/Western setting, which is underrepresented in security literatures (2.3.3).

As I argue that in/security understandings are relational and contextual, and with ties to identity, a contextual background on the Colombian case study was required. This was
provided in Chapter Three, which gave a background on the armed conflict in Colombia and important in/security dynamics pertaining thereto. This included tracing the origin of the centre-periphery divide, in which I situate the relational approach I take in discussing the centre and the margin in relation to each other. The problematisation of the centre-periphery divide provided in Chapter Three was paramount for discussing in/security understandings and the implication of contested meanings in the empirical chapters.

The methodology that I adopted was set out in Chapter Four. A fundamental aspect of the methodology was the design that allowed me to bridge the macro- and micro-levels in order to get to important relational aspects of in/security understandings. This was done through a mixed methods methodology, which combined qualitative, quantitative and visual methods. Before discussing the main results of the empirical chapters, a few specific limitations merit attention.

8.2.1 Research limitations

When I conducted the fieldwork, the Colombian government and FARC guerrillas were engaged in peace negotiations. Nevertheless, armed hostilities between the two parties were ongoing, while negotiations were on the verge of breaking down on several occasions. These dynamics were reflected in the interviews, with many interviewees being largely sceptical about the probability of the government and the FARC reaching an agreement. Likewise, findings at the macro-level, and the policies and discourses I refer to, relate to the dynamics pertaining to the active armed conflict. During the last stages of my research, a peace agreement was reached and the FARC were on course to transition from an armed insurgent group to a political party. Several security-related polices have been issued, including a revised approach by the state to counter drug trafficking and the ‘development programmes with a territorial focus’ (PDET). The SoH strategy is being replaced by the ‘Victoria’ strategy, coming into force in 2017 (CGFM, 2017). These developments partly relate to concerns expressed and demands articulated in the interviews. However, due to these being very recent developments, they were not discussed in the interviews per se, nor are there any implementation results as of the time of writing. As such, the implications of these late developments are not discussed in the thesis. Nevertheless, the focus of this research on how in/security is understood, allows for important contributions to be made to underlying conceptualisations of in/security that have a wider validity beyond such particular political developments. The empirical data serves as empirical evidence to that end.
The way the research methodology combined mixed methods, and incorporated a range of different data sources and analysis techniques, allowed me to capture and triangulate important additional complex everyday in/security dynamics besides those articulated in the interviews. The introductory vignette reflects the way this empirical data collection produced an in-depth engagement with in/security understandings. Nevertheless, the qualitative emphasis of the research, coupled with the sensitivity of the topic, generated certain limitations. It is recognised in Chapter Two that the way of approaching asymmetrical levels inevitably generates certain exclusions, in particular at the micro-level (2.5.2). One way it does so is by excluding people who are not part of any form of community organisation, but who are profoundly affected by the armed conflict. Indeed, many refrain from organising out of fear, as discussed in Chapter Six (6.7). They become the excluded of excluded, the marginalised of the marginalised. However, the difficulties in reaching this group due to their reluctance to organise and articulate their concerns, reinforces the accounts by the interviewees of IAG control and distrust of state authorities. Lastly, in total, 48 in-depth interviews were conducted, which preclude wider extrapolations and generalisations of the results to different contexts. This limitation, however, is in line with the overall premise of the research, namely that understandings are deeply contextual and thus do not necessarily lend themselves to all-capturing explanations or categorisations.

8.3 Main Findings of the Thesis

8.3.1 Research question 1: How is in/security understood and practised at the state level?

This question is answered predominantly in Chapter Five, where I inquire into how in/security is understood at the state level, interrogating derivative aspects, underlying assumptions and boundaries. In approaching the state level, I focused on specific institutions and entities with a direct mandate to respond to the armed conflict – which I refer to as the macro-level, in order to refrain from conceptualising the state as a unified actor. I sought to move away from such conceptualisation, in order to not fall back on the assumptions of traditional security studies, as well as to interrogate the extent to which ‘the state’ was invoked in order to justify security policy and practice (2.5.2). Based on policy analysis, official discourse and interviews, I analysed the way in/security was represented and produced within the macro-level and, to a lesser extent, between governments. To aid the analysis, I made use of GIS-based maps to illustrate visually the way in/security is understood and produced.
My research found that understandings of in/security at the macro-level were strongly related to the protracted armed conflict and the historic inability of the state to assert territorial control and authority across large parts of the country. Understandings have produced a particular set of responses (Browning and McDonald, 2013) and enactments (Huysmans, 2011; Wibben, 2016), which I presented through four main arguments. First, I argued that understandings centre on a spatial sequenced approach. The spatial sequenced approach gives in/security important geospatial dimensions. The geospatial dimension refers to the way the country is divided into consolidated/secure central regions and unconsolidated/insecure peripheral regions. The latter are perceived as regions with weak state presence, in terms of institutions and governance structures, and where IAGs exercise territorial control to a varying degree, impeding the state from governing and fulfilling its constitutional obligations towards its population. The sequenced dimension refers to the way security is to be produced through an ordered intervention logic and inter-institutional functions. Echoing realist theories, in the initial stages, security becomes synonymous with the accumulation of coercive power (Morgan, 2000; Waltz, 1979), whereas insecurity equates to state weakness – that is, the inability to assure territorial control and govern its population. The accumulation of power over the IAGs pertained not only to the coercive strength of the armed forces vis-à-vis the IAGs. It was also to be achieved through improving state-society relations, while eliminating the social and political capital of the IAGs that they gain from fulfilling certain government functions in the regions they control.

Once a minimum level of security has been generated by the armed forces, remaining state institutions gradually consolidate their presence. An underlying assumption is that only by assuring institutional consolidation can the state govern the regions and fulfil its constitutional obligations towards, and thus assure the constitutional and human rights of, its citizens. The way in/security in the subsequent phases centres on rights-based participatory democracy, where the state provides protection, services and guarantees, denotes a certain shift from an emphasis on the state to that of the citizen/community. I refer to this as people-oriented in/security. People-oriented in/security more closely echoes liberal theories, which equate security with democratic systems, the principle of the rule of law, and universal respect for human rights (Morgan, 2000; Navari, 2008).

Secondly, I argued that the spatial sequenced approach is framed in a rights-based language, which emphasises the security of individuals/communities as a right and the provision of security as an obligation by the state. However, the approach generates a hierarchy in in/security understandings, which effectively conditions people-oriented security on
in/security defined narrowly in military terms. The conditioning of people-oriented security on state territorial control, institutional consolidation and the fomentation of governance structures, moreover posit the state as the principal security provider for its citizens. Based on such conceptualisation, the state is perceived to be the main reference object of in/security and is, by extension, believed to guarantee the security of its citizens. While the state is the main referent object, the centrality of the state is justified against a rights-based people-oriented framing. Effectively, in/security remains state-centred throughout the spatial sequenced approach.

The third argument holds that the spatial sequenced approach assumes distinct boundaries between the legal and illegal, the political and criminal. Yet, boundaries have been purposefully manipulated to enhance state legitimacy and its manoeuvrability over the IAGs. This was illustrated through the shifting representations of armed violence in Colombia, the reinterpretation of IHL and reconceptualisations of the IAGs, which furthermore reflect power struggles between governments and between institutions. The creation and manipulation of such boundaries also constitute a purposeful construction of context to justify violence (Dalby, 2010). The way this occurred was illustrated through the representations of the unconsolidated/insecure peripheries as lacking state presence, and being ravaged by IAG-perpetrated violence contesting state territorial control and authority. This, in turn, justified state-perpetrated violence in terms of coercive action by the armed forces through reference to bringing the state to the regions, in order to provide security to and govern the population living under IAG control. The way boundaries are manipulated and amended also point to security policy and practice not necessarily being governed by rational concern for good outcomes, but are rather the products of struggles over power (Burke, 2013a) among state entities when defining and responding to in/security. This relates to the final argument of the chapter.

The fourth and final argument holds that intra-state power struggles and distrust make the spatial sequenced approach to in/security contradictory. The approach assumes that the state can effectively be constructed in the unconsolidated regions, yet policies targeted at the problematics of the regions in many ways impede sustainable institutional consolidation. Resources and decision-making power are not transferred to the regions, under the pretext of structural weakness and corruption, thereby also obstructing the contextual approach and institutional consolidation. The lack of transformation of in/security dynamics in the peripheries, maintains people-oriented in/security as a promise in the future.
8.3.2 Research question two: How is in/security understood and negotiated among local conflict-affected communities?

This question is predominantly answered in Chapter Six, where I shift focus to the local community level, making a similar inquiry into how in/security is understood and navigated. I focus on four marginalised conflict-affected communities – two communities in rural areas, and two in urban areas in the Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio regions. I refer to these communities as the micro-level. Based principally on in-depth interviews, I inquired into how in/security is understood and how understandings are derivative of the contexts navigated on a daily basis and tied to identity. I also sought to determine the extent to which understandings were relational to macro-level policy and practice.

Across communities in rural and urban settings in both regions, contextual and identity factors had a significant impact – albeit to a different degree – on how interviewees spoke about in/security and the issues they spoke of. A context shared across all communities was that of competing claims to rule (Krupa and Nugent, 2015), where weakened state governance structures (Idler, 2012a) and the lack or scarcity of public services facilitated the consolidation of IAG control over communities. Within this context, security and insecurity emanated from the same sources, namely the IAGs and ‘the state’ (using the term employed by the interviewees). Across all communities, the context of state abandonment (as defined by the interviewees and which bore strong resemblance with their marginalised status) and communities’ relation to the state were paramount in regard to how communities spoke of in/security. Interviewees largely spoke of in/security in relation to their perception of and experiences with ‘the state’. Interviewees articulated how they perceived the state was working against them, either through direct military and police attacks, or through exclusion, discrimination and stigmatisation. Both communities felt that their marginalisation was a purposeful strategy by the state, despite a discursive/policy commitment to the contrary. It was argued that such purposeful marginalisation was motivated by an approach to development to which these communities became obstacles. For farming communities, it centred specifically around the perceived neoliberal approach to rural development in which peasant farming has no place. For urban communities, it was motivated by a desire to silence victims because of what they know, both in terms of illegal state practices and deficiencies in its approach to in/security. The most effective way of silencing, stigmatising and delegitimising communities, interviewees argued, was to accuse them of pertaining to – or supporting – the guerrillas.
Stigmatising through associating communities with the guerrillas which could then be militarily attacked was also indicative of the way the macro-level perceives the guerrillas to be the main driver of the armed conflict and insecurity in Colombia. However, most interviewees held that the neo-paramilitaries were the most critical IAG, yet the threat posed by the neo-paramilitaries was persistently downplayed by the state. Many believed this was partly due to the continued collusion between the neo-paramilitaries and certain state entities, in particular the armed forces. A common way of diminishing the threat posed by the neo-paramilitaries was to declare violence suffered by the communities in the hands of the neo-paramilitaries as linked to ordinary crime. In this way, communities were denied protection, compensation and reparation provided for in the VLRL.

While many similarities were found within the micro-level, important differences between the four communities illustrate the importance of local everyday complexities for in/security understandings. Narratives from rural farming communities revealed how a campesino (peasant farmer) identity was actively and purposefully constituted against conflict dynamics plaguing the regions and insecurity pertaining thereto. The campesino identity served, on the one hand, as a prism through which to understand and explain the persistent violence perpetrated against these communities and, on the other, as a means to negotiate in/security. The identity had strong historical, social, political and territorial associations, formed around a notion of farmers’ rights against the historic and systematic violence and stigmatisation against these communities. From this perspective, in/security was predominantly spoken of in relation to the continuation of past violent and exclusionary practices perpetrated by ‘the state’ in coalition with rural elite and illegal actors. In the context of the official transition into the post-conflict period, these practices became less violent and thereby less visible, partly through the framing of government action in a post-conflict rights-based discourse. The way farmers have responded to in/security dynamics in the region has been through the creation of ZRCs and by resisting government strategies to pacify the regions, as these strategies translate into greater insecurity from the perspective of farmers.

The strong collective campesino identity contrasted, in many ways, with the victim identity which emerged through the narratives with urban conflict-affected communities. Being diverse communities made up of people displaced from elsewhere in the country, these communities did not have a shared history or a common struggle. This was reflected in the way their accounts were more oriented around the present, whereas, with farming communities, the historical and future undertones came out more strongly. Accounts from the urban communities essentially demonstrated an understanding of in/security centred on
prevention, protection, vulnerability and risk, thus mirroring aspects of macro-level people-oriented in/security. Having settled in peripheral barrios and settlements where violence was rife, these communities lived in a mutually reinforcing context of neo-paramilitary control and state abandonment. The contextual settings furthermore severely restricted their space to negotiate in/security, whereas official mechanisms of protection aimed at these communities increased their vulnerability.

In this context, a collective victim identity emerged. In a co-constitutive manner, narratives around in/security centred on being victim of neo-paramilitary control and violence, as well as being unprotected and abandoned by ‘the state’. Thus, the victim identity was founded largely on grievances and trauma, and in relation to the victimising acts of ‘the other’ (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Jacoby, 2015). Although the victim identity was not an identity constructed as a forward-looking ideal, as was the campesino identity to a certain extent, it was used to organise communities and open up a different space the for political participation through which in/securities could be navigated. Thus, the victim identity did not suggest communities had no voice or agency (Jacoby, 2015), or were merely the passively suffering (Denov and Gervais, 2007). It is important to note that farmers did also at times self-define as victims. Yet, the victim identity was very much a secondary narrative, referred to mostly when wanting to reinforce how farmers had suffered disproportionally in the context of the armed conflict. Equally, many of the urban interviewees were displaced farmers and thus spoke from a farmer perspective as well. However, in the present context displaced farmers navigated, this identity became secondary.

Contrasting findings at the micro and macro-levels against each other illustrate how there is a certain convergence between understandings of in/security, yet in many ways meanings of in/security are contested. At both levels, the lack of state presence (whether spoken of as unconsolidated regions or state abandonment) and the resultant violent IAG dynamics, denial of rights, and high levels of basic unsatisfied needs, influenced understandings around in/security. At the macro-level, it was argued that insecurity generated by unconsolidated state presence pertained to the way in which it produces an enabling environment for the IAGs. At the micro-level, however, it was the state response through the spatial sequenced approach that was a main cause of insecurity. Thus, insecurity emanated to a considerable degree from macro-level security policy and practice. This, in itself, is neither contentious nor original; indeed, a main contribution by the critical security approaches has been to illustrate how insecurity to individuals or communities often emanate from the state (see 2.3.1). However, understandings of in/security as articulated at the micro-level revealed
conflicting images of an ideal, actual, and past state. The ideal state tied in with what Tate (2001) terms an aspirational state. Interviewees articulated a desire for a legitimate state providing guarantees for victims. The past state was associated with human rights abuses, IHL infringements, and a main cause for the marginalised conditions of these communities (these accounts related to many of the dynamics discussed in Chapter Three). Most of the interviewees encounters with the ‘actual state’, that is with public officials of different state institutions and units, continued to be largely negative, in the sense that communities felt discriminated against, stigmatised and made targets of the armed forces. Yet, a contradiction emerged in the way most interviewees critiqued the government’s response to the neo-paramilitaries (Bacrim) for not being equally as forceful in its response to the guerrillas. Several interviews expressed a desire that the armed forces target Bacrim in a similar way as they target the guerrillas. This, nevertheless, effectively means the continuation of the spatial sequenced approach, which was identified as a main in/security among these communities. It should be noted that, after conducting the interviews, the government reconceptualised Bacrim and reinterpreted IHL (5.5.2) in a way that partly reflects the demands of a more forceful approach towards the Bacrim. Nevertheless, these developments effectively maintain the militarised response to in/security, and in the context of IAG control and state abandonment, enable the continued manipulation between the legal and illegal. An implication of such manipulation, is the delegitimisation of many of the claims and demands by local communities.

A different form of state presence was also aspired to, one which allows for the participation in politics – in this context, meaning the ability to propose alternative approaches to development and participation that enhance the security of local communities. Such state presence closely mirrors people-centred approaches to in/security at the macro-level, which are increasingly emphasised as the country transitions into the post-conflict period and in the guiding concept for post-conflict peacebuilding territorial peace. However, as Chapter Seven showed, there is a continuation in the macro-level approach to in/security in the post-conflict transition, which maintains exclusionary and stigmatising practices against these marginalised communities. This happens, in particular, when communities seek to negotiate in/security in the contexts that they navigate on a daily basis, through alternative means of development and channels of participation than those sanctioned and authorised within people-oriented security as conceptualised at the macro-level.
8.3.3 Research question three: In what ways do the contested meanings of in/security between the state and community levels impact on (post)conflict dynamics?

This question is predominantly answered in Chapter Seven, where I inquire into the way contested meanings of in/security at the macro- and micro-levels impact on security dynamics in the official transitions into the post-conflict period. I did this by bringing together the way in/security is understood at both the macro- and micro-levels, as discussed in the two preceding chapters, and discussing findings against the government’s approach to peacebuilding. The government’s peacebuilding approach is centred on the concept of territorial peace, which emphasises the rural development and the precarious situation of farmers in the conflict-affected rural regions (Jaramillo, 2013). These aspects are emphasised also in the peace agreement of 2016 (Government of Colombia, 2016b). The discussion centred on the role of the resource extraction sector, due to its designated importance in the post-conflict period and its geographical proximity with the conflict epicentres. To aid the analysis on how contested meanings of in/security impact on in/security dynamics, I made use of GIS-based maps to provide a visual illustration of competing land claims that emerge from contested meanings between and within the macro- and micro-levels in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio.

Incorporating findings from Chapter Five and Six, the main argument of the chapter is that there is a continuation in the approach to in/security as the country officially transitions from five decades of armed conflict into a post-conflict period. I contended the proclaimed shift towards a wider people-oriented approach to in/security in macro-level discourse, arguing that the shift is largely discursive. What this means is that security-related policies and official discourse largely prioritise the security of people (whether expressed as citizens, conflict-affected communities, etc.). At the micro-level, however, there are few indications of the state-centred in/security focus giving way to a people-oriented focus. The continued reliance on the military provision of security, as well as preservation of the state centrality, ultimately impedes the ability to eliminate the exclusionary, stigmatising and criminalising practices against marginalised communities in the peripheries. The centre-periphery divide, identified in the peace agreement as a major structural driver of armed violence, is thereby maintained and the peripheries continue to represent a context constructed to justify the use of violence.

In developing the argument, I illustrated how the sequenced spatial approach to in/security at the macro-level allows for a number of truth claims – or a particular production of
knowledge based on numerical data and statistics (Bigo and Tsoukala, 2014) – around in/security dynamics. Macro-level understandings of in/security, together with specific outcomes of the spatial sequenced approach, have allowed the government to claim that a juncture in in/security dynamics has been reached. Through the way in/security is monitored and assessed, important security improvements can be demonstrated. These include the reduction of a number of high-impact violence indicators, as well as the peace negotiations and subsequent agreement with the FARC. The juncture in in/security dynamics serves to legitimate the spatial sequenced approach to in/security, and has been presented in a way that enhances the legitimacy of the state. It has also promoted a discursive transition towards people-oriented in/security. People-oriented in/security is underpinned by a concept of a rights-based participatory democracy, where state efforts are centred on closing societal inequality breaches through effective and comprehensive governance. These aspects underpin the government’s concept of territorial peace, which is integral to the peace agreement and the post-conflict period. In government discourse, it is argued that the peace agreement allows for a redirection of state efforts towards eliminating the centre-periphery division and the socio-economic development gap. In doing so, the government emphasises a bottom-up approach to peace building, which promotes conflict-affected communities to be active participants rather than passive recipients.

Nevertheless, when juxtaposing this juncture in in/security and the projection of the post-conflict period against the lived experiences of the communities at the micro-level, it was found that the results generated by the sequenced spatial approach to in/security are not perceived by the interviewees as bringing about the changes in local in/security dynamics in a way that transforms underlying structures driving violence and insecurity. Local in/security dynamics, as perceived by the communities, demonstrated a continuation of conflict-related violence, much due to the continued presence of other IAGs and the state response thereto. Moreover, the government’s approach was found to have little impact on less visible violence pertaining to the social conflict. Finally, the quantitative emphasis on measuring in/security allows for the manipulation of people-oriented in/security initiatives.

To illustrate how the continuation in the approach to in/security and the contested meanings of in/security impact on the post-conflict transitions, I discussed the implications of the strategic importance of the resource extraction sector. I focused the discussion on the Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio regions, and the contentious interplay between the sector and the armed conflict. Both Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio are strategic energy resource and mining regions, where resource extraction is identified as the main driver of post-conflict
development. Two central arguments underpinned the discussion. The first was that the strategic importance of the resource extraction sector for post-conflict development, with its stated objective to eliminate the centre-periphery divide, maintains exclusionary dynamics. The promotion of the resource extraction sector has led to a conflictive reordering of territory. The rapid and disorganised issuing of titles for resource extraction sits against the slow pace of land restitution and the acute underdevelopment of the regions. The latter, strongly perceived by communities as a purposeful strategy to indirectly displace people from their land to make way for resource extraction. Indeed, mapping competing land claims that have arisen in Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio support such claims by the marginalised rural communities. Secondly, the strategic importance – for both legal and illegal actors alike - justified the continued reliance on military security provision in the regions, thereby continuing the spatial sequenced approach to in/security in the peripheries.

An important implication of the above at the micro-level, has been the simultaneous recognition and criminalisation of the marginalised communities in the peripheries. What is apparent in macro-level understandings of in/security is that, when people-oriented in/security becomes incompatible with state-oriented in/security, the spatial sequenced approach becomes insensitive to the boundaries between different community groupings (such as farmers, community leaders, artisanal miners, and human rights defenders), and the IAGs. This tends to happen through a multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in various macro-level strategies manipulating the boundaries between the legal and illegal, the political and criminal. In regions like Catatumbo and Magdalena Medio, I argue that this occurs due to a dual emphasis on the rural sector coupled with opposing models to rural reform and contested meanings of in/security, in which competing claims to land accumulate, and where both legal and illegal alternative sites of authority contend. Among urban periphery communities, I illustrated how this occurred through the continuation of the unproblematised approach to eliminate security threats defined in national policy. In this process, underlying structures of exclusion, stigmatisation and criminalisation are maintained rather than supressed. The people-oriented security objectives of territorial peace are thereby undermined, and as a result the centre-periphery divide - identified at the macro-level as a structural cause of the concentration of the armed conflict in the peripheries – is maintained.
8.4 Overall Research Question and Contributions of the Thesis

The findings presented in the empirical chapters of the thesis together allow me to answer the overarching research question: ‘How are in/security understandings at asymmetrical levels of society relational and contextual?’ Situating my research in the post-conflict transitions occurring in Colombia, I contribute important insights into how relational dynamics become manifest in changing contexts. In particular, the implications of contested meanings of in/security arising in post-conflict transitions.

I stated in the beginning of this thesis, and reiterated in the beginning of this chapter, that security in itself does not exist in isolation (Krause and Williams 1997). Instead, security is always defined in relation to something or someone (Hills 2009), which makes security a relational concept. At the most basic level, as Dillon (1996) points out, we can never think of security without insecurity. Security and insecurity are not opposites, but rather co-constitutive – two concepts dynamically defining one another (Echavarria 2010). Denoting relational and contextual dimensions of in/security, the margins cannot exist without someone occupying the centre, and these processes are not simply inherent by-products of an exercise of power (Enloe 1996). Scholars, including Ackerly et al. (2006), Sylvester (1994), and Berents (2015), have illustrated how these approaches begin at the margins but interrogate those who occupy power centres, and which continues the exclusions of communities at the margins. Or, as Hills concludes, security cannot be understood in isolation from the political context in which it is being employed.

The empirical evidence presented in this thesis confirms these arguments, while contributing important findings into how relational aspects become manifest in a changing conflict/post-conflict context, and between asymmetrical levels of society. Understandings of in/security at the state macro- and community micro-levels were relational between and within these asymmetrical levels. Understandings were also strongly derivative of context – including the historical, social, cultural, and territorial dimensions of context –, and to identities constructed and adhered to.

In/security understandings at the macro-level were strongly influenced by dynamics at the micro-level – with the micro-level conceptualised in policy and discourse as the unconsolidated/insecure peripheries. The centre/periphery divide was a construct based on geographical, historical, political, socio-economic, and – importantly – in/security-related dimensions. The divide tied into conceptualisations of the state, with distinctions made in macro-level discourse between the state of the past, the present, and, to a certain extent, the
aspirational state. The state of the past was, in many ways, perceived as weak, in terms of territorial control, institutional presence, and governance capacities. At times, the state was acknowledged to be guilty of illegitimate practices in the peripheries. The present and aspirational state was conceptualised as strong and legitimate, through the perceived security improvements in the periphery, as well as the rights-based focus on eliminating the centre-periphery divide. Tied to the (re)production of the strong legitimate state identity, the peripheries continued to constitute a context which legitimated different kinds of violence and insecurities. Moreover, while at the macro-level the state was largely conceptualised as a unified actor, in/security understandings and enactments were also relational to intra-state power constellations, distrust and historical divides. These intra-state dimensions produced contradictions in the macro-level approach to in/security towards the micro-level in the peripheries. These contradictions were strongly perceived by communities at the micro-level, and impacted on the way they articulated in/security understandings.

At the micro-level, meanings of in/security could only be understood in relation to the contexts communities navigated on a daily basis and the identities they constructed or adhered to. These specific contexts and identities, moreover, were relational to the macro-level spatial and sequenced approach to in/security, which translated into a highly militarised context in rural regions that was associated with violence towards and delegitimisation of communities. While urban communities had less direct encounters with the military, the macro-level approach diminished what communities perceived as main security threats, while contributing to the exclusion, stigmatisation and criminalisation of these communities. Across the micro-level, the state was thus perceived as an important security threat among communities, with individuals frequently negotiating a dual role as beneficiaries and adversaries of state security policy and practice. In/securities negotiated by communities translated into specific enactments, such as the promotion of the ZRC and victims’ organisations, which, while providing space for communities to negotiate in/security, also provoked contradictory responses at the macro-level. These forms of enactments are recognised and encouraged through macro-level people-oriented security discourse and policy, yet at times criminalised in the specific contexts navigated by local communities. The simultaneous recognition and criminalisation of conflict-affected communities can only be understood in relation to the derivative dimensions of in/security, which include the (re)production of the strong legitimate state discourse, and contextual factors tied to the centre-periphery divide, including territorial, political and historic dimensions.
Discussing the relational and contextual dimensions of in/security, pointed to how understandings – in particularly as expressed in security-related policies – assumes distinct boundaries between actors and binary concepts such as the legal/illegal. Yet, empirical evidenced illustrated how these boundaries are highly fluid, contextual and purposefully manipulated to achieve different security objectives. Important dynamics were found in the border areas between the legal and illegal, the political and the criminal, and between ‘the state’, ‘communities’ and the ‘IAGs’, which combined to produce important and consequential implications for interpreting in/security understandings and dynamics.

Through the framework set out in Chapter Two, it was possible to see in continuum the way deeply ingrained understandings of in/security reproduce violence, as the government seeks to transition the country into a post-conflict period following five decades of armed conflict. The research, through a detailed empirical case study, supports the view that in/security is relational and derivative of context and with ties to identity. It contributes to further our understandings of in/security at three distinct levels, set out in the final sections.

8.4.1 Wider academic contributions

The way the research incorporated a multiplicity of accounts of how, by whom and for whom in/security is understood and enacted in particular locations in a post-conflict transition context, illustrated that in/security cannot be neatly explained or understood through any one particular theoretical concept or approach. Insights by various security studies approaches help understand the contested nature of in/security and see in/security as a dynamic process, which evolves over time and space. The findings generated by this research move the academic debate on in/security understandings forward on three specific levels. Theoretically, the thesis builds upon the critical security studies literature to advance an enhanced understanding of the relational dimensions of in/security, the contested meanings of in/security and the implications thereof. It does this through inquiring into the centre and the margins in relation to each other, incorporating a multiplicity of accounts. In this way, the research represented a further step towards moving away from a focus on what security is, towards more thoroughly engaging with the way in/security is understood among different actors, recognising that meanings of in/security are largely contested and contradictory, and producing important implications. The focus on two asymmetrical levels of society in relation to each other, provides important insights into how in/security is understood and experienced at the margins, from the embodied perspective of those acted upon (Vaughan-Williams & Stevens 2016), which have generally been neglected in security studies (see 1.2; 2.3.3). In addition, inquiring into these dynamics in a post-conflict transitional context
demonstrates the relevance of such an approach more generally, as it engages with concrete
dynamics - that come into play at different moments and with different implications - that
might otherwise be misinterpreted. Moreover, the relational approach contributed to a more
nuanced understanding of how in/security is understood and acted upon by government and
other state actors, drawing attention to the fluid boundaries, and thus building upon research
that seeks to move away from the dominant unproblematised approach to the state (see 2.2.2;
2.3.1; 2.5.2).

Through the framework proposed to capture the relational and contextual dimensions of
in/security understandings, the research contributes at the methodological level. Through a
combination of conceptual lenses and methods, the framework contributes to challenge and
shape how the study of in/security may be approached. By approaching critical security
studies from an overarching perspective, allowed me to examine how the various approaches
have engaged differently with the broadening and deepening in/security, with contextual and
identity dimensions, and the implications of in/security discourse and practice (2.3). The
meta approach also enabled me to draw from the various counter-critiques within this body
of literature. Combining these insights provided a rich theoretical terrain while at the same
time providing space and openness for contesting dominant conceptualisations of
in/security. The methods employed within this framework further enabled me to bridge the
macro- and micro-level through a combination of qualitative, quantitative and visual
methods. A specific contribution of this mixed methods approach was the selection of the
specific research contexts in relation to in/security understandings at the macro-level, which
were thereafter contrasted against in/security understandings articulated by communities in
these sites – thus, engaging with the articulations of in/security from both the dominant
political actors making the securitizing moves, and the embodied perspectives of the subjects
of securitising moves.

Finally, the focus on Colombia provides important empirical contributions. The research is
a further step towards a wider contextual approach to in/security that seeks to account for
in/security dynamics from non-Western/European contexts (2.3.3). The relational approach
taken in, and state problematisating aspects of, the research furthermore builds on this gap
in the literature by moving away from the state-centred focus of security studies. In this way,
the empirical findings contribute to an off-centred understanding in two aspects. It moves
away from a Western/European contextual focus, and from dominant conceptualisations of

46 The term off-centred view, borrows from Krupa and Nugent's (2015) discussion on the
state from a Global South perspective.
the state, as represented in both academic (2.2.2; 2.4) and – as the research has shown – state in/security policy, practice and discourse, as a unified actor and main referent object of security.

By situating the research in the official transitions from five decades of armed conflict to the post-conflict period, it has the potential to offer an important contribution to the analysis of in/security dynamics in post-conflict transitions more generally. While there is neither one definition of armed conflict, nor of post-conflict, the Uppsala Conflict Database Programme identified 131 ongoing armed conflicts in 2016, which included state-based, non-state, and one-sided violence (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). The empirical evidence provided by the Colombian case study, contributes with important insights into the implications of contested meanings of in/security between state actors, in their role in devising and implementing policies, and conflict-affected communities as among the intended beneficiaries of such policies and practice.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: A Chronological Overview of The Armed Conflict

This appendix provides a chronological overview of the armed conflict, introducing the principal actors, tracing main events and key dynamics, and illustrating the intertwined nature of the political armed conflict and the drug trade.

Early dynamics leading up to the formation of the main guerrilla groups

Since independence from Spain in 1810, Colombia has experienced 11 major violent internal conflicts, many of which were ideological conflicts between the Conservative party and the Liberal party. In the main, the Conservative party promoted centralized government, strong ties to the Catholic Church, and limited suffrage (McDougall, 2009). The Liberal party for its part, aspired for decentralized government, home rule, separation of church and state in education and civil matters, and broad voting rights. After a period of relative calm in the first half of the 20th century, confrontations between the Liberals and the Conservatives reached new levels in 1948 with the assassination of a prominent Liberal president candidate. The event provoked a ten-year civil war – commonly referred to as La Violencia - between the Liberal and Conservative supporters. Although the civil war was fought along the Liberal and Conservative party divide, violence was characterised by landowners organising peasant clients to launch attacks and vendettas on neighbouring villages (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). An estimated 200,000 people were killed and one million internally displaced during this war (Chacon et al., 2011; McDougall, 2009).

During the La Violencia civil war, the Colombian Communist Party organised peasants into mass-defence movements, promoting autonomous safe havens as a defence against violence between Liberals and Conservatives. Several enclaves emerged, such as El Pato, Río Chiquito, Sumapaz and Marquetalia, which became known as the Independent Republics (Ortiz, 2002). The republics disappeared between 1958 and 1965, due to a combination of government’s promises of amnesty and military interventions. The FARC traces its origin in farmers that regroup in the Marquetalia republic during this time.

The 1960s saw the formation not only of the FARC but also the ELN and EPL guerrilla groups. All three guerrilla groups championed a Marxist-Leninist ideology, calling for agrarian reform and seeking to overthrow the state. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP) indicator of minor war, the conflict started in 1966 when battle related deaths between the warring parties reach 25 after attacks by both guerrilla groups against the
state (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). In the early 1970s, the M-19 guerrilla was formed by a section that had been excluded from the FARC together with other socialist movements in the country. As opposed to the predominantly rural-based FARC and ELN, the M-19 was initially an urban guerrilla and adhered to a nationalist rather than communist ideology (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017).

The 1970s

During the 1970s, violence between the guerrillas and the government forces was of relatively low intensity (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). However, the establishment of the drug trade in rural peripheral regions of the country towards the end of the decade had a dramatic effect on the evolution of the armed conflict. The establishment of the drug trade in Colombia at this time was largely the result of U.S. led counter-narcotics efforts in neighbouring Peru and Bolivia – under the auspices of War on Drugs. Rather than curtailing the trade, a main impact of these efforts was to divert trafficking routes into Colombia (Gootenberg, 2012). The M-19 was the first guerrilla group to take advantage of the profits to be made from coca cultivation, which simultaneously began to adopt a rural agenda (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). The FARC and ELN initially opposed any involvement in the drug trade under the argument that it was counterrevolutionary and corruptive, but both groups eventually reverted this stance. For the FARC in particular, embracing the trade was of strategic importance in order to increase its influence among colonos, many of whom had come to regard coca cultivation as their only viable livelihood (Ortiz, 2002), and to bolster military strength (Otis, 2014). Taxing coca cultivation became an important source of financing in its quest to strengthen its fighting capacity and expand territorial control (McDougall, 2009; Otis, 2014). The FARC rapidly accrued the capacity to directly confront the armed forces (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017).

The 1980s

The 1980s was characterised by increasing levels of armed violence, though coupled also with peace agreements and demobilisations. The establishment of the drug trade in Colombia also led to an accelerated development of organise crime (InSight Crime, 2017). In the 1980s, the first major cocaine cartels emerged, including the Medellin cartel and the Cali cartel. Agreements between drug traffickers and the guerrilla groups were formed, facilitated through the existence of a shared enemy – the government of Colombia. As a consequence of the above-mentioned developments, the armed conflict was pushed in also to urban areas (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017).
The 1980s also saw the first attempts at peace negotiations with the guerrillas. A peace process took place between 1982 and 1984, initiated by president Betancur, in which ceasefire agreements were reached with the FARC, the M-19 and the EPL. The ELN however, refused to negotiate. As part of the agreement, the guerrillas were allowed to form political movements and participate in the 1985 national elections. Only the FARC accepted this option, forming the Patriotic Union (UP). Nevertheless, the violent annihilation of the UP in the subsequent years fomented great scepticism within the FARC against party politics and peace negotiations as an alternative to armed struggle, and caused a shift in the balance between the political and military wings of the guerrilla (González, 2004). For their part, the EPL and M-19, denounced the ceasefire agreement and escalated violence in the run up to the elections. Peace agreements were eventually reached with the EPL and M-19 by the following government under President Barco. Both guerrilla groups disarmed and as part of the peace process, received preferential access to the political system (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). The FARC and the ELN on the other hand, together with dissident group of the EPL, continued to pursue their goals through military struggle.

The 1990s

Violence between the remaining guerrillas and the government troops increased in the 1990s (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). The FARC expanded from an estimated 13,200 soldiers in 1989 to 18,000 in 1992, and its increased strength was reflected in a series of aggressive military offensives during the early to mid-1990s (Richani, 2013). Violent incidents involving the guerrilla rose from an average 600 incidents per year during the 1980s to an average of 1,300 incidents per year between 1991 and 1998. Territorial expansion increased from controlling 173 municipalities in 1985 (representing 17 per cent of all municipalities in Colombia) to 622 (61 per cent) by 1996 (Richani, 2013). In response to the increasing strength of the guerrillas, various paramilitary organisations operating in Colombia under a counter-insurgency logic, went together to form the united self-defence forces of Colombia, the AUC, in 1997. During its existence between 1997 and 2005, it has been responsible for the majority of human rights violations against the civilian population perpetrated within the context of the armed conflict (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017).

Under these conditions of violence and competition between the IAGs, the drug trade prospered. The trade benefitted not only the IAGs, which were able to more forcefully confront the armed forces and each other, but also businessmen, politicians, government
officials and military personnel (InSight Crime, 2017; Stone and McDermott, 2016). As Stone and McDermott elaborates, the consolidation of the drug trade in Colombia caused the U.S. administration to divert its War on Drugs to Colombia. Drug trafficking cartels were declared a security threat to American society in 1989 and in recognition of the under-funded and ineffective Colombian counterinsurgency efforts, the USA increased military aid to Colombia. This support enabled the Colombian government to strengthen its military efforts against the cartels. However, violence dramatically increased as the cartels - in particular the Medellin cartel – retaliated through series of bombing campaigns and the killing hundreds of civilians, police, judges and politicians. Violence by the Medellin cartel led to the formation of the PEPES, an IAG dedicated to bringing down Escobar. The founders of the PEPES, the Castaño brothers, would later form the AUC.

Although the government was able to eliminate the large cartels, their elimination produced two unintended consequences. First, it provided FARC an important opportunity to expand its power by pushing coca cultivation increasingly to FARC-dominated areas while destroying one of the guerrillas principal military-political competitor (Peceny and Durnan, 2006). Secondly, it led to the decentralisation of the drug trade (Stone and McDermott, 2016). Thus, in addition to the political violence between the guerrillas and the government forces, a myriad of drug export networks, armed groups and mini-cartels emerged fighting each other to fill the void left by the cartels (International Crisis Group, 2007; Prieto, 2013; Stone and McDermott, 2016). One of the most important new IAG at the time was the Norte del Valle Cartel (NDVC), formed by remnants of the Cali cartel and a group of former and active police (InSight Crime, 2017). These new IAGs however, adopted a lower profile than the cartels by camouflaging their intentions in political rhetoric, military alliances and police uniforms (InSight Crime, 2017). Violence once again escalated and cultivation and trafficking increased. Despite continuous military aid from the USA, the drug-trade continued to expand; An important impact of the end of the cartels was the end of the direct purchase of coca paste produced in Peru and Bolivia (InSight Crime, 2017). Instead coca cultivation in isolated rural areas in Colombia quickly grew. Cultivation increased from an estimated 44,700 hectares in 1994 to 163,300 hectares in 2000, whereas the production of cocaine increased from an estimated 201 tons to 695 tons (Palacios, 2012; Rochlin, 2011). Resultantly, taxing the drug trade became the most important source of finances for the guerrillas, in particular the FARC, while adding an incentive for other IAGs to seize guerrilla controlled territory (InSight Crime, 2017).
It should be noted, however, that different FARC commanders interacted with the drug-trade differently and not all of FARC fronts have been involved in the drug trade (Holmes et al., 2006; International Crisis Group, 2010). FARC’s involvement in the trade during the 1990s is believed to have been principally (though not exclusively) confined to the lower echelons; that is, territorial control of coca cultivation and a monopoly on coca base processing (Norman, 2017; Peceny and Durnan, 2006). This clearly suggests some form of cooperation with drug traffickers and paramilitary groups, which tend to dominate the cocaine processing and trafficking stages of the chain, though relationships are complex and fluid (International Crisis Group, 2010; Saab and Taylor, 2009). A complex set of dynamics emerged, where on the one hand in some geographical areas FARC fronts engaged in a pragmatic cooperation with the paramilitaries and other drug traffickers over the drug trade. On the other, these groups violently confronted each other over territorial control and along the supposedly ideological lines of left-wing guerrillas and right-wing counterinsurgency efforts. These explosive dynamics, which included the increasingly intertwined armed conflict and drug trade, let to violence reaching record levels by the turn of the millennium.

The 2000s

Towards the end of the 1990s, new attempts were made at pursuing peace talks with the guerrillas. Between 1998 and 2001, the government under president Pastrana were engaged in peace talks with both the FARC and the ELN. Both talks broke down. The FARC emerged considerably strengthened having used the demilitarized zone that it was granted as a condition for the talks to proceed, to reinforce and train their fronts, and for extensive coca cultivation. By the time the talks broke down, the FARC had greatly built up its military capacity (Gomez-Suarez and Newman, 2013). This led to a renewed surge in violence during the first years of the new millennium (Restrepo and Spagat, 2005), and the FARC was able to effectively encircle Bogota (Henderson, 2011; Simons, 2004). For their part, paramilitary violence was particularly intense during the peace talks, which included the carrying out more than 100 massacres (defined as the killing of four or more non-combatants in a single event) each year (Isacson, 2013).

Against the failed peace talks and escalating violence, president Uribe was elected in 2002 on a hard-line security agenda which promised to forcefully confront the guerrillas. Intense confrontations between the guerrillas and government troops followed. In 2004 the government had intensified the military offensive against the guerrillas through Plan Patriota
(the Patriot Plan). The previously separate confrontation against the drug traffickers and counter-insurgency efforts were merged into a fight against narco-terrorist (Echavarria, 2010). This was situated in the wider framework of the U.S. led War on Terrorism, under which the Colombian government received substantial financial and technical support from the USA through the Plan Colombia aid package (Rochlin, 2010). Conflict intensity decreased after the years of war between 2004 and 2005 (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). A few unsuccessful attempts were made at holding peace talks and to negotiate a humanitarian accord between the FARC and the government. The FARC’s capacity to directly confront the armed forces largely decreased during the counter insurgency/terrorism efforts by the Uribe government, forcing the FARC to resort to traditional guerrilla warfare tactics (International Crisis Group, 2010). During the second Uribe government and the following governments under president Santos, the FARC furthermore suffered great losses to its leadership, with several of its top commanders killed by the armed forces.

The Uribe government did however initiate a peace process with the AUC in 2003, in which AUC leaders demobilized their armies and handed themselves in to the authorities. Over 30,000 AUC fighters demobilized (Nussio, 2011). At the same time, the NDVC began to break up following an internal war between its various factions (InSight Crime, 2017). These two events produced a new criminal-paramilitary hybrid, which the government dubbed Bacrim. While Bacrim have been the subject of intense debate, it is generally believed that these groups include paramilitaries that either rearmed or did not demolished, many led by former mid-level AUC commanders who filled the vacuum left by the top paramilitary leaders (InSight Crime, 2017). Comparative analysis of paramilitary violence and Bacrim violence, tend to demonstrate that the Bacrim operate in much of the same areas as the former paramilitaries and are engaged in the same kind of violence (Nussio, 2011). Thus, important changes to conflict dynamics notwithstanding, as President Santos took power in 2010, violence in much of the peripheral rural areas in Colombia remained a constant feature.
Appendix 2: An Overview of the Main Illegal Armed Groups

This annex provides an overview of the main illegal armed actors operating in Colombia within the context of the intertwined armed conflict and drug trade. It includes an overview of the vigorous debate on Bacrim and the extent to which they can be considered the continuation of the paramilitaries, i.e. neo-paramilitaries.

Guerrilla Groups

The FARC

The FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) has consistently been the largest the guerrilla group in Colombia. It was formed in 1966 and has its origins in the rural self-defence groups formed during the La Violencia civil war. Following a government offensive in 1958 against the self-defence groups, justified within a Cold War infused anti-communist discourse, several peasants forces regrouped in the Marquetalia independent republic in the Tolima department and with the support of the communist party formed the FARC (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). Founded on a Marxist-Leninist ideology, the original aim of the FARC was to bring down the regime, end “U.S. imperialism”, and to achieve extensive socio-economic reform. After the fall of the Soviet Union however, its ideological foundation became less pronounced (Ortiz, 2002).

The guerrilla group is organised into fronts, characterized by a relatively strong hierarchy and discipline; the secretariat reportedly has had a high degree of control over all fronts, with centralised income and direct communication with commanders (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). Its main support base has been rural colonizing peasants, or colonos, who have turned to the FARC for protection and for organizing basic infrastructure (Saab and Taylor, 2009). The FARC was initially relatively successful in mobilising peasants, particular in the administrative departments of Caquetá, Neta, Santander, and Arauca. However, where political mobilization has been ineffective, it has recruited through coercion, intimidation, or false promises of a salary and good treatment (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017).

Traditionally, the guerrillas justified their confrontations against governments in Colombia by emphasizing the nonlegitimate origin of governments and the way they defend the interests of an oligarchy against the majority of the population (Ortiz, 2002). As Ortiz (2002) argues, though the claims around government illegitimacy was however increasingly replaced by critique on the incompetence of Colombian governments in resolving social inequality, crime and deficient public services. Against government incompetency, the
FARC configures itself as a parallel state in the regions it controls, providing services such as health, education, and public order, to the local population.

At its height around the turn of the millennium, the FARC was estimated to have up to 20,000 armed fighters (Restrepo and Spagat, 2005). By the time of the peace agreement in 2016, its number had decreased to an estimated 7,000 (Fundación Paz y Reconciliación, 2017).

**The ELN**

The ELN (the National Liberation Army) was formed in the Santander department in 1964, by a group of people from a mostly urban middle-class background. Founded on a Marxist-Leninist ideology, as well as liberation theology, it considered itself a liberation movement formed with the goal of ousting the ruling government (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). Like the FARC, its support base has predominantly been rural peasants, although labour unions and student movements also constituted an important membership base. At its strongest point, the ELN was believed to have numbered around 5,000 troops, declining to an estimated 2-3,000 fighters in 2007 (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). ELN is currently engaged in peace talks with the government.

**The EPL**

The EPL (the Popular Liberation Army) was formed in 1967 as a military branch of the clandestine Maoist party in Colombia (Florez-Morris, 2010). Also proclaiming a Marxist-Leninist ideology, it initially focused its revolutionary struggle in marginal rural areas. Later on, some of its more radical views were relaxed and its influence extended into urban areas. It signed a peace agreement with the Colombian government in 1991, with 2,000 guerrillas laying down arms (Florez-Morris, 2010). However, some 200 guerrillas continued the military struggle as the EPL Dissident Group. Today, a faction of the EPL remains in Catatumbo. The government does not perceive this faction to be a guerrilla group, due to its heavy involvement in the drug trade (Espitia, 2017).

**The M-19**

The M-19 (the April 19th Movement), proclaimed a nationalist and Bolivarian ideology, although in its first communiqués it aimed at establishing a form of socialism with local characteristics. It was active between 1972 and 1989, signing a peace agreement in 1989 and demobilizing 900 fighters (Florez-Morris, 2010).

**Paramilitaries**

**The AUC**
The AUC (the Self-Defence Forces of Colombia) was formed in 1997 with the stated objective to fight against left-wing guerrilla groups and promote right-wing policies (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). However, it is largely perceived as a coalition of right-wing paramilitary death squads, that used the armed conflict to camouflage their illicit economic activities. In 1999, it was decided that the groups should campaign for political recognition (InSight Crime, 2015). The paramilitary groups did not seek to overthrow the government, nor was it antagonistic to its economic policies (Saab and Taylor, 2009). Estimates of the size of AUC has varied widely, though by 2001 most sources suggest the AUC had between 8,000 and 10,000 armed combatants present in approximately 40 per cent of Colombia’s municipalities (Saab and Taylor, 2009). Others put the figure at 30,000 members, operating in two thirds of the country (InSight Crime, 2017).

The origins of the paramilitary groups that came together to form the AUC stretch back to the early 1980s, when drug traffickers responded to a wave of kidnappings by the guerrillas through forming a death squad known as Death to Kidnapers (MAS) (InSight Crime, 2015). As an investigation by InSight Crime (2015) shows, MAS was followed by the creation of self-defence groups by a variety of actors, including army officers and politicians to protect against the guerrillas. Many of these self-defence groups were legal, formed within the remit of Law 48 of 1968, which allowed civilians to establish private militias for the purposes of defense against the guerrillas. However, many also worked for the cartels or powerful landowners operating as their private armies. In response to cartel violence perpetrated by these armies (in particular, violence by the Medellin cartel), the PEPES was formed with the aim to persecute members and supporters of the cartel. PEPES dissolved with the elimination of the cartels, though remnants moved on to form the Self-Defence Force of Cordoba and Uraba (ACCU). The ACCU created the AUC, which brought together other self-defence/paramilitary and established new factions throughout many regions of Colombia.

AUC membership largely composed of three social groups: the old security services of the defunct cartels, small- and medium-sized drug lords, and regional landowning elites (Saab and Taylor, 2009). It is furthermore believed that the AUC had links to local military commanders, and it often recruited its troops among former Colombian army soldiers (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, 2017). The AUC offered their security model to landowners and businessmen in areas ravaged by the guerrillas. The AUC confronted the guerrilla in many parts of the country, perpetrated massacres among the civilian population whom they accused of collaborating with the guerrilla (Rozema, 2008b), while at the same time collaborating with the guerrillas over the drug trade.
The AUC signed an agreement with the government in 2003 to demobilize its forces, a process that was concluded in 2006 promoting the president to proclaim that the paramilitaries no longer existed.

**Bacrim**

Bacrim (criminal bands) is the term used by the government to capture the IAGs that emerged following the AUC DDR process. In 2006, the Organisation of American States – mandated with monitoring the AUC DDR process - reported that paramilitaries were still active as common criminals. Shortly after, the Colombian government documented the formation of 22 Bacrim groups comprising around 3,000 people rising from the ashes of the AUC (Saab and Taylor, 2009). According to state figures, in 2006, 33 groups were present in 110 municipalities comprising 4,000 members. Six years later, in 2012, five groups were recognized, present across 190-200 municipalities with approximately 4,800 members. These five groups are known as ‘the Urabeños’, ‘the Rastrojos’, dissidents of ‘the ERPAC’, ‘the Renacer’ and ‘the Machos’ (Prieto, 2013).

Bacrim are highly complex structures with no clear or visible hierarchy or chain of command, a main characteristic which sets them apart from the strictly hierarchical organisational structures of the paramilitaries. Authorities tend to distinguish however between key commanders; their armed and financial factions that receives direct orders from these commanders; and criminal networks which lends logistical, armed and material support (Prieto, 2013).

Directive 15 of 2016, redefined what was until that point known as Bacrim into armed organisations or organised criminal bands. The directive identifies three main Bacrim groups operating in Colombia as armed organisations: ‘the Usuaga Clan’ (also known as the Urabeños or the Gulf Clan), ‘the Puntillos’ and ‘the Pelusos’.
Appendix 3: Processing of CINEP Data

Table 1. Transcribed CINEP data: examples of double-counts.

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### Appendix 4: Interviews Conducted

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Appendix 5: Background on the AMOVI Archive

The AMOVI archive is situated at the Industrial University of Santander (Universidad Industrial de Santander – UIS), in Bucaramanga, Colombia. It was founded in 2013, with the principal aim to give voice to civilian victims of the armed conflict of Colombia. It seeks to generate thorough understanding of social and political processes of political and state violence that occurs in Colombia. AMOVI is funded by Colciencias and UIS, and evaluated by Corporación Compromiso.

The AMOVI archive contains eight lines of investigations. In my research I consulted the “investigation on life stories by victims of forced displacements situated in the township of Café Madrid in Bucaramanga”. As of 2017, this sub-archive contains 48 tape-recorded and transcribed life stories by persons forcibly displaced by the armed conflict. In early 2015, when I consulted the archives, it contained 25 life stories.

Interviews are conducted by historians or researchers trained in oral history methodologies. Four encounters are held with each participant. The first encounter consists of an introductory meeting, where the objectives and specifics of the interviews are explained. In the second encounter, an in-depth interview is conducted. The interview is transcribed and related back to the participant in the third encounter, in which the participant can choose to elaborate on any particular aspect, agree or disagree with his or her previous statements. A final encounter is held with the participant, with the objective to reflect on the matters brought out in the interviews. ‘The interviews aim to capture the entire life story of the participant and not only the violence and horror’ (interview, Yvonne Suarez, director of AMOVI, Bucaramanga, 21/01/2015).

A detailed account of the methodology used by AMOVI and background on the lines of investigations is available at the AMOVI website (https://www.uis.edu.co/webUIS/es/main.html)

I visited AMOVI on five occasions in January and February 2015. At this time, interviews were still being conducted and recordings transcribed. I consulted nine interview transcripts, which had all been conducted in 2011. The transcripts were selected randomly by AMOVI personnel, and were numbered 1 – 9. All transcripts were anonymized and could only be consulted at the premises of AMOVI. The transcripts were read on AMOVI’s computers. While notes could be taken, print-outs were not permitted.
Appendix 6: Guiding Points for Interviews

Below are the main guiding topics for the interviews. As explained in Chapter Four, in the process of constant comparative analysis, guiding questions were amended following each round of interviews.

Macro-level:

- Key in/security issues in the regions
- Main changes over last ten years
- Impact of security policy
- Definition of armed conflict
- Perceptions of the post-conflict phase
- Preparation made for post-conflict transitions
- Expected changes in in/security dynamics in the post-conflict transition period
- Implications of VLRL in the regions
- Relation with central/local state – coordination matters
- Policy vs. practice
- Neglected areas / issues
- Main issues impeding integral state presence in the peripheries

Micro-level:

- Specific issues facing farmers communities / urban communities
- Changes over time
- Reasons behind formation of the ZRC (farming communities)
- Main objectives of the ZRC (farming communities)
- State support received (farming communities)
- Perceived reasons behind hostilities towards the ZRC (farming communities)
- Dynamics around private security
- Definition armed conflict / social conflict
- Dynamics around geographical and social marginalization
- Impact of in/security policy and practice
- Impact of civic-military days (farming communities)
- Potential implications of peace agreement
- Relationship IAGs and communities
• Who sees to the needs of the communities
• Dynamics around denouncing insecurities
• Multiple / inter-urban displacement (urban communities)
• Impact of VLRL
• Possibility of returning to land abandoned (farming communities)
• Kind of state presence wanted

Meso-level:

• Main in/security dynamics in the regions
• Changes over time
• Impact of security policy and practice
• Level of IAG social control over communities / IAG-community relations
• Perceptions around peace process with FARC
• In/security dynamics pertaining to IAGs other than the FARC