

**Arrangements of Convenience:  
Violent Non-state Actor Relationships and Citizen Security  
in the Shared Borderlands of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela**

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

by

Annette Idler

St. Antony's College  
Department of International Development  
University of Oxford

Trinity Term 2014

## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

Name: ANNETTE IRIS IDLER

Candidate number: 513438

College:

Supervisors of thesis:

ST. ANTONY'S COLLEGE

Alexander Betts  
Arlene Tickner

Title of thesis:

ARRANGEMENTS OF CONVENIENCE:  
VIOLENT NON-STATE ACTOR RELATIONSHIPS AND CITIZEN SECURITY IN  
THE SHARED BORDERLANDS OF COLOMBIA, ECUADOR AND VENEZUELA

Word count: 99,930

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## Abstract

Borderlands are critical security zones but remain poorly understood. In regions plagued by drug violence and conflict, violent groups compete for territorial control, cooperate in illegal cross-border activities, and substitute for the functions of the state in these areas. Despite undermining physical security, fuelling fear, and challenging the state's sovereignty, the exact *modi operandi* of these groups are little known.

Against this backdrop, this thesis explores how different interactions among violent non-state actors (VNSAs) in the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands impact on citizen security. These border areas attract rebels, paramilitaries and criminal organisations alike: they constitute geo-strategic corridors for the global cocaine industry and are sites of supply and operation for the major actors involved in Colombia's decades-long armed internal conflict.

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, this thesis consolidates the literature on conflict, security and organised crime, borders and borderlands, and anthropological approaches to fear and violence. It integrates theories of cooperation among social actors with original empirical research. It is based on a comparative, multi-sited case-study design, using ethnographic methods complemented by quantitative data. The research involved over twelve months of fieldwork with 433 interviews and participant observation on both sides of the crisis-affected Colombia-Ecuador and Colombia-Venezuela borders, and in Bogotá, Caracas and Quito.

Developing a typology of VNSA interactions, I argue that these create not only physical violence but also less visible types of insecurity: when VNSAs fight each other, citizens are exposed to violence but follow the rules imposed by the opposing parties. Fragile alliances produce uncertainty among communities and erode the social fabric by fuelling interpersonal mistrust. Where VNSAs provide security and are socially recognised, "shadow citizen security" arises: security based on undemocratic means. I show that the geography of borderlands reinforces the distinct impacts of VNSA arrangements on citizen security yet renders them less visible.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis would have been impossible without very many people in the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands as well as in Bogotá, Caracas and Quito who gave their time to share their thoughts, knowledge and stories with me. I am particularly grateful to the women who accompanied and inspired me in different parts of my fieldwork journey, especially Magali, Johana, Clara and María Isabel. I admire their strength, courage and leadership. I am grateful to the Jesuit priests who made me feel at home in Maracaibo and in El Nula, and to my hosts in Bogotá, Caracas and Quito for their warm welcome.

The support of UNDP, UNHCR, OHCHR, UNODC, MAPP-OAS, GIZ, Norwegian Refugee Council, Jesuit Refugee Service, Red Fronteriza de Paz, CARITAS, and the National Peace Observatory was invaluable for my fieldwork and made travelling along the borders so much safer and more enjoyable for me. I would also like to thank Universidad de los Andes, FLACSO Quito, and Universidad Central de Caracas for their academic support in Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, as well as the High Commission for Reintegration for supporting me in contacting ex-combatants.

I could not have accomplished this work without financial support from the German Academic National Foundation; a grant from the Drugs, Security and Democracy Fellowship Program administered by the Social Science Research Council and the Universidad de Los Andes in cooperation with and with funds provided by the Open Society Foundations and the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada; the Santander Award and several grants from the Oxford Department of International Development and St. Antony's College.

I am indebted to my supervisors. To Arlene Tickner who was always incredibly supportive and encouraging during my fieldwork and “across the Atlantic”, to Alexander Betts who provided invaluable advice in Oxford, and to Jörg Friedrichs who guided me in the earlier stages of this journey.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to many others at Oxford who provided me with their wisdom, skills and mentorship during different stages over the last four years: David Preston, Michael Athanson, Diego Sánchez-Ancochea, Eduardo Posada, Halbert Jones, Laurence Whitehead, Maurice Herson, Malcolm Deas and David Keen. Many thanks outside Oxford go to María Clemencia Ramírez, James Forest, Cecile Mouly, Michael Weintraub, Mauricio Portilla, and Julian Roa.

My friends always helped and motivated me. I thank Marthe Achtnich, Andreas Tischbirek and Rebecca Merkley; my “loft family”, especially Chloé Lewis, Narae Choi, Ina Zharkevich, Hannah Höchner, Carolin Fischer, Paula Roque, María Mancilla García, Patricia Espinoza, Divya Nambiar, Cintia Külzer Sacilotto, Sofia Donoso, David Passarelli, Abby Hardgrove, Cameron Thibos, Elise Klein, Sarah-Jane Cooper-Knock, Alexandra Lowe, Asha Amirali and Susanne Verheul; my St Antony's College friends Philipp Krakau, Rachael Crook, Leana Podeszfa, Liz Ramey, Michael Grätz and Juan David Gutiérrez; the DSD fellows who shared with me the excitement of my fieldwork; and the Broad Street Dancers who gave me the energy and balance I needed to accomplish this project.

Finally, I would like to thank Felipe Roa Clavijo, whose unconditional support made me hang on when I most needed it, my grandparents who encouraged me at the beginning, and I'm sure would have loved to see the end, of this journey, my brother Stefan and my parents Manuela and Thomas Idler who were always there when I needed them.

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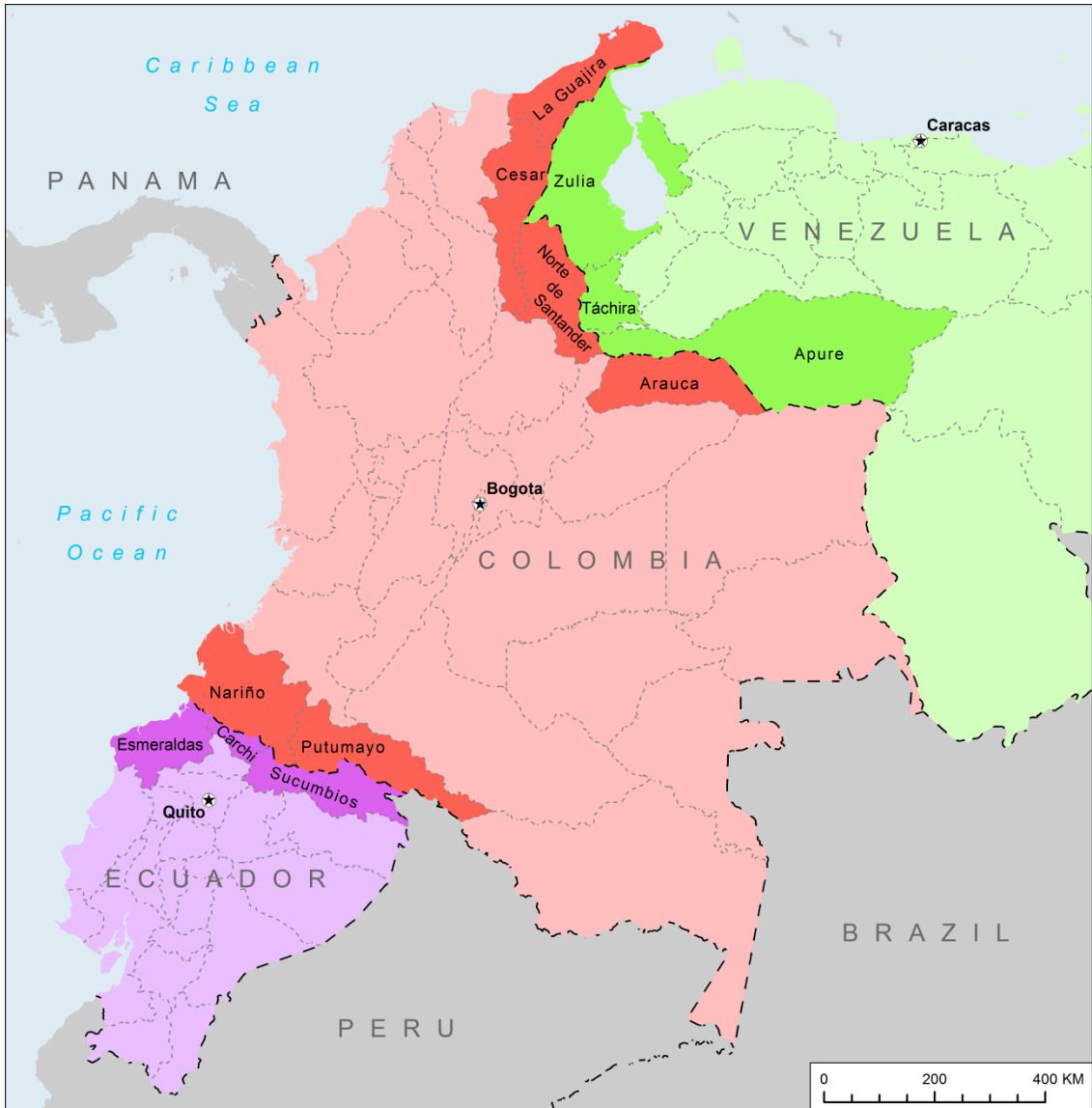
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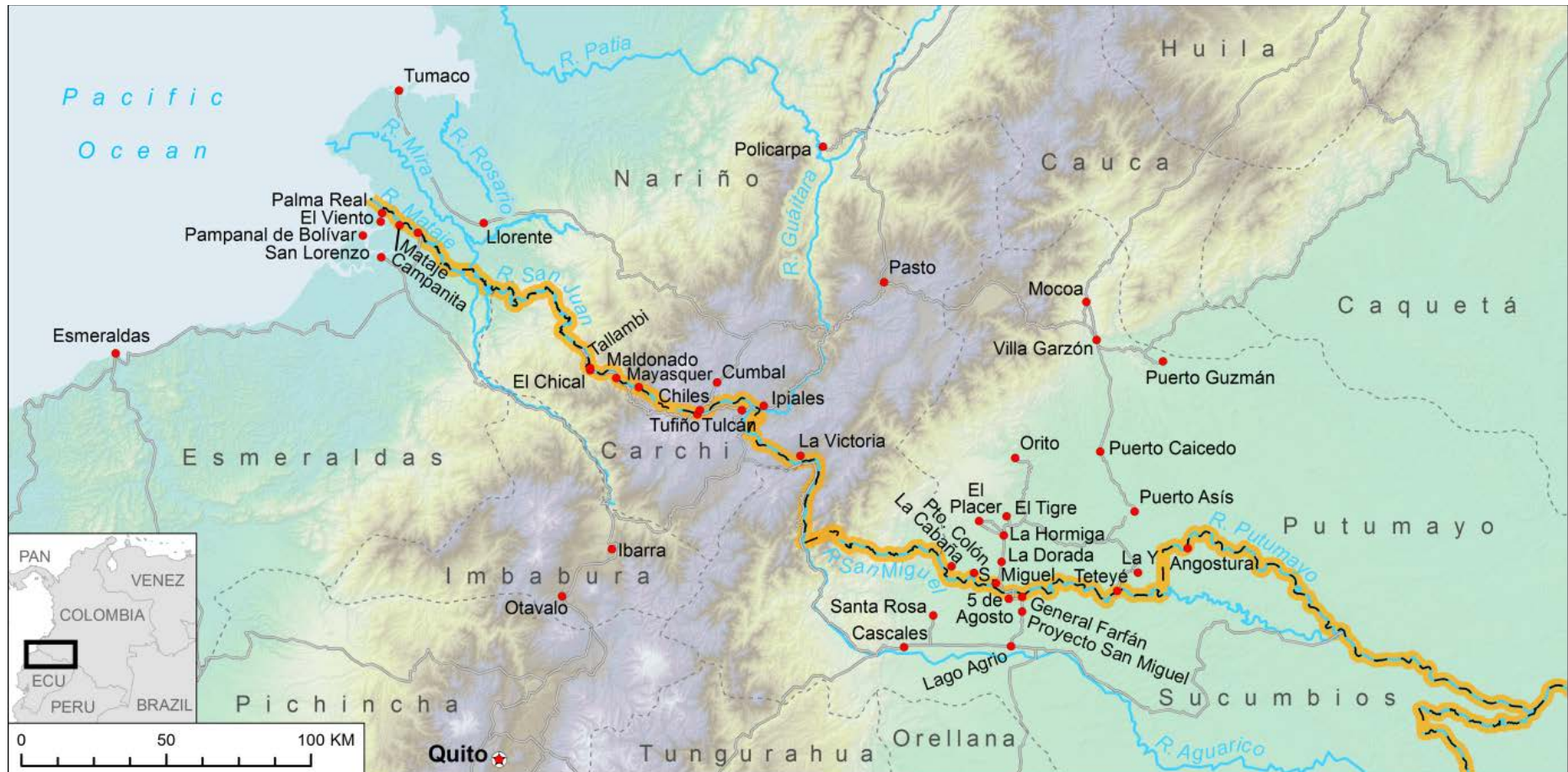
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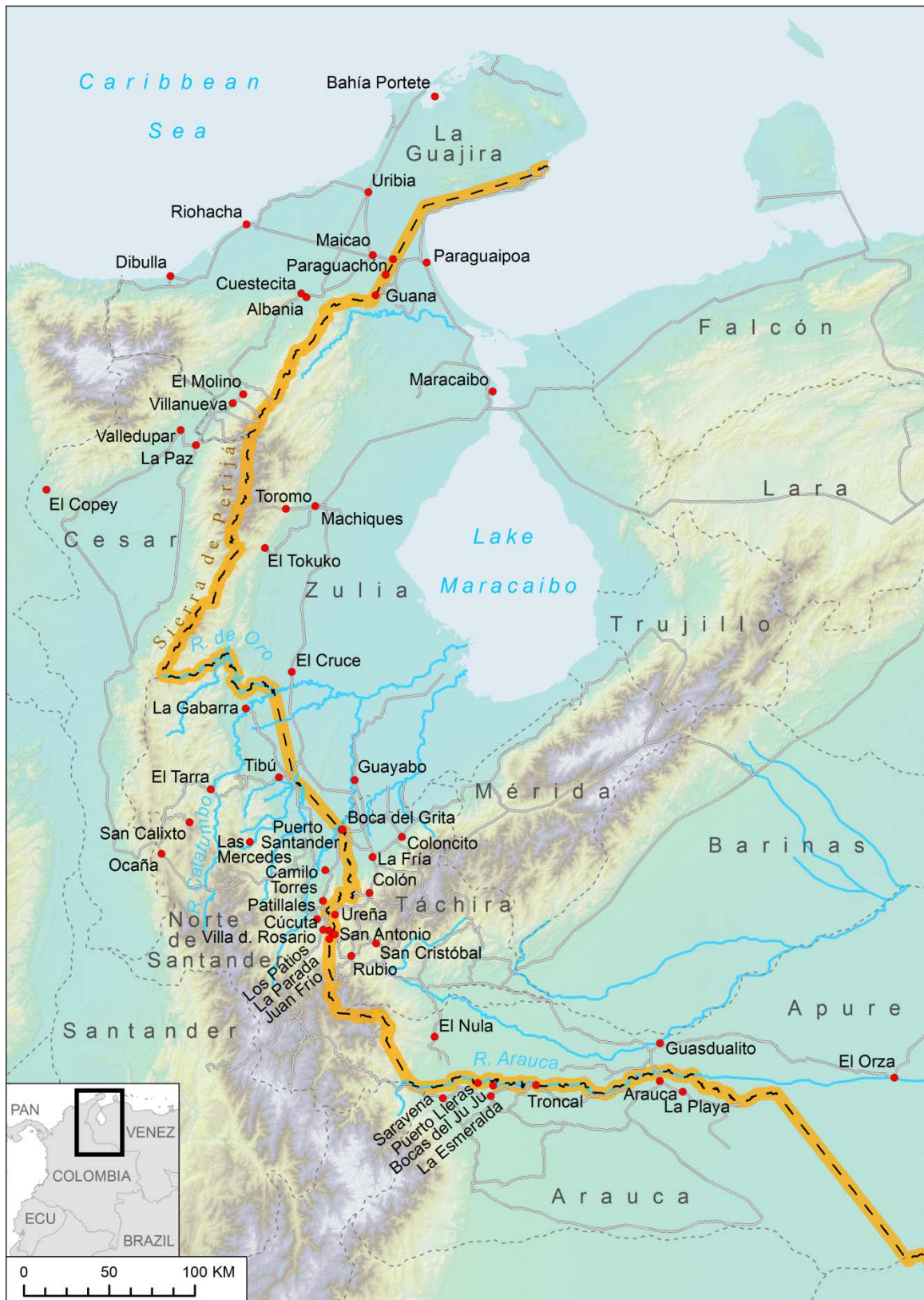
ACCU	Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá (Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá)
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia)
BACRIM	Bandas Criminales Emergentes (Emerging Criminal Bands)
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army)
ERPAC	Ejército Revolucionario Popular Antisubversivo de Colombia (Popular Revolutionary Anti-Terrorist Army of Colombia)
FARC-EP	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army)
FBL	Fuerzas Bolivarianas de Liberación (Bolivarian Forces of Liberation)
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation)
M-19	Movimiento 19 de Abril (19 <sup>th</sup> of April Movement)
MAPP-OAS	Misión de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz en Colombia de la Organización de los Estados Americanos (Mission of the Organization of American States to Support the Peace Process)
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States
VNSAs	Violent Non-state Actors



**Map 1: The shared borderlands of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela**



**Map 2: The Colombian-Ecuadorian borderlands**



**Map 3: The Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Borderlands are critical security zones but remain poorly understood. In many regions of the world, they are characterised by weak state governance systems, rooted in the states' historical neglect of border zones. Due to their transnationality, they also comprise a low-risk/high-opportunity environment. The blurring of two neighbouring jurisdictions offers an advantage for non-state actors in comparison to law enforcement constrained by territorial sovereignty (Martínez 1994, 14; Donnan and Wilson 1999; Korf and Raeymaekers 2013, 7). This precarious mixture facilitates the emergence of parallel governance systems and makes illegal cross-border activity profitable. Impunity is rife. In countries plagued by conflict and drug violence, an array of violent non-state actors (VNSAs) including rebels, paramilitaries, gangs and criminal organisations exploit state absence in these areas. They compete for territorial control, cooperate in illegal transnational activities and undertake huge financially and politically profitable operations. They also impose “shadow citizenship” by substituting state functions.

Examples of complex interactions among VNSAs in borderlands exist across the globe. In south-east Asia, the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah and the insurgent Free Aceh Movement have been able to strengthen their networks in border regions (Hastings 2010). In South Asia, the militant group Tehrik-i-Taliban-Pakistan has used Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, bordering Afghanistan, as a safe haven from which to launch attacks on Afghanistan and Pakistan (Perkins 2014). In Africa's Great Lake region, the Allied Democratic Forces rebel group have benefitted from the strategic location of the Rwenzori borderland shared by Uganda and Congo to sustain their fighting (Scorgie 2012). In the Horn of Africa, the Islamist Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam have organised in Somalia's borderlands to engage in cross-border strikes (Menkhaus and J. N. Shapiro 2010). In the Americas, the tri-border area shared by Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay is a hub of organised criminal groups and extremist groups, apparently including Hezbollah (Hudson 2003; Folch 2012), and the US-Mexican borderlands are profitable areas for drug cartels and smaller trafficking groups (Muehlmann 2014). Even in less fragile settings in Western Europe

this phenomenon is common. For example, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) consolidated their power on the Anglo-Irish border (Patterson 2013).

This *modus operandi* of VNSAs in borderlands across the world undermines physical security, and is likely to erode social fabric and to challenge the legitimacy of central governments: it fuels fear and undermines the state's sovereignty. Not only local but also international peace and security are threatened because, as the examples above show, borderlands are safe havens for terrorists and business hubs for transnational organised crime (Idler and Forest 2012). Despite its global relevance, research on security dynamics produced by VNSAs involved in illegal economic activities in borderlands across the Social Sciences is limited, possibly hampered by the inherent danger of necessary field research. Little is known about the exact way interactions among VNSAs affect citizen security and their wider repercussions.

### **1.1 Insecurity, Conflict and Drugs in the Andean Borderlands**

The Andean borderlands are particularly instructive for the relevance of borderlands to security dynamics. Having shared the struggle for independence led by Simón Bolívar against the Spanish, Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador preserve traditional, cultural and linguistic ties. Intraregional migration, energy cooperation and economic integration have ensured that the countries are connected between themselves and with their Andean neighbours (Shifter 2008). The last border war – between Ecuador and Peru – was settled in 1998, yet some interstate tensions persist. Colombia and Venezuela dispute their maritime boundary and the Las Monjes islands, and ideological cleavages between Colombia and its neighbours have produced several diplomatic crises with Venezuela and Ecuador during the last six years. Continued weapons acquisitions and the maintenance of conventional army structures fuel these dynamics (Paullier 2009).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Military expenditure of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela were 3.4, 1.7 and 1.4 per cent respectively of their GDP in 2013 (SIPRI 2014).

Nonetheless, the risks in the Andes are more alarming at the intrastate level. In the context of the return to democracy in many Latin American countries (Arias 2010, 117; Bergman and Whitehead 2009, 1), trends of interstate and intrastate conflict in Latin America have been falling, and the subcontinent has made unprecedented progress in democratic consolidation and economic growth over the last two decades (Latinobarómetro 2013, 4). However, in the Andes in several instances over the last decade the *status quo* was declared an “Andean Crisis”, “a profound crisis of authority, governance, democratic legitimacy, and territorial security” or a “crisis of democracy” (Marcella 2008, 1; Shifter 2004; Briscoe 2008; Mainwaring, Bejarano, and Pizarro Leongómez 2006, 1). All five Andean states suffered internal turmoil during the last few years, rooted in issues such as horizontal inequalities, struggles over land and natural resources, poverty and exclusion. Recent constitutional and legislative changes suggest the neglect of such structural problems and a tendency towards hyper-presidentialism rather than a commitment to redressing institutional flaws (Idler 2009). In Venezuela for example, more than 40 people died and thousands were arrested in protests in the first half of 2014 alone (ICG 2014; BBC 2014).

The Andean region also faces citizen insecurity, like the rest of the subcontinent. Violence and insecurity severely challenge human development in Latin America (UNDP 2013b; UNODC 2013a, 21). The region has the highest homicide rates worldwide. In 2012 homicide rates per 100,000 were 53.7 in Venezuela, 30.8 in Colombia and 12.4 in Ecuador, all well above the global average of 6.2 (UNODC 2013a, 21). Perceived insecurity has been consistently rising across the region, even in countries with relatively low homicide rates. Between 2003 and 2008 the average perceptions of insecurity in Latin America increased by 41 per cent to 59 per cent of the population (Casas-Zamora 2013, 31). Andean citizens including Colombians, Venezuelans and Ecuadorians cite crime and citizen insecurity as their countries’ biggest problem (Latinobarómetro 2013, 61; Lagos and Dammert 2012). With a conviction rate of only 24 per 100 victims in the Americas (UNODC 2013a, 18), high rates of impunity and corruption add to this sobering security panorama (Duce and Pérez 2003, 69–92), and may explain public outrage over insufficient government commitment and mistrust towards state institutions (UNDP 2013b, 3).

Within this panorama of citizen insecurity, paradoxically, the country with Latin America's formally most stable democracy faces an internal armed conflict: Colombia. The armed conflict led to 220,000 deaths between 1958 and 2012, with 81 per cent being civilians. An additional 27,000 people were "disappeared" (CNMH 2013, 23–25). 5.7 million people – almost 15 per cent of Colombia's population – were displaced, making it the second largest displacement crisis worldwide after Syria (NRC 2014, 11). The first phase of violence, "La Violencia", started in 1948 after presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was assassinated. Dissatisfaction about unmet social demands led in the 1960s to a conflict between Colombia's government and leftist guerrillas, most notably, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC) and *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), the two major insurgent groups still operating today (Leal Buitrago 2004, 87–88). During the 1970s, Colombia became the world's largest cocaine producer, with an increasing number of armed groups becoming involved in the cocaine business. Coca was primarily cultivated in Bolivia and Peru while Colombia was the centre of processing and trafficking.<sup>2</sup> With the emergence of two major drug cartels in Medellín and Cali during the 1980s, Colombian traffickers started to dominate the business. This benefitted most armed groups including guerrillas, and paramilitaries formed in the 1980s to respond to escalating rates of violence. This added another dimension of violence to the conflict (Leal Buitrago 2004). FARC and ELN started to levy taxes on traffickers in exchange for protecting illicit cultivation, laboratories and exports (Steinitz 2002, 3). In the early 1990s the two cartels were destroyed and the cocaine market became more disorganised. Coca cultivation declined in Bolivia and Peru yet, due to the so-called "balloon effect", started to rise in Colombia rather than to disappear (Thoumi 2003, 7, 355). The paramilitaries and FARC intensified their involvement in the drug business. While the former dominated international cocaine trafficking, the latter expanded their activities to direct control, production, and domestic distribution (Sanderson 2004, 51). From 2003 to 2006, the paramilitary umbrella organisation United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), founded in 1997, was demobilised, which coincided with the emergence of smaller, paramilitary splinter groups and criminal groups. Some of the best-known ones, that I

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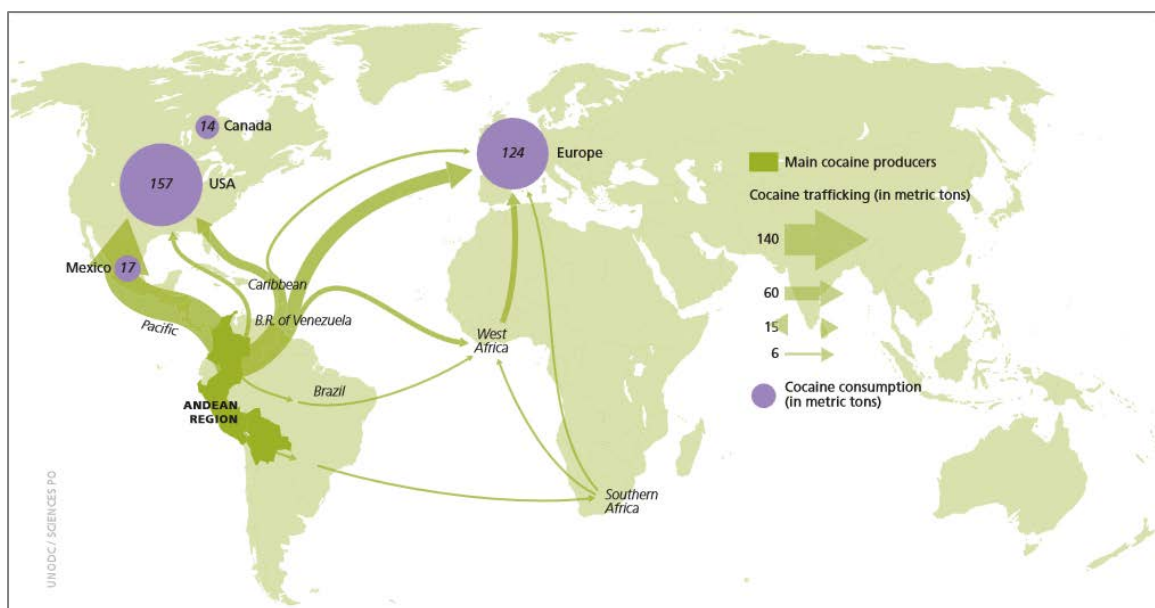
<sup>2</sup> As of 2014 Peru has become the principal coca leaf producer (UNODC 2014a, 34).

will henceforth call post-demobilised groups, are the Rastrojos, Urabeños, Águilas Negras and Paisas, subsumed by the Colombian government under the term BACRIM (*bandas criminales emergentes*, emerging criminal bands) (Granada, Restrepo, and Tobón 2009; Human Rights Watch 2010).<sup>3</sup> Today, virtually all these groups have a stake in drug trafficking or related forms of transnational organised crime (ICG 2010). In 2012, FARC and the Colombian government initiated peace negotiations in which the illicit drug problem has been discussed. In the course of these negotiations FARC have reassumed strength in Colombia's peripheral regions. ELN and the government are likely to initiate negotiations by the end of 2015.

The cocaine business pervades the entire Andean region. Although the surface area of coca cultivation decreased from an estimated 210,900 hectares in 2001 to 133,700 hectares in 2012, it is still widespread: for 2012 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2014a, 34) reports cultivation estimates of 25,300 hectares in Bolivia, 48,000 hectares in Colombia and 60,400 hectares in Peru. Areas of coca cultivation have also been detected in the border zones of Ecuador, Brazil, Panama and Venezuela, often near processing laboratories. In 2008 cocaine production was 450 tons in Colombia. According to UNODC (2014a, iv) cocaine production in Colombia decreased to 309 in 2012. However, services connected to the cocaine business are provided throughout the region. Ecuador, for example, is crucial for money laundering and precursor provision. As Map 4 demonstrates, all Andean states are transit or starting points of drug trafficking routes to markets in Europe and the United States (US).

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<sup>3</sup> For discussions of whether the term "BACRIM" disguises the real nature of these groups see Pérez-Santiago (2012) and Arias Ortiz (2012).



**Map 4: Main global cocaine flows, 2009 (UNODC 2011, 123)**

In the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands, conflict and organised crime dynamics converge, attracting rebels, paramilitaries, post-demobilised groups, and criminal organisations alike. Given their geostrategic location within the global cocaine industry (Clawson and R. W. Lee 1996), they constitute corridors for the illegal drug business and related forms of transnational organised crime, including smuggling of gasoline and chemical precursors for the cocaine business, the trafficking of arms and ammunition and human trafficking. These borderlands are also sites of retreat, reorganisation and operation of the major actors involved in Colombia's decades-long armed internal conflict (Pécaut 2001). FARC's financing fronts that engage in business deals for supply operate in the border areas: in the Colombian-Ecuadorian borderlands the mobile column Daniel Aldana, and in the Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands FARC's Front 33 (UNHCR Colombia 2011; Niño Ascanio, Camargo León, and Cañizares Arévalo 2012, 266). Being located in border zones facilitates crossing over to deal with logistics or supply, including of arms, ammunitions, uniforms, food and medicine.

Colombia's borderlands have become the principal war scenes after the conflict's shift to the country's peripheries due to Bogotá's security policies. In 2000 the US Congress approved Plan

Colombia, a counter-drug and counter-insurgency initiative developed by the Colombian government under Andrés Pastrana Arango which later – with US assistance – became part of former president Álvaro Uribe’s Democratic Security Policy.<sup>4</sup> Uribe’s policies improved security in urban areas and arguably weakened FARC. Yet they also contributed to moving the conflict’s impacts to the periphery and beyond. Intense military operations of Colombia’s armed forces increased refugee flows and made Colombian VNSAs retreat to the borderlands (ICG 2011a).

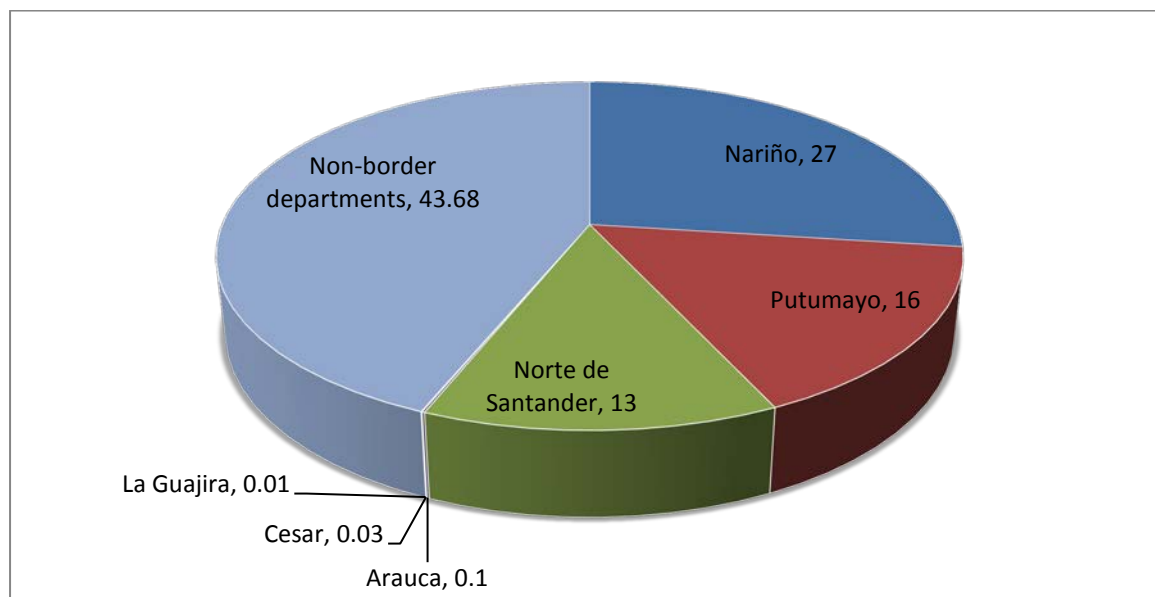
In 2007, Plan Consolidation was initiated to consolidate state presence – first with a military and then a civilian focus – and substitute coca cultivations with alternative economic development projects in regions with historically high rates of violence, the presence of armed groups and illicit cultivations (UACT 2012). Of the nine existing “territorial consolidation zones”, four include border municipalities: Arauca, Nariño, Catatumbo in Norte de Santander and Putumayo (UACT n.d.). The civilian component has never been implemented appropriately. The high presence of state forces, yet not of civilian institutions, influenced the VNSAs’ relationships with local communities both on the Colombian and the Ecuadorian/Venezuelan side of the border. Citizens became more likely to be suspected to be informants, in some cases entailing stricter behavioural rules for the population, imposed by VNSAs. This has increased these communities’ alienation from the states which have lost, or never had, legitimacy due to weak state governance systems and shortcomings in border security cooperation that has fuelled impunity on both sides of all the borders.

At the same time, due to these policies, fumigations, i.e. toxic aerial sprayings to eradicate coca, encouraged coca growing to move to new areas: Colombia’s overall coca crop area has remained the same between 2012 and 2013 at 48,000 hectares. However, in 2013 the Colombian border departments of Nariño, Norte de Santander and Putumayo attracted 76 per cent of the increase, while more central departments were characterised by decreasing areas of coca cultivation

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<sup>4</sup> For the Democratic Security Policy see Republic of Colombia (2003).

(UNODC 2014b, 13). Figure 1 illustrates that more than half of all coca crops are concentrated in border departments.



**Figure 1: Percentage of coca fields in Colombian departments, 2013 (UNODC 2014c, 16)**

#### *Violent Non-state Actor Interactions and Citizen Security*

The convergence of conflict and organised crime dynamics in Colombia's borderlands epitomises the myriad and complex relations between different VNSAs.<sup>5</sup> In any place with more than one VNSA, there is variation in the VNSA relationships across time and space. For example, in different locations in Mexico, drug cartels have alternately engaged in tactical alliances and violent conflict to secure control over supply routes (Stewart 2010). The behaviour of different gangs in Guatemala City likewise displays elements of conflict and cooperation (Juetersonke, Muggah, and Rodgers 2009), as do various VNSAs in Iraq (P. Williams 2009), Sudan, Somalia, Lebanon and Afghanistan (Christia 2012). In Colombia's borderlands, guerrillas have joined forces with post-demobilised groups in the cocaine business; criminal gangs and drug cartels have shared territory, and FARC and ELN have fought each other, despite their ideological similarities.

<sup>5</sup> Unless stated otherwise, for simplicity I use the term "Colombia's borderlands" to refer to the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands.

This variation in VNSA relationships is puzzling for three reasons. Firstly, ideologically opposed VNSAs frequently enter into cooperative relationships, while ideologically similar VNSAs have engaged in violent conflict with one another (cf. Fjelde and Nilsson 2012; Nygard and Weintraub 2012). Secondly, while dominant civil war scholars assume that VNSAs are committed to achieving monopolistic territorial control (Kalyvas 2006; Arjona 2010; Balcells 2010), groups frequently share territory with other VNSAs. Thirdly, according to the mafia literature we should expect economically motivated VNSAs to reduce costs, for example by signalling, when fighting each other (cf. Gambetta 2009). Sometimes VNSAs give warning signals in the form of graffiti or pamphlets but, frequently, VNSAs invest costly resources in their fights. Despite these puzzles, VNSA relationships are underexplored or treated in theoretically uncritical ways in the literature. There is research on single VNSA groups, on the dynamics between states and VNSAs and on conflict or criminal dynamics, but we know little about how multiple VNSAs interact with each other. By developing a typology of different VNSA relationships based on cases in Colombia's borderlands, this thesis narrows this gap and attempts to enhance our theoretical understanding of these interactions.

We know even less about how VNSA relationships affect the citizen security of the communities in which they are embedded (Tickner, García, and Arreza 2011). This lack of knowledge is most evident at the states' margins, particularly Colombia's borderlands. Here, VNSA presence has spurred five significant lines of argument. Firstly, scholars such as Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk (2001) and Carlos Malamud (2004) highlight how the Colombian state's deficient territorial sovereignty has jeopardised national security. Accordingly, they focus on the state's military and institutional capabilities to regain control of remote regions seized by VNSAs, yet not on issues such as legitimacy and the state-society relationship, the groundwork of citizen security. Secondly, "neighbourhood effect" theories emphasise a potential conflict "spillover" (Poe and Isacson 2009; Millett 2002). Borderlands are considered to be a transit zone from Colombia to the neighbouring countries, affected by flows of refugees, rebels and arms, rather than an important unit of analysis themselves. Thirdly, Socorro Ramírez (2011a) and Ana Bustamante (2011)

emphasise the implications of borderland disputes for international relations between neighbouring states, focusing on national politics rather than trans-regional ones. Fourthly, Ann Mason and Arlene B. Tickner (2006) argue that trans-regional security dynamics, including flows of illicit goods, are at stake without analysing the micro-dynamics of violence. Fifthly, agencies such as Human Rights Watch (2010) point to humanitarian emergencies, for example mass displacements and other forms of large-scale violence, that affect local communities' physical security. They fail to grasp everyday violence and perceptions of insecurity resulting from VNSA presence in borderlands. These approaches conceal variations in how citizen security is affected across different types of interaction, particularly the less quantifiable ones.

Typically, “newsworthy” occurrences in these borderlands, such as combat between VNSAs, clashes with state forces and mass killings of civilians, have spurred the interest of academics, policymakers and the public. However, we usually avert our eyes once the outbreak of violence is over, although surviving civilians are left in what I later describe as a tense calm. Furthermore, it is unclear how sporadic VNSA cooperation in borderlands, for example to engage in illegal economic activities, affects local communities. Peter Andreas and Angelica Duran-Martinez (2015, 383) highlight that “we need more research about the conditions under which illicit trade generates violence” and, I add, what types of violence emerge. Also, citizen security situations in borderlands with constantly low rates of violence, but potentially high perceptions of insecurity or intense VNSA-imposed control, are avenues which have until now remained unknown. We do not know what specific VNSA relationships exist and what kind of citizen insecurity they produce.

## **1.2 Research Question and Contribution to Scholarship**

This study seeks to enhance understanding of interactions among VNSAs in borderlands and of how these interactions affect citizen security. This is of critical importance to promoting stability in Colombia, on the cusp of what is likely to be a tough post-conflict period, and to other crisis-affected areas across the globe. Building on a unique and exclusive database comprising 433

interviews in and on Colombia's war-affected border regions, I seek to empirically illuminate the distinct repercussions of VNSA interactions in Colombia's borderlands on citizen security. The thesis asks the following question:

**How do different forms of interactions among violent non-state actors (VNSAs) in the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands affect citizen security?**

Addressing this question requires a transnational perspective. It speaks to the micro-dynamics of citizen security, conceptualised in Chapter Three, i.e. a situation in which a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship reduces physical violence or the threat thereof. These micro-dynamics are embedded in regional dynamics of VNSA interactions, and transnational dynamics shaped by the relevance of borderlands for global security threats arising from conflict and organised crime.

Aware of the challenge of analytically distinguishing between "state" and "non-state", I define VNSAs as a set of at least three individuals who are i) "willing and capable to use violence for pursuing their objectives"; ii) thereby directly or indirectly challenging the state's legitimate monopoly of violence by using or threatening to use violence illegally; and iii) "shaped through an organisational relationship or structure that exists over a specific period of time" (Schneckener 2006, 25; Schneckener 2009, 8–9). Given that my study involves multiple kinds of groups, VNSAs is a useful umbrella category. Using the term as a common denominator of different groups enables exploring the groups' relationships and their repercussions on citizen security, regardless of their *raison d'être*. It differs from the term "extralegal groups" by explicitly referring to the willingness to resort to violence (cf. Cheng 2011). It also differs from terms such as "non-state armed groups" or "armed actors" because it includes the possibility of violence with means other than arms (cf. P. Williams 2009; Koonings and Kruijt 2004; Bartolomei, Casebeer, and Thomas 2004). The borders between economic and political group motivations are often muddled and motivations change over time entailing fluid group identities rather than clear-cut distinctions (cf. Collier 2003; Berdal and Malone 2000; Ballentine and Sherman 2003). Therefore, I avoid

typologies, such as Phil Williams's (2009, 9–17) categorisation into “warlords”, “militias”, “paramilitary forces”, “insurgencies”, “terrorist organisations” and “criminal organisations and youth gangs” (see also Koonings and Kruijt 2004, 9–11; Schneckener 2006). Some of these categories are value-laden, for example when differentiating between insurgents and terrorists (Policzer 2005). For illustrative purposes, I use terms such as “guerrillas”, “paramilitaries”, or “post-demobilised groups”. If known, I use the names with which these groups identify themselves.

I integrate original empirical research with theories of cooperation among social actors to develop a typology of VNSA interactions with eight types of “arrangements of convenience” among VNSAs (P. Williams 2002), described in Chapter Three. They are situated on what I call “a fuzzy continuum of arrangement clusters”:

- i. Absence of arrangements,
- ii. Spot sales and barter agreements,
- iii. Tactical alliances,
- iv. Subcontractual relationships,
- v. Transactional supply chain relationships,
- vi. Strategic alliances,
- vii. Pacific coexistence,
- viii. Preponderance relations.

Employing this framework, I argue that VNSA interactions in Colombia's borderlands have distinct impacts on citizen security. Depending on the type of VNSA interaction, they create not only physical violence, but also less visible forms of insecurity.

- i. In the absence of VNSA arrangements physical violence is inflicted on citizens.
- ii. Short-term arrangements including spot sales and barter agreements, tactical alliances and subcontractual relationships, undermine the community's social fabric and produce constant uncertainty.

- iii. In long-term arrangements including transactional supply chain relationships, strategic alliances, pacific coexistence and preponderance relations, VNSAs substitute state governance functions, entailing “shadow citizenship” and “shadow citizen security”.

I show that, in the context of the Global South, the specific geography of borderlands intensifies the citizen security impacts of the distinct VNSA arrangements or renders them less visible.<sup>6</sup>

This thesis integrates the literature on conflict, security and organised crime (Kalyvas 2006; P. Williams 2013; Gambetta 2009), borders and borderlands (Andreas 2009; van Schendel 2005a) and anthropological approaches to fear, violence and uncertainty (Rotker 2002a; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Taussig 2002). Since Colombia’s borderlands contain numerous different VNSAs, and unite the Colombian armed conflict setting with the neighbouring countries’ non-conflict, yet violent, settings, the analysis links the civil war, mafia and organised crime literature, to enhance a holistic understanding more aligned to reality on the ground than those in the existing segmented literature. Specifically, the thesis contributes to scholarship in four ways:

Firstly, this research offers a more nuanced understanding of VNSA interactions than has been available so far. Transitions from conflict to peace, such as the one anticipated in Colombia, are prone to a speedy proliferation of VNSAs. Post-conflict Central American states have set alarming precedents: they are now plagued by disputes and alliances among gangs. Also Iraq and Sudan have proved that the complexity of VNSA interactions during conflict persists or increases in its aftermath. Current scholarship on VNSAs lacks conceptualisations of interactions between multiple kinds of VNSAs in unstable environments. The literature focuses on single categories, i.e. the mafia (Gambetta 1993; Varese 2001), criminals (Schelling 1980; Naylor 2001; Campana and Varese 2013), or criminalised legacies (Andreas 2004), drug cartels (Grillo 2013; Stewart 2010), warlords (Reno 1998), terrorists (Crenshaw 2011a), and civil war actors (Kalyvas 2006;

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the term “Global South” see Fawcett and Sayigh (2000, 1–16). I define those countries as belonging to the Global South which are excluded from the UNDP’s Human Development Report (2013b)’s category “very high human development”.

Weinstein 2006; Arjona 2010), especially rebels (Gurr 1970; Scott 1985). P. Williams's (2009) work on Iraq and Daniel Pécaut's (1999, 144–145) on Colombia account for conflict and cooperation among various VNSAs, yet stay within this dichotomy. Scholars studying organised criminal groups have also reduced interactions to dichotomies of conflict and cooperation, or economic relationships (Schelling 1980; P. Williams 2002; Makarenko 2004).<sup>7</sup> The “crime-terror-nexus” literature concentrates on the groups' long-term motivations (Hutchinson and O'Malley 2007). Civil war scholars explore how civilians are affected without considering drug-traffickers, and analyses of civil war actor interactions have been side-lined in favour of VNSA relations with the state (Staniland 2012). Recently, accounts of VNSA relationships have enriched the academic debate, but they remain limited to war contexts (Bapat and Bond 2012; Christia 2012).

I bridge different categories of VNSAs, focusing on the dynamics *between* categories rather than on those *within* a single category. This is crucial to understanding today's security challenges in contexts where actors from these different categories are interlinked and civil war, criminal and terrorist violence is increasingly blurred. My research responds to the need for theoretical tools that guide evidence-based security policies in rapidly changing violent contexts and create synergies between organised crime, post-conflict and anti-drug policies.

Secondly, the thesis depicts the distinct citizen security impacts of VNSA interactions. It demonstrates that, in addition to physical violence, VNSA interactions have “invisible” consequences, including life under social control, fear and terror. In countries suffering crises, enduring psychological distress can detrimentally shape entire future generations. Paradoxically, tracing the repercussions also reveals the instances in which VNSAs are perceived to be more legitimate security providers than the state. This knowledge helps promote “second-best” policy interventions that target those citizen security effects which can be mitigated most effectively.

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<sup>7</sup> See Saab and Taylor (2009) for a discussion of conspiracy theories (Sterling 1995; Ehrenfeld 1990) and in-house criminality theories (Dishman 2001).

Security analysts ignore variations in citizen security across different VNSA interactions and focus on either quantifiable factors or on perceptions. Scholars such as Amelia Hoover Green (2011) have explained repertoires of violence used by single VNSAs. Pécaut (1999, 142) has highlighted varied and diverse forms of violence and actors in the Colombian context. He stresses the “extremely heterogeneous nature of the violence” and the absence of a “*single* axis of conflict” without identifying the multiple axes of conflict (and cooperation) that emerge from specific relationships among actors and entail distinct forms of violence. The civil war literature and advocacy groups paint a partial picture of security repercussions, by measuring them with indicators of violence such as homicide, displacement, disappearance, rape and torture rates (Collier 2003; Kalyvas 2006; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Weinstein 2006; D. K. Cohen 2010; Kalyvas 2012; Human Rights Watch 2010).

Anthropologists, psychologists, economists and criminologists have studied the consequences on perceptions of being exposed to VNSAs presence, including fear of crime (Hale 1996; M. Lee 2001; Farrall, Jackson, and Gray 2009). A growing body of literature has examined the concept of fear in the specific context of Latin American societies (Caldeira 2000; Koonings and Krujit 1999; Rotker 2002a), described by Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruit (1999) as “societies of fear” or by Susana Rotker (2002a) as “citizens of fear”. Likewise, social control and the normalisation of violence originating in the exposure to VNSAs in daily life have received scholarly attention (Das 2007; Scheper-Hughes 1993; Taussig 1992; Bourgois 2010). These studies hardly speak to each other and have failed to link the phenomenon to VNSA interactions. I transform these literatures into one holistic approach to produce knowledge which could be key to designing policies that target “hard” *and* intangible security consequences.

Thirdly, by assuming a transnational view from the states’ margins, the study reveals how VNSAs in borderlands impinge on security on multiple levels. Borderlands are at the core of a growing multidisciplinary research agenda, studying cases from Europe (Eskelinen, Liikanen, and Oksa 1999; Anderson, O’Dowd, and Wilson 2003; Wilson and Donnan 2005), Africa (Feyissa and

Höhne 2010), and across several world regions (Zartman 2010; Korf and Raeymaekers 2013), yet these works make few links to wider security implications such as the state-society relationship at the root of citizen security. Regarding the Americas, while scholarship on the Mexican-US border has been prolific (Martínez 1994; Simon 1998; Andreas 2009), South American borderlands remain under-researched. There is local scholarship on the Andean borderlands (Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris 2012; Laverde and Tapia 2009), but with some exceptions such as Bustamante (2008), it has hardly been linked to the broader border scholarship agenda, or has had a policy focus (Briscoe 2008; ICG 2011a). Conflict studies limit the relevance of borderlands to national security issues, e.g. as sanctuaries for rebels (Salehyan 2007). Scholars working on Colombia, Ecuador or Venezuela consider the impact of the conflict on civilians, but mostly constrained to one side of the border (cf. Poe and Isacson 2009; S. Ramírez 2011a; González Carranza 2011; Carrión and Espín 2011). This thesis defies state-centric perspectives that only consider borderlands with outbreaks of violence and challenges to territorial sovereignty. It acknowledges their relevance beyond the local level, particularly for the transnational illicit flows penetrating societies across the globe. The thesis demonstrates how troubled borderlands impact the states' centres and beyond. This is a precondition for enhancing local citizen security, depriving VNSAs of illicit authority, and mitigating transnational security threats, such as terrorism and drug trafficking.

Finally, my research makes an innovative methodological contribution. Drawing on VNSA arrangements as analytical units, my case selection is based on social rather than spatial configurations. I employ ethnographic methods across multiple field sites to explore questions relevant across the Social Sciences. Typically, security analysts engage in quantitative studies or in elite interviews, for example by talking to Colombian and US government officials, yet claiming to reveal the coca farmers' voices (see e.g. Felbab-Brown 2010, 186). I develop a novel interdisciplinary approach. Listening to numerous individuals who produce and are affected by security dynamics across various regions, I establish a clearly defined typology to abstract empirically rich findings into Political Science conclusions.

### 1.3 Research Design

The research's spatial scope is Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela: I analyse VNSA interactions and citizen security in the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands and reflect on repercussions in the wider region. The temporal scope is one decade, from 2003, marking the start of the Colombian paramilitary demobilisation process and the phase of the drug business's most intense fragmentation in 26 years (Tickner, García, and Arreza 2011, 424), until 2013, when I finished my data collection. Within this time period, the peace talks between FARC and the Colombian government started. Both FARC and the state have been aiming to demonstrate strength, which altered VNSA interactions and security dynamics. Furthermore, Venezuelan president Chávez died in 2012. This influenced security dynamics at the Colombian-Venezuelan border because it has led to upheaval in Venezuela and Chávez' successor, Nicolás Maduro, has not had the direct communication with Colombian rebels Chávez had.

Analysing VNSA interactions in the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands has empirical, analytical and practical benefits. These borderlands offer rich data because, owing to Colombia's protracted internal armed conflict with many armed actors involved, they feature multiple VNSAs, and they are a central hub of the global cocaine business (Clawson and R. W. Lee 1996; Pécaut 2001). The states' presence is weak, the borders are porous and they unite a civil war context with non-conflict yet violent contexts. This allows accounting for conflict actors in non-conflict territories, important to understanding contexts where people suffer insecurity in the absence or aftermath of war. Analytically, these borderlands facilitate exploring the variation of VNSA interaction and their citizen security impacts across time and space. Different conflict and drug business actors have gained and lost significance, with new groups adding to and others disappearing from the VNSA panorama. Practically, I can draw on my knowledge from previous research on the Andes. I selected the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands rather than Colombia's shared borders with Panama, Brazil and Peru because these are the most accessible and most vibrant borderlands where both legal and illegal economic cross-border activities are thriving.

### 1.3.1 Comparative Case Study

The research is based on a comparative case study design with a universe of cases constituted by different VNSA interactions. Following John Gerring (2009, 9), I define case study approach as “the intensive study of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases), for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units (a population of cases)”. Since I aim to build novel theory based on an exploratory research strategy rather than testing existing theory, my study is limited to few cases and I combine within-case analysis with cross-case analysis (cf. Eisenhardt 1989, 546). A small-N study serves to reveal mechanisms that link VNSA interactions within the scope of Colombia’s borderlands to citizen security impacts. It facilitates exploring internal rather than external validity, and investigating pathways rather than effects (Gerring 2009). Case studies “preserve the texture and detail of individual cases” (Gerring 2009, 3). A case study approach helps acknowledge complexity while creating categories of a parsimonious model to make sense of this complexity.

Scholars such as Stathis Kalyvas (2006), Jeremy Weinstein (2006) and Zachariah Mampilly (2011) endorse a focus on micro-level processes to understand the dynamics of violence in civil war contexts. I take their approach further and also apply it to non-conflict, yet violent contexts (the Ecuadorian and Venezuelan border zones adjoining Colombia). I hope to draw lessons for other borderland regions to inform policy interventions. The focus on micro-dynamics within a case study facilitates detecting concrete practices on the ground with which to target specific VNSA interactions.

I also chose an explorative case study approach for practical reasons. A quantitative study requires the empirical data to conduct statistical analyses. Given the absence of previous comparable studies on the subject, no detailed data were available. Quantitative studies rely on “observables”, such as homicide rates, they hardly capture people’s perceptions and feelings and thus do not reveal the broad spectrum of citizen security impacts. There is theoretical literature on

related topics, but not on this specific one. Hence, I draw on existing theory from multiple bodies of literature to construct a distinct analytical model that accounts for my research question.

I developed the case study design in an iterative process (cf. Eisenhardt 1989, 546), informed by the interplay of grounded theory and adapting existing concepts of VNSAs and their interactions. Based on a literature review and prior fieldwork on violence in Ecuador's northern border zone, I developed some preliminary propositions on the impacts of conflict and cooperation among VNSAs on citizen security. Soon after going to the field I recognised I was guided by dichotomised accounts of conflict and cooperation and hence identified more nuanced types of interactions which I refined throughout the project. This process, during which I went back and forth between empirics and the literature while in the field, led me to define eight categories of VNSA interactions, which are the cases of this study. They are organised into three clusters: the absence of an arrangement, short-term arrangements, and long-term arrangements.

My case study analysis has three layers: a cross-case analysis of the three arrangement clusters to explore the inter-cluster variations in citizen security repercussions; a within-case analysis of each cluster to explore intra-cluster variations; and a within-case analysis of each category of VNSA interaction informed by examples across Colombia's borderlands, i.e. Nariño/Esmeraldas, Carchi; Putumayo/Sucumbíos; Norte de Santander/Táchira; La Guajira, Cesar/Zulia; and Arauca/Apure. I consider VNSA interactions limited to one side of the border and cross-border interactions. Having identified the examples for each type of VNSA interaction inductively, the numbers of examples for the categories vary. This itself is significant because more frequent occurrences of an interaction type across regions reinforce specific citizen security impacts related to that type. The selection of examples I analysed in more detail was motivated by criteria variation to account for examples from different cocaine production chain stages; examples with one type of VNSA interaction versus overlapping forms of interactions; geographic and cultural conditions; the type of borders (maritime/land); and the temporal significance of VNSA presence (historic/recent).

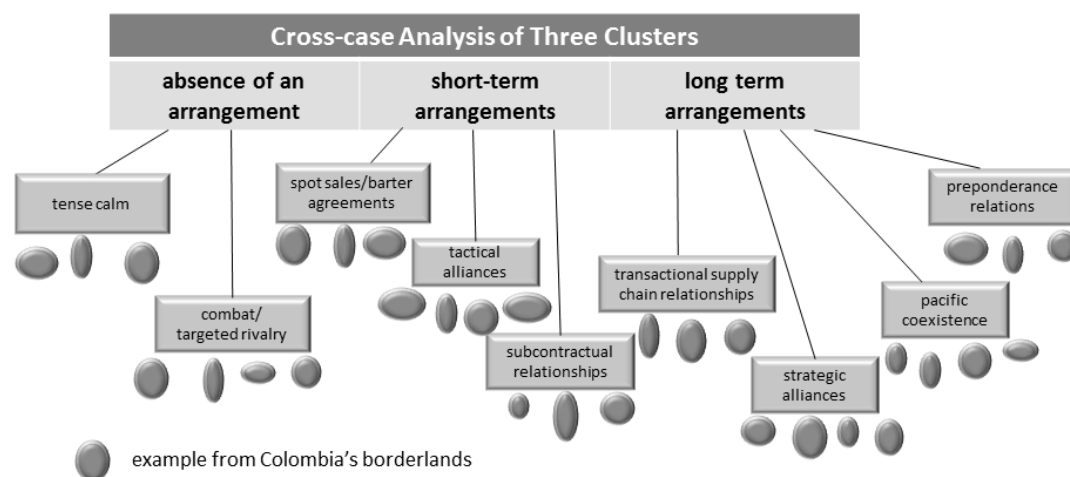


Figure 2: A multi-layered case study analysis

### 1.3.2 Ethnographic Methods in Political Science

Following political scientists such as Séverine Autesserre (2010) or Susan Woodward (1995), I adopted an interdisciplinary approach, grounded in Political Science enriched by ethnographic methods. Thomas Schwandt (2007, 93) defines ethnographic methods as a “collection of methods of generating and analysing qualitative data that are grounded in a commitment to first-hand experience and examination of some particular social or cultural phenomena”. He cites participant observation, interviewing, and the collection of data based on documents, artefacts and oral histories (Schwandt 2007, 93–94). Ethnographic methods have become increasingly popular in Political Science and International Relations (Vrasti 2008), but are still an exception (Gagnon 2008). I chose ethnographic methods because VNSA interactions in Colombia’s borderlands have not been studied before, thus original qualitative research was necessary to obtain analysable data. The scarce literature available on some of these borderland areas tends to draw on previous literature with perspectives from the capitals and only on a few works with original *in situ* research, entailing reproduction rather than a critique or complementary work. The existing literature provides descriptive accounts of borderland life yet mostly fails to engage in analysis (cf. Ávila 2012). My political scientist approach that establishes categories of interaction allows

systematisation of citizen security impacts, facilitating limited generalisations which provide insights for other border regions.

I collected data during extensive multi-sited fieldwork in the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands and in Bogotá, Caracas and Quito. I visited all borderland areas including zones which I initially considered unfeasible for security reasons (Venezuelan Apure and Colombian Arauca).<sup>8</sup> As illustrated by the maps in Appendix I, between August 2011 and May 2013 I conducted over 12 months of fieldwork in four phases. Between the fieldwork phases I reflected on and analysed data and wrote sections of this thesis in Oxford. In the first fieldwork phase I started in Bogotá from where I conducted a short, exploratory trip to Cúcuta, the capital of Norte de Santander department which borders Venezuela, and subsequently travelled along the Colombia-Ecuador border.<sup>9</sup> In the second phase I started in Quito and conducted borderland trips from there and afterwards travelled to the Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands. In the third phase, I started in Caracas and continued along the Colombia-Venezuela border. The fourth phase was a follow-up trip to clarify specific points of the research.

A Political Science approach with ethnographic methods shares elements with an ethnography. “A study becomes ethnographic when the fieldworker is careful to connect the facts that s/he observes with the specific features of the *backdrop* against which these facts occur, which are linked to historical and cultural contingencies. Not all *in situ* studies are field studies” (Baszanger and Dodier 2004, 12). Aiming to identify variation among VNSA interactions and to explore their distinct citizen security impacts, I account for background factors, including the cultural and historic context that alters citizen security impacts. Ethnographic methods allow linking observed facts, such as rebel group graffiti, FARC militia presence or people’s fear to the historic exposure to violent conflict or the indigenous people’s resistance arising from their roots in the territory.

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<sup>8</sup> I travelled to all administrative border units except Venezuelan Amazonas and Colombian Vichada and Guainía because the difficult access and absence of institutions would have exceeded the budget and time available in this project.

<sup>9</sup> Colombian departments, Ecuadorian provinces and Venezuelan states are the administrative territorial units that correspond to each other.

Answering my research question required multi-sited fieldwork rather than single-sited fieldwork or multiple single-sited fieldwork as a comparison. George Marcus (1995, 105) describes multi-sited fieldwork as follows:

De facto comparative dimensions develop [...] as a function of the fractured, discontinuous plane of movement and discovery among sites as one maps an object of study and needs to posit logics of relationship, translation, and association among these sites. Thus, in multi-sited ethnography, comparison emerges from putting questions to an emergent object of study [...].

The comparative dimension in this research develops from drawing on examples of multiple sites that together form a holistic picture of VNSA interactions across Colombia's borderlands. Marcus (1995, 106–110) supposes that a multi-sited ethnography comprises following people, things, metaphors, plot, life or conflict, for example by tracing a person's journey or life. In my study multi-sitedness arises from mapping VNSA interactions in borderlands, reflected in Mark-Anthony Falzon's (2009, 2) definition of multi-sitedness as "a spatially dispersed field through which the ethnographer [or fieldworker] moves – actually, via sojourns in two or more places, or conceptually, by means of techniques of juxtaposition of data". I conducted interviews in multiple borderland locations. This multi-sited approach rather than the detailed study of a particular borderland area over a long period of time is not intended to proffer detailed knowledge on each particular area, but to capture a broad range of perspectives and variations in relation to the research subject. As Orin Starn (1999, 15) put it, it provides "a wide-angled view of many faces". To explore the perspectives from the state centres on borderland dynamics I conducted elite interviews in Bogotá, Caracas and Quito.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis Methods*

My main methods of data collection were semi-structured interviews, participant observation and the review of media articles, policy documents and secondary literature. I complemented these qualitative methods with quantitative dimensions, for example by reviewing statistics on homicide rates or surveys on security perceptions.

## - Interviews

I conducted 433 semi-structured anonymous interviews based on informed consent in the borderlands and Bogotá, Caracas and Quito. 421 were in Spanish, six in English and six in German. I conducted all the interviews without a translator and I have translated all interview extracts in this thesis into English. The interviewees included ex-combatants, displaced persons, civil society representatives including indigenous and afro leaders, clerics, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, police and military forces officials, government officials and academics. Such a broad range of sources with different, at times, opposing, perspectives served to triangulate and gather reliable, original data. To avoid selection bias and to balance different sources in each research site (cf. G. King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 128), I asked my existing contact persons for references of representatives of these different types. I selected the interviewees based on a snowball system in combination with references locals gave me about people I wished to contact. Most interviews lasted between 30 minutes and two hours; the extent to which they were structured depended on the context. Interview questions to academics or international organisation staff were targeted. For security reasons, questions to informants such as ex-combatants or displaced people were more open, resembling informal conversations. When the informants agreed, I took notes and recorded the interviews. I coded the recordings and stored them separately from the coding table. If recordings were not desired I took notes. Most interviews were one-to-one interviews; in some cases, several people were present. I conducted most interviews alone, in some I was accompanied by my local trusted contact person, listening next to or behind me.

Two strategies reduced disparities and increased comparability of the data collected under different circumstances: first, I interviewed key informants in Bogotá, Caracas and Quito, including some who had worked and lived in the borderlands and whose accounts I could compare with my borderland trip impressions. Second, I complemented data from people's answers to my questions with my observations and perceptions of the varying interview contexts.

- Participant observation

I used participant observation to complement and overlap with interviews. As Schwandt (2007, 220) notes, “participant observation is a means whereby the researcher becomes at least partially socialized into the group under study in order to understand the nature, purpose, and meaning of some social action that takes place there”. Ray Gold’s (1958, 217-223) and Buford Junkers’ (1960, 35-38) four types of researcher roles, cited for example in Robert Burgess (1990, 80, 83) and in Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007, 82) comprise “complete participant”, “participant-as-observer”, “observer-as-participant”, and “complete observer”. In some instances, I was a complete observer, for example when I attended meetings between a UN agency and communities in particularly dangerous circumstances due to the guerrilla militia presence and the sensitive issues the UN agency explored. Interviews would have jeopardised the local population’s and my security; I used observation complementarily. In other instances I was a complete participant: when I cooked, ate, chatted, went shopping, or went dancing with the locals with whom I stayed, for example with an indigenous Wayúu family in Zulia, an Ecuadorian family in General Farfán, a village in Sucumbíos, and a Colombian family in Arauca. Whenever possible, I lived with families to better understand their way of life. As I explain in Chapter Two, this also served to ensure my security because people including guerrilla militias saw me with locals rather than entering their territory as a stranger. The locals I lived with knew about my researcher role, and when I was not interviewing I participated in their daily activities. I wrote field notes of my reflections on these events as I did as a complete observer thus enhancing my understanding of life in the borderlands.

According to Stephen Brown (2009, 213-214), separating the private from the public selves is a difficult, if not impossible task. Indeed, my “self” as a private person was mostly superseded by my “researcher self”. Usually, my role shifted between “participant-as-observer” – when I informally chatted with locals about their lives and aspirations – and “observer-as-participant” – when I engaged in more structured data collection, particularly interviews. While questions constituted the formal method, I simultaneously observed the interviewees’ gestures and ways of

talking, for example, when people started to whisper and look around uneasily while talking about the paramilitaries.

- Documentary research

I reviewed local and national newspaper articles, reports of the Ombudsman's Offices, and policy documents to explore to what extent the public representation of borderland dynamics differed from the local population's representations.

Further, I wrote fortnightly fieldwork reports to reflect on the data collected and their context. Through the reports I engaged in an initial data analysis while still in the field, allowing me to refine my approach and interview questions in line with the preliminary research findings. The triangulation of sources and of data collection methods provided me with an extensive overview of the different perspectives on the topic and enabled me to evaluate them in a balanced way.

I drew on the software NVivo 10 to code and systematise the data, and explored them with process tracing, "a key technique for capturing causal mechanisms in action", in a mix of deduction and induction (Bennett and Checkel 2014, 10, 27). To identify mechanisms deductively, I analysed whether and how VNSA activities in specific interactions had specific citizen security impacts. I inductively examined whether citizen security outcomes such as death and fear within a case can be traced to a specific VNSA interaction (cf. Bennett and Checkel 2014). This detailed tracing allowed identifying intervening variables between VNSA interactions and citizen security dynamics and accounted for complex causality: a "zooming-in" onto investigated phenomena demonstrates that many factors influence the outcomes.

I used a provisional list of codes that I determined before starting the coding process, including codes representing the characteristic features of borderlands or citizen security outcomes, such as death or fear (cf. Saldaña 2009, 65). I then engaged in descriptive, structural, process, versus and emotion coding. Often, the coding was simultaneous: I assigned several codes to the same text

sections. With this procedure I identified themes and categories that helped build the typology. I also conducted “In Vivo coding”: using phrases from the interviews directly as codes, mostly because they were mentioned frequently across different interviews (Miles and Huberman 1994, 61; Saldaña 2009, 3), including “tense calm”, “the rule of silence” or “if he’s dead, it’s because of something”. Following Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (1985) cited in Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman (1994, 62), throughout the study I filled in additional codes, reconsidered already coded material in new ways, bridged codes by identifying relationships I had not discovered before and identified categories emerging from codes. I also drafted memos during the analytical process to organise and systematise ideas.

I created all maps in the thesis with Esri’s ArcGIS 10.2 mapping and spatial analysis software (unless stated otherwise). I combined my own data with satellite images and OpenStreetMap. Elevation data was added with SRTM and national and subnational borders with Natural Earth data.

Throughout the project I shared preliminary findings at conferences and seminars with locals, international academics and practitioners to assess their validity. In addition to meeting my supervisors, I conversed with experts on specific topic aspects to receive feedback. My support to the Colombian National Peace Observatory in 2012 served as “half-way” validation exercise. We organised a civil society workshop on conflicts in the Colombian southern border departments where I presented my preliminary results to civil society leaders and received feedback. In July 2014 I presented my final research findings to the Drugs Subdirection of the Colombian Ministry of Justice, the UNODC in Bogotá, the Colombian government’s Administrative Unit for Territorial Consolidation and a local peace and conflict think-tank in Bogotá to evaluate their validity.

## 1.4 Thesis Structure

Chapter One introduces the thesis's research question and argument. It outlines the contributions to scholarship and the research design. Chapter Two discusses the challenges arising from multi-sited fieldwork in a dangerous setting. Chapter Three provides the analytical framework. I conceptualise citizen security and borderlands, and develop a typology of VNSA interactions and their distinct impacts on citizen security. I then introduce the "border effect" to explain how borderland geography alters citizen security repercussions of VNSA interactions. Chapter Four outlines border cooperation among Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela and maps VNSA interactions in the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands. Following the case study design, Chapters Five, Six and Seven are organised according to the cases and explore how VNSA interactions in the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands impact on citizen security: Chapter Five focuses on the absence of an arrangement, Chapter Six on short-term arrangements and Chapter Seven on long-term arrangements. Chapter Eight discusses the border effect in the empirical cases. Thus, while Chapters Five to Seven concentrate on the VNSA arrangements and citizen security *within* borderlands, Chapters Four and Eight frame these Chapters by focusing on the geography of borderlands. The concluding chapter summarises the findings, outlines policy implications and depicts how the findings are relevant to other regions.

Before I proceed, three notes on the text are in order: first, unless stated otherwise, all pictures in this thesis are taken by me; second, all important locations mentioned in the thesis are indicated in Map 2 and Map 3; and third, references to interviews are marked with an asterisk in the text.

## 2. FIELDWORK CHALLENGES

*You have to be very cautious, always, always cautious. Do your job, but don't risk your life. Because here life isn't worth anything. A Coca Cola is worth more than life. Life is worth nothing here.*  
Cleric from Colombia's borderlands (2012)

This warning from an interviewee shaped my research into citizen security impacts of VNSA interactions in Colombia's borderlands. Fieldwork in these violence-affected regions gave me a profound understanding of the local security dynamics and of everyday life at the states' margins. Vulnerability, uncertainty and illusoriness – the themes running through the following chapters – characterised my fieldwork journeys and form part of my immersion into the research subject, including the ethical issues arising from it. This was related to three methodological particularities: first, studying a sensitive topic in a violent setting; second, the research subject's volatile nature; and third, researching a transnational space, i.e. borderlands and conducting multi-sited fieldwork.

### 2.1 Research on a Sensitive Topic in a Violent Setting

Researchers conducting dangerous fieldwork have reflected on difficult environments and on how to avoid risks (R. M. Lee 1995; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Sriram 2009). However, projects on the source of these risks are particularly challenging (cf. Dolnik 2013, 2).

#### *The Illegality of the Activities Being Studied*

Working on a topic related to illegal activities raises ethical issues. Showing me a picture of her baby, one ex-combatant told me that the baby's father is an ex-guerrilla with whom she fell in love and due to whom she joined the guerrillas. The touching story made it difficult not to sympathise with someone perceived by others as a cruel perpetrator of violence. It showed the human side of these combatants, typically neglected in quantitative security studies of the literature on rebels, terrorists and the like. Similarly, when talking to coca farmers, who do not

receive any services from the government and whose relatives have been tortured or killed by state forces, one understands their support for the insurgents.

I too was directly affected by the difficulties of researching a delicate topic. At Bogotá's airport from where I travelled to a conference to present on the cocaine supply chain, I had to explain to police officials why I had FARC DVDs and a huge poster on the cocaine trade in Colombia's borderlands in my suitcase. They brought dogs to search my luggage. After explaining that I study these issues, I was allowed to leave, but other officials might have been less sympathetic. I constantly revisited my own concepts of security and learned from those whom I accompanied: when I attended rural community meetings with an international organisation, a staff member of the organisation advised me not to leave my bag on the table. She had done so once and got into trouble at the airport when travelling with that bag because apparently some coca paste was on the table and hence on her bag. At the airport she was suspected of trafficking cocaine when the dogs sniffed her bag.

### *Absence of Data*

Studying citizen security impacts of VNSA interactions in borderlands meant asking questions about sensitive phenomena in the location where they occur. Depending on the region and the interviewee, the limits of what I could reasonably ask for differed. It was crucial to adequately interpret the collected data, and the *absent* data. In sites where the population was relatively free from VNSA-imposed social control, I asked targeted questions on citizen security. In others, any sensitive question would have put others or me into danger. In Ecuador's northern border zone a priest warned me:

Here, absolute silence reigns. You will never get anything out of anyone... People won't tell you anything. People know who is helping [the guerrilla] with medicine, who facilitates support, which authorities are involved in these things. But they won't tell you...of course other foreigners like you come here, it's just that...be careful when selecting the persons because you could say what everyone's doing. Therefore I told you: watch out!

Constantly re-emerging as a major theme of my research, the “rule of silence” also limited the ways in which I researched. As John King (2009, 16) summarises Amy Ross’s (2009) argument, “penetrating fear-based psychological barriers to speaking about the unspeakable is almost impossible in countries that have lost the security of the person”. It is not only impossible, but also undesirable. Jonathan Goodhand (2000, 3) notes, “for traumatized individuals and groups, silence may be a coping, not just a survival, strategy”. It is an ethical obligation to not re-traumatise these individuals by making them talk about issues about which they prefer to remain silent (Nordstrom and Robben 1995, 19; Olujic 1995).

In tense situations, I asked broad questions on life in the borderlands, and on how previous years differed from the present. I also learned to be a good listener. People’s stories about matters important to them provided me indirectly with the responses I was curious about. People would tell me about citizen security because it was part of their daily concerns. In one instance, an interviewee told me at the beginning of the interview he would talk about anything except security. We started talking about other things. Towards the end he trusted me sufficiently to mention issues related to citizen security, yet framing them differently. When talking about the quality of life in his village, he observed that due to murders and fear, the quality of life was low. Another indicator of how comfortable people felt when speaking about certain issues was their way of talking. Some interviewees whispered when referring to the guerrillas or paramilitaries, even when we met in their homes where it was unlikely that anyone would overhear them. Whether people were willing to talk about sensitive issues or not indicated the tension in their lives. I also noted the absence of history. Although many Colombianists emphasise the importance of the memories of “La Violencia” for understanding present-day violence in the country (e.g. Pécaut 1999, 161–162), no interviewee mentioned that era to me. While historical memories are beginning to form part of the Colombian debate in the country’s political centre, their absence in Colombia’s most war-torn regions suggests there may be another history from the margins that has lacked attention and may repeat itself in the midst of a potential transition into a post-conflict period.

*Transparency and the Responsibility to Protect Others*

I agree with Raymond Lee (1995, 18) that “it is usually important in conflict situations to avoid any suggestion of a covert research role”. I normally explained clearly to my interviewees that I was conducting an academic study. Sometimes one can be open about one’s activities and still avoid issues that might arise from being too direct. For example, when talking to civil society representatives whose background I did not know, I explained I was a doctoral student in Development Studies interested in borderland dynamics without mentioning the specifics of citizen security and armed group interactions. To protect myself, reduce suspicions, and avoid the impression of being threatening or intimidating, I usually adopted the role of the young girl from Europe who does not know much about these violent contexts. Only in one instance was I accused of being a spy; generally my friend role helped increase trust and enabled me to talk about more sensitive issues.

Although such strategies to gain access and talk about sensitive issues are useful for one’s research, the potential repercussions can be lethal in such contexts, as exemplified by the fate of many human rights defenders in Colombia. Being hardly mobile, local interlocutors are in particular need of protection when talking about sensitive issues (Sriram 2009, 58), yet often do not receive any. One needs to be careful about what to say and how to deal with sensitive data. If in doubt, silence is the better option, even if this means gathering less detailed data than one had hoped for. Confidentiality and caution regarding what people say in their interviews and one’s own observations and thoughts are crucial. Since I was mostly surrounded by other people, including militias and post-demobilised group members, in certain circumstances I wrote my field notes in German rather than Spanish or English since this reduced the likelihood of someone reading them which might have produced misunderstandings about my work. Being well-informed about the conflict dynamics through following the local media and listening to conversations – as well as my background knowledge about my research sites – reduced the risk of raising sensitive issues.

Some unexpected ethical dilemmas may arise in cases in which contact persons ask for help (Nordstrom and Robben 1995, 16). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, 69) argue that small favours are useful “to demonstrate that [the researcher] is not an exploitative interloper, but has something to give”. I did favours such as helping organise a civil society workshop, giving academic advice to local researchers or inviting people for coffee or lunch. Yet in some cases people asked me to give large financial support. In one case, I was told a relative stepped on a landmine and they needed a large sum of money to pay the medical expenses. It is important to make clear from the beginning what one can reasonably offer and what is beyond one’s own budget or unethical to give.

### *The Researcher’s Vulnerability*

At many institutions ethical clearance ensures the informants’ safety while neglecting the researcher’s vulnerability (Gallaher 2009, 134–136). Due to the on-going conflict in Colombia and the violent settings I worked in, the risks of entering an unknown research site as an outsider were high. However, I adapted strategies to minimise vulnerability, for example, by staying with trusted locals whenever possible and avoiding being alone. Interviewing in public spaces was usually safer than in the interviewee’s house, but people were then less likely to talk about sensitive issues. They told me that “they”, i.e. the guerrilla militias and informants of post-demobilised groups, “have ears everywhere”. Hence, interviews in public spaces inevitably proved a drawback for my data collection. When agreeing to interview in people’s houses, I had to rely on intuition and on references from previous informants and friends about the interviewee to decide whether to take this risk. I also formulated a security system. I always informed a trusted contact person of my whereabouts and sent him my daily plan. If internet access was not available, he informed my supervisors and my family about my situation. Furthermore, I always tried to maintain a low profile. Several times, I was asked to give a media interview, but declined. In one instance, I was at an indigenous event with live broadcast. Although I had said I would be happy to attend in the audience, but not as a panellist in the broadcast discussion, they called me

onto the panel while on air and presented me. I decided to talk about anything except my research and left the panel during the first break.

It was also important to be perceived to be neutral. In Putumayo, I followed an interviewee to the headquarters of his peasant organisation. Afterwards, I learned that the organisation was supposedly a FARC militia “branch” and was told I should refrain from doing that again because I was observed by BACRIM members. They might have thought I supported FARC which could have got me into trouble. In Caracas in September 2012 I interviewed a radical left-wing group which gave me a shirt with their group name as a gift and wanted me to put it on. They also wanted me to join them in a march in support of Hugo Chávez. Since they are known as a radical group claiming to be “more chavista than Chávez” I knew it would be problematic to be seen publicly with them. I politely refused to participate in the march and put on the shirt as it was their gift to me, but took it off once I had left their “office” under a bridge in the centre of Caracas. In another instance an informant offered to arrange an interview with the local boss of a post-demobilised group. Together with my informant I visited the boss’s girlfriend. If she liked me, I would get permission to talk to her partner. After the visit I received the green light and my informant offered to accompany me to a place where I would be able to interview this boss. In the end I decided not to go there. The rival groups in town would have perceived me to be on the other one’s side which could have jeopardised my security. Weighing up the benefits for the research project with the personal risks has to be a constant in one’s research if it is to be conducted responsibly.

The experience of violent death and fear can shape perceptions and clash with one’s own world views. Linda Green (1994, 230) notes “fear is elusive as a concept; yet you know it when it has you in its grip”. On a daily basis, interviewees told me how relatives and friends were killed, about the anxiety they experience and about the fear that something might happen to them or their loved ones. For the first time, I feared for my own life, something that is impossible to comprehend by reading about it in secondary literature. Grappling with direct exposure to

violence and death during my fieldwork has led me to engage more closely with anthropological and psychological approaches to coping strategies, which has helped me understanding my own and the borderlanders' perceptions of security.

Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius Robben (1995, 17) note “if seduction manipulates ethnographers, then fear, anxiety, and intimidation may paralyze them”. I faced this challenge, and the other extreme: the normalisation of violence. Being constantly confronted with these issues makes them more normal and only while reflecting in Oxford could I detach myself from what I had experienced and revisit my thoughts about it. Although immersed in these violent contexts, the reality of the researcher's life is different. Rather than the cruel murders interviewees talked about, during the year of my fieldwork my personal experience were of several deaths in my family and among friends due to illness, age and an accident. Making sense of these different worlds and pains, each of them difficult in their own way, and the “self-care” necessary to potentially tackle direct and vicarious trauma (Theidon 2014), are challenges that continue long after returning from fieldwork on a sensitive topic in a violent context.

## **2.2 The Dynamic Nature of the Research Subject**

Given the dynamic nature of VNSA interactions and of the state's intervention, often forcing VNSAs to change their behaviour, my research subject was volatile. Conflict dynamics are unpredictable and affect the fieldworker. Nordstrom and Robben (1995, 16) call this the “uncertainty of violent events” which besets the qualitative researcher “who becomes suddenly enveloped in a situation of violence for which he or she was not prepared”. I frequently faced such situations. I went with two Afro-Ecuadorian young women who worked for a human rights organisation in San Lorenzo, in Ecuador's border province of Esmeraldas, on a boat trip to Palma Real, one of Ecuador's least developed villages, on a small island between San Lorenzo and the Colombian city of Tumaco (see Figure 3). I was going to speak to Ecuadorian military officials and some community members. While I was talking to the highest ranking military official, a

helicopter appeared above us. First I did not pay much attention, but the nervous gazes of the official and his subordinates started to worry me. It was a Colombian military helicopter in Ecuadorian airspace. Instantly, I remembered that some years ago, the village was bombed by a Colombian military helicopter. It was supposed to be a guerrilla hideout. The two girls looked at me with panic. One of them grabbed my hand; we ran to the shore, jumped onto our boat and went back to San Lorenzo. Given that San Lorenzo has one of Ecuador's highest homicide rates, I did not feel safe in San Lorenzo before that day, yet on returning from Palma Real I was relieved to be back. In such cases researchers have to decide whether to leave the venue, continue, or choose to study something else (Nordstrom and Robben 1995, 16). Although I had not completed the interview, I decided not to go back to Palma Real. No bombardment took place this time, but who knew whether and when it would.



**Figure 3: Palma Real, Ecuador**

In another instance, I was going to travel with an indigenous leader from Mocoa to her relative's home village La Hormiga, a village with guerrilla presence further south in Putumayo, near the border with Ecuador. Being welcomed by a resident of the village reduces the risks because the guerrillas knew I was a relative's friend who was visiting. Some days before the planned trip, on 4 November 2011, the Colombian state forces killed then-FARC leader Alfonso Cano. The war dynamics changed. The situation was tense; everyone was expecting acts of retaliation. The trip to the village, still a FARC stronghold, would suddenly have been much riskier. After discussing the

issues with my indigenous friend and trusted international organisation staff based in Mocoa, I decided to cancel it. Contingencies need to be understood in their wider context (Nordstrom and Robben 1995, 16); in this situation the political context was key. Four months later I was able to visit the village – that time, with the MAPP-OAS. While still difficult, the situation was less tense: as quickly as conflict dynamics can deteriorate they can also improve.

Capturing snapshots, the data collected may be a distorted representation of reality. In Arauca, for example, I accompanied UNHCR on a mission during which we met with communities living along the River Arauca, which marks the border with Venezuela. In one community meeting, people told us how the situation had improved and that clashes between the state forces and the guerrillas had not occurred for a long time. Later I learned that half an hour after we had left there was a clash between the Colombian military and the guerrillas next to the village where we had our meeting. These are some of many examples where illusory calm was followed by violence.

Acknowledging rapid changes in conflict dynamics is important both when collecting and analysing data. As Nordstrom and Robben (1995, 4) note

the complexity of violence extends to the fieldworkers and their theories as well. Understandings of violence should undergo a process of change and reassessment in the course of fieldwork and writing because it is not only unrealistic but dangerous as well to go to the field with ready-made explanations of violence so as to “find truths” to support our theories.

The ways in which borderlanders experienced violence differed from how violence in the region was portrayed by the media. Instead of constant bloodshed, the kind of violence I encountered was sporadic and short-lived next to long periods of calmness. People fall back into their daily routines and continue their work despite these interruptions. This seemed to be their way of coping with, or defying, the dynamic nature of violent conflict, similar to how, according to Carolyn Nordstrom (1998, 117), Mozambicans continued their daily lives amidst war: “They defied the assault on the present to construct their own future”.

*Identities and Access*

My fieldwork's multifaceted nature led me to reconsider my position as a researcher and my identity in the field and beyond – including how others perceived me, changes in my own perception of who I am and where I come from, and what values are important to me. Unlike fieldwork in remote villages over a long period of time common in anthropological studies, or only building on the elite interviews typical for Political Science, I combined both by travelling to remote borderlands, and to the capital cities. I frequently moved between two entirely different worlds. While always perceived as an outsider from Europe, my identity was different in each of these worlds.

Awareness of one's own identity is crucial when conducting fieldwork (Norman 2009, 83). Identity can help but also hinder building trust relationships with interviewees and the communities in which one is embedded. Courtney Radsch (2009, 97) explains that in her research it was important to “draw on particular parts of [her] identity that seemed relevant and similar to the person [she] was talking to”. “Invoking particular personal characteristics at various times” helps establishing a connection with the persons that often facilitates talking more openly (Radsch 2009, 97). I sometimes highlighted my identity in my interaction with informants as a woman, a student, a researcher, a former practitioner or a European.

Being perceived as an Oxford University researcher facilitated access in ministries, government agencies and international organisation offices. I adapted to the context and their expectations by dressing in formal business attire and choosing appropriate questions. When talking to police or military officials, my female identity mattered in these mainly male contexts. Being charming helped because some officials wanted to impress me by facilitating access to the information I was looking for. In borderland situations, rather than stressing my vulnerability as a white woman in a violent region with frequent kidnappings and assaults, I dressed in jeans and T-shirt and highlighted my student identity which helped build friendship and trust. Perceived as a young

student from Europe, I was not intimidating.<sup>10</sup> Most people did not know Oxford University (some thought it was “Oxfam”, which they knew). Many offered to accompany me and to protect me rather than being suspicious. People not only talked to me to share information, but also out of curiosity: one young woman told me that first I would have to answer all her questions, then she would answer my questions. She asked about spring and autumn in Europe and what it is like to walk on snow. Another way of gaining access was finding commonalities with my interviewees. I told displaced people in Putumayo that my grandmother was displaced in the Second World War. In another instance, a female ex-combatant told me that she joined FARC because of her passion for discipline. I said I also like discipline and therefore practiced ballet. In such differing contexts identifying commonalities helped to foster mutual understanding.

Fieldwork encounters also shaped my perception about my “self”. Being more conscious about my own background and how I grew up informed how I analysed and interpreted fieldwork data. For example, when conversing with an eleven year old boy who lived in a Colombian town with soaring homicide rates, whose uncle was killed by the guerrillas and whose father had received death threats, he asked me whether I am not scared in Germany because of all the concentration camps. I told him this was a long time ago and things had changed and asked him how he feels about life in Colombia, expecting he would tell me about hopes for the end of the conflict. He replied Colombia might have guerrillas and paramilitaries but at least it did not start a world war. On another occasion, an interviewee asked me: “How are the guerrillas in Germany?” When I told her there are no guerrillas she replied: “Ok, but how are the people who fight against the government?” These experiences increased my awareness of what I and others take for granted and how these issues shape my and their perception of life in conflict.

Even in solid trust relationships people only give the information they want. My understanding of personal situations is incomplete. People decide what to tell me and when to tell the truth. Since my objective was not to represent in detail single stories but use these pieces to construct the

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<sup>10</sup> One interviewee asked whether it is common in Europe to let underage people travel so far away.

bigger picture, triangulation helped compensate for incompleteness or incorrectness of understanding.

### **2.3 Borderland Research**

Fieldwork in Colombia's borderlands also generated practical and methodological challenges. Travelling between multiple research sites and across borders was complicated by being influenced by local situations and people. Hastings Donnan and Dieter Haller (2000, 9) note "research on state borders requires a doubling of effort". In my case it requires knowing the sides of three borders. This involves knowledge of all the countries, and, as Lindsay Scorgie (2012) notes, poses logistical difficulties, starting with a mobile phone for each country and ending with support networks in all sites. International agencies seldom work across borders. Every time I crossed the border I had to find new support networks. Researching borderlands is dangerous: cocaine is smuggled in suitcases, women are kidnapped for human trafficking and border officials supplement poor salaries with bribes. Although crossing the border never involved any formal payment, at one border immigration office the official would not stamp my passport without me paying him. He claimed to not have a printer or paper to give me a receipt for the payment and put the money in his pocket when I left his office.

The road infrastructure in these borderlands is deficient and public transport precarious. The road between Pasto, the capital of Nariño, and Mocoa, the capital of Putumayo, is a six-to-eight-hour drive through mountainous rainforest along a winding road strewn with memorial marks dedicated to those who died in landslides or accidents. It is the only road connecting these two towns, which I visited in 2011 and 2012.<sup>11</sup> Due to landslides, this road was closed for over six weeks when I had intended to return to Pasto, making me travel from Mocoa to Quito instead.

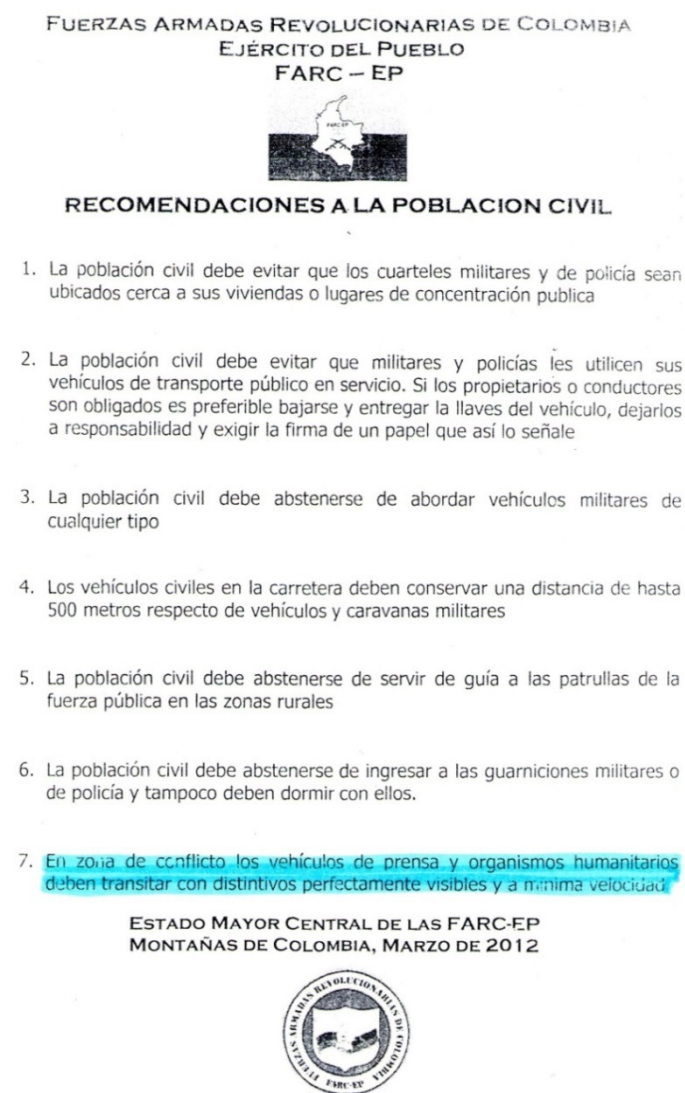
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<sup>11</sup> Flights from Pasto to Bogotá and from Bogotá to Mocoa would have been too costly.



**Figure 4: Road between Pasto and Mocoa, Colombia**

I mostly travelled alone and, being a white, blond woman in an area with a predominantly *mestizo*, indigenous and black populations, stood out. My local contacts lived in the respective research sites; they normally could not accompany me from one site to another. I weighed up the choice of means of transports against my budget constraints even if risks, such as harassment, assault and kidnapping persisted. I hardly experienced any harassment at the military and counter-narcotics check points in Ecuador's northern border zone, where all passengers have to leave the bus and are searched. In extremely unsafe regions, for example when travelling from Guasualito to El Nula in Apure where many buses had been attacked recently, I took a taxi to minimise risks. I also travelled with the Mission of the Organisation of American States to Support the Peace Process (MAPP-OAS), the UN and several aid agencies. These trips were tightly structured. According to security protocols we had to arrive at our destination by six o'clock, before sunset. A mission of a humanitarian organisation in Zulia, which I had planned to accompany, was cancelled due to the tensions arising in the run-up to the presidential elections in October 2012: the Venezuelan army or the Colombian guerrillas in Venezuelan territory might have misinterpreted the mission as being directed against them. The constraints were also due to VNSA-imposed rules. As Figure 5 shows, in a pamphlet in March 2012 FARC advised that "in conflict zones vehicles of the media and of humanitarian agencies must transit with perfectly visible decals and minimum speed" to avoid becoming "military targets".



**Figure 4: FARC pamphlet with warning against humanitarian agencies (anonymous interviewee)**

These challenges influenced the planning of data collection, enforced my flexibility vis-à-vis multi-sited fieldwork, shaped my perception of the research context and predetermined my mobility. While I sometimes drew on alternative options (paying a taxi or changing the itinerary), most borderlanders have few mobility choices.

Experiencing these risks and uncertainty as a participant-as-observer helped me make sense of clashing levels of mobility including being confined or self-confining oneself as a means of protection.

Most analysts of violence focus on displacements as consequences of clashes among armed groups. I learned how the limitations to or the impossibility of displacement shaped people's experience of these groups in their territory. Being on the move is linked to a threat of the unpredictable, the constant exposure to danger. Many borderlanders thus avoid travelling altogether, self-imposing limitations to their mobility, or confining themselves. Unlike the people I interacted with, I was free to move from and to different border zones. I travelled from the other end of the world to their homes, while some of them had never left their villages.

The danger of becoming a victim of crime when travelling from one research site to another was linked to the necessity of constantly negotiating new trust relationships. Planning multi-sited fieldwork involves establishing contacts, finding accommodation, booking flights or working out back-up plans and bus timetables for each new site. Local institutions or contact persons would offer their support, accompany me, recommend accommodation or invite me to stay in their homes, but I typically had little time to find out details about them. In most villages I only stayed between one and seven days. In some cases, I returned to the village in the subsequent fieldwork phase. In Cúcuta I stayed four weeks during which I travelled to nearby villages where I stayed some nights, for example to Tibú, to Ocaña and to San Cristóbal in Venezuela. Given the time constraints, I often had to rely on recommendations from trusted previous interviewees as my only reference.

Citing David Lewis and Andrew Weigert (1985), Julie Norman (2009, 72–73) differentiates between cognitive and personal, or emotional, trust; cognitive trust “is based on a cognitive process which discriminates amongst persons and institutions that are trustworthy, distrusted and unknown”. Guided by interests, this “thin” trust is in line with a rational choice approach to decision-making. Emotional trust is rooted in personal relationships (Norman 2009, 72–73). These two forms help the understanding of trust relationships in a relatively stable context after having spent some time at a specific research site. I found a third form crucial to quickly adapting to the multiple new research contexts and to travelling between them: intuitive trust. The Oxford Dictionaries (2014) define intuition as “the ability to understand something instinctively, without the need for conscious reasoning”. Where lacking information on people and in the absence of time to slowly establish rapport and build “thick” trust, the gut feeling in combination with interpersonal skills tell you whether to trust people or not. In “normal” circumstances, intuiting wrongly may have the consequence of cheating or betrayal; in conflict zones and other violent contexts this may cost one’s life.

Two anecdotes from my third fieldwork phase illustrate the necessity of intuition as to whether to trust strangers while travelling between research sites, and the anxiety arising from doubting one's gut feeling.

The first reflects the difficulties of mobility across borders. I was going to cross the border between Paraguaipoa in Zulia and Maicao, in La Guajira. The brother of my "host mother", a Wayúu primary school teacher, was going to accompany me with his friend in his friend's car to the border. At the border he would hitchhike back to Paraguaipoa while I would continue with his friend to Maicao. This friend would take me to another friend's place where I could stay some nights. Having established a close relationship with my host mother with whom I stayed for a week I trusted her recommendation of travelling with her brother. My gut feeling told me it was also okay to travel with his friend. I agreed. After several military checkpoints in which my luggage was searched, we reached the other side of the border. But then a thunderstorm started, the car broke down, the supposed friend in Maicao did not pick up her mobile phone and apparently no-one knew where she lived. I became scared. I had been introduced to my host mother's brother before, but I did not know his friend with whom I was suddenly alone in a broken-down car during a thunderstorm. Being an important cocaine trafficking and gasoline smuggling corridor, the route we were taking was supposedly under the control of various actors benefitting from the illegal business: post-demobilised groups, FARC, local gangs and the Venezuelan military. As long as people adhere to these actors' rules, things are fine. Any deviation causes mistrust which can have security implications. What if the friend was involved with any of these armed groups controlling the drug route? What if his intention was not to deliver me to the friend in Maicao, but to kidnap me? I had relied on my host mother who had told me her brother would care for me. I relied on her brother's judgement according to which his friend was honest and would help me. But could I trust him? After a while in the broken car in the middle of nowhere under the pouring rain, we stopped a taxi. I was taken to a Wayúu leader's *ranchería* – the Wayúu's basic housing – in a violent neighbourhood on the outskirts of Maicao. It was dark as we discussed what to do. Finally my companions took me to the place of another

friend I did not know, in a more central and safer area. I stayed a couple of nights there. I succeeded in crossing the border. I intuited correctly; the people I interacted with were supportive. Nevertheless, the risks linked to following intuition and the uncertainty of not being able to build cognitive or emotional trust fuelled my anxiety. Anxiety, intertwined with a desire to reach one's destination in the midst of potential dangers on the way, is important to understanding the borderlanders' security concerns: while in Western cultures we are concerned to arrive on time, they are concerned to arrive at all, and therefore limit travelling to the necessary and prefer to stay in a familiar location with trusted people.

The second anecdote highlights the heightened risk of being "kidnappable" (Villarreal 2013) when on the move. Researchers in difficult contexts are often prepared to assess risks and how to reduce them (cf. R. M. Lee 1995, 26), yet not to make choices among the worst and less bad options and how to psychologically deal with it. An extract from my field notes illustrates this dilemma:

It was around 6.30pm. The sun was setting. I arrived at the Maracaibo bus station after a trip to Machiques. I looked forward to seeing my friend who was going to pick me up. I got off the van but he was not there. I'll wait some minutes, he must be here soon. He was not. He called. He told me seriously he was at the other Maracaibo bus station; there are two! Given the traffic and the distance, it would take him an hour to arrive. Panic slowly spread in me. It was already seven and dark. This is the bus station everyone has warned me of. Don't go there at night. Don't be by yourself, a white, blond woman. That's why we arranged for my friend to pick me up. Who could know there are two bus stations?! A well-dressed woman in her early forties watched me while I was telling my friend on the phone: "No problem, I'll wait for you!", thinking "What shall I do, all these guys watching me and it's dark already!" Should I talk to the taxi driver with whom I drove here, the only familiar, but not trustworthy face around me? But he is a man. He left as well, as did all the other passengers. The woman said: "Are you alright? Is no-one picking you up?" "Yes, my friend. I just have to wait a bit!" "You can't wait here. That's too dangerous. It's dark already! Let's go, come with me, I'm scared here too, come with me, don't stay here with these men!"

I followed her. What should I do? Everyone had warned me of this bus station, only men around me, she was the only woman, the only well-dressed person I saw. "Where are we going?" "Just come with me, we can't stay here. Here is my car, get in the car, we can wait for your friend in the car..." I got in her car, an expensive-looking jeep. I started to feel hot and cold. I just got into a foreigner's car in the dark at the Maracaibo bus station of which I had heard many stories of kidnappings. But did I have any other option? Stay at the station in the dark with all these men, knowing all these rape and assault stories? She started the motor, the car began to move. "What are you doing? My friend will come here; can't we wait here for him in

the car?” “That’s too dangerous, we can’t stay on this parking space in the bus station, and this parking space is only for short stays, we have to get out of here. I’ll drive to the other side of the bus station and we can wait there. You have his number, right?” My mobile phone rang: “I’m already on my way, but it’ll take a while, are you okay?” “Yes, I’m with a woman in her car!” Thinking: “Help me!” “If you want, I can talk to him and tell him where we are waiting!” She took the phone: “Hello, yes she is with me, come to the parking space at the back of the station!”

We left the bus station, got on the highway. She is taking me somewhere else! I have to get out of this car; we are *not* driving to the other side of the bus station. She is kidnapping me! I sent my friend a text: “Come here as quickly as you can, come!” Shall I jump out of the car? Where are we? This must be a slum, all these street hawkers on the street, beggars, if I jump out of the car here, I’d probably be assaulted or raped or dead soon. Who is she? She asked me: “What were you doing in Machiques?” “Visiting friends from CARITAS...” “Oh, I used to work for CARITAS!” “So you know the boss there?” “Yes, but I don’t remember the name...” Ok, she says she worked with them, which is good, but she doesn’t know their names. That’s strange. How can you work for someone without knowing the name? This probably means she does not know them; she’s just making it up. “I only brought stuff; I was one of the women who brought clothes”. We were all the time getting further away from the bus station, but suddenly she turned right. To a parking space. “Let’s wait here. Do you want to give your friend a call again so I can tell him where we are?” Fifteen minutes later he arrived. She just wanted to help me. She is one of the rich Machiques ranchers and knows many who have been kidnapped. She had sent her daughter to France to study. And she probably thought about the chances of her daughter being kidnapped if she had been waiting on her own in the dark at the bus station when she saw me. She saved me.

“Field research is about so much more than data collection” (Dolnik 2013, 4). Referring to research on terrorism, Adam Dolnik (2013, 4) argues,

[i]t is the process itself that plays the more crucial role of educating the researcher and deepening his/her knowledge about the context, and everyday realities in which the perpetrators, supporters, and victims of terrorism operate. This exposure to reality alone can rapidly change the researcher’s perceptions on many different fronts. [...] Without field visit and exposure to the environment there is much tacit knowledge the researcher simply will not be aware of. In many ways it is the “just looking factor” of field research that by itself justifies its benefits.

In addition to “just looking”, or observing, being exposed directly, even if involuntarily, to the precarious situations which one aims to study is invaluable for understanding people’s fear that something *might* happen. Michael Taussig (2002, 215) distinguishes between the *empirical facts* and the *experience* of violence that inform understandings of violence. I would add the *fear* of violence: having been a potential victim myself shaped how I reflected on the perception of being a “potential victim” (Rotker 2002b), shared by so many borderlanders.

Multi-sited fieldwork also entails challenges for data analysis, especially the data's comparability. My preference for semi-structured interviews complemented by participant observation was not always feasible; I had to adapt data collection methods to the security situation of each fieldwork site. In the Catatumbo region in Norte de Santander, for example, and in rural areas of Arauca and southern Putumayo where I accompanied diplomatic missions of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the MAPP-OAS, I had to limit interviews to selected cases, such as local clerics. These regions are among the armed conflict's "red zones" and doing a lot of interviews might have jeopardised my own and/or the interviewees' security. Instead, I was a careful observer and observer-as-participant. My data from these regions are less rich than the data from regions where I conducted many interviews and conducted participant observation. Similarly, in some regions I took pictures, while in others this would have been too sensitive. I mitigated this problem by interviewing international agency staff working in these areas rather than civil society representatives and by drawing on the local media. Gathering data being more challenging in some cases than in others mattered for my research findings.

Also the access-determining support mechanisms differed in each site. As R. M. Lee (1995, 16) notes, "access to a research setting is never a given". As mentioned above, in "hot" conflict zones, I accompanied international institutions. In others, I conducted interviews in the presence of my local contact person. This was useful because the interviewees perceived me as a trusted person's friend rather than a stranger. Yet his or her presence might have influenced the interviewees' answers. In Maicao, La Guajira, an indigenous Wayúu leader, a local *vallenato* singer and a bass player all offered to escort me from one interview to the next one because they were curious about me and wished to protect me. This was useful because they suggested various persons to interview and knew the city. They waited outside the room where I was interviewing, or one of them joined me, which helped prevent the interviewee being intimidated by our strange "combo".

Mobility also protects researchers. In contexts of interpersonal mistrust those controlling the village observed outsiders entering it. Leaving places within some days after I arrived gave armed

actors less reason for suspicion about my presence as there was less room for gathering information they did not want me to collect. When I returned to previous research sites I emphasised the study's academic nature, but felt safer knowing I would not come back. Being constantly on the move also enabled me to maintain critical distance while analysing the situation.

Throughout the research I constantly reassessed my work and reflected on my researcher, friend, and individual roles in these difficult settings. Studying violence means experiencing an existential shock, a "disorientation about the boundaries between life and death, which appear erratic rather than discrete" (Nordstrom and Robben 1995, 13). At one extreme, doing so in multiple settings can mean that this shock is experienced again in each new setting, re-shaping the researcher's perceptions and capacities to analyse the data in an objective way. At the other extreme, through frequently entering new violent research settings, blurring of the line between life and death can become more normal. Being conscious of this is the first step for responsible research. Reflecting on this existential shock and on how it shapes our own perception, and the local populations' perception of oneself, is the continuation of this exercise. Only thanks to the borderlanders' support and help throughout my research across the different research sites was I able to complete my fieldwork successfully. Therefore, I consider it vital to report their perceptions of me and how they have shaped my researcher role, to be fully responsible to those lives we study.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

*Fear is in people's minds. It won't leave you. For them it's better to instil fear than to cause damage. [...] Honestly, there isn't really anything good to say about security here.*  
Citizen of Maracaibo, Venezuela (2012)

*There is a clash between concepts. For example, the concept of the border. What do the Wayúu understand by border? What do we understand by border? [...] For them the border is an imaginary line.*  
Citizen of Maicao, Colombia (2012)

In this chapter I present the two central concepts of this thesis, described by the citizens quoted above: citizen security and borderlands. I then establish a typology of VNSA interactions under the scope of the conditions of Colombia's borderlands and theorise about the distinct types of interaction within the typology to set out their relevance for citizen security. Finally, I introduce the border effect: the influence of the geography of borderlands on these security dynamics.

#### 3.1 Concepts from the Literature

##### 3.1.1 Security and Citizen Security

An “essentially contested concept” (Gallie 1955), security is interpreted in multiple ways: it matters “who gets to decide what security means, what issues make it onto security agendas, how those issues should be dealt with, and, crucially, what happens when different visions of security collide” (P. D. Williams 2012, 2). In this thesis I put the security of citizens in largely marginalised borderlands at the centre of attention. As democracy and human rights lie at the core of citizen security, this approach reveals the importance of addressing this issue not only for the borderlanders, but for society at large. In so doing, I challenge the vision of state borders as a matter of national security.

##### *The Evolution of Security Studies*

Even though its meaning has changed over time and space, security has been important throughout human history (Rothschild 1995, 60–61). Nonetheless, Security Studies became a

major field of study only after the Second World War (P. D. Williams 2012, 3). Commonly considered a subfield of International Relations, traditional Security Studies focused on national security (see e.g. Wolfers 1962, 147–166). With the state as the referent object, studying national security commonly implied analysing and influencing military strategy in the context of the Cold War, for example regarding nuclear deterrence (P. D. Williams 2012, 3). Until the 1980s, realists considered security a spin-off of power, while idealists considered it an outcome of peace (Buzan 1991, 2).

In the 1980s, in the context of the nuclear stalemate and increasing international interdependence through rising economic and environmental agendas, the militarily focused concept of national security received growing criticism. In addition, the relevance of the state changed as non-state actors increasingly influenced world politics. These developments brought into question the narrow concept of security, dominant among US realist scholars, with the state as the only referent object and the military arena as what security is about, precipitating a debate on broadening the concept (Buzan 1991, 12–13; Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 2). This debate led to new strands of thought, with two of them standing out (Wæver 2012, 50–53): Critical Security Studies, which emphasise that security is about threats against people rather than threats considered through a state-lens (see e.g. Krause and M. Williams 1997); and the Copenhagen School, which highlights how issues become securitised through speech acts (see e.g. Wæver 1995).

This “non-traditionalist” thinking resulted in the “deepening” of actors: the referent object is considered to include not only the state, but also regions, communities and individuals, the latter being reflected in the term “human security”. It can also consist in an individual characterised by a specific relationship with a larger group, such as citizens who belong to a citizenry (P. D. Williams 2012, 8). This thinking entailed a “widening” of the scope of security as well. Security threats are not limited to the military arena; they encompass other sectors, namely the political, economic, societal, environmental (Buzan 1991, 12; Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 21–23).

In this study I follow the non-traditionalists and consider security in a broader sense, as citizen security. The referent object is deepened to citizens and the sectors are widened to the political, economic and societal spheres. International Relations, where Security Studies are traditionally located, is not sufficient to understand security challenges in such a broader sense. I therefore also draw on insights from Area Studies to situate the citizen security concept in the regional context; Criminology to address the context of transnational organised crime; Anthropology to understand people's perceptions of security in their everyday lives; and Psychology to grasp coping strategies and reasons for engaging in violence.

### *Citizen Security*

For the purpose of my analysis I consider citizens the referent object and threats to democracy and human rights a security issue. I draw on Charles Tilly (1997, 599) who defines citizenship as

a relation between 1) governmental agents acting uniquely as such and 2) whole categories of persons identified uniquely by their connection with the government in question. The relation includes transactions among the parties, of course, but those transactions cluster around mutual rights and obligations.

Citizenship invokes fundamental human rights that lie at the heart of democracy, including the right to life and personal integrity (Casas-Zamora 2013, 3). These are not always fully exercised. Therefore Tilly (1995, 8) argues elsewhere that citizenship can “range from thin to thick”, depending on the “transactions, rights and obligations sustained by state agents and people living under their jurisdiction”. The state-society relationship is at the core of citizenship, and of citizen security.

I conceptualise citizen security as a societal order in which a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship reduces violence. Following John Bailey (2009, 274), I limit the violence component in this concept to “actual physical violence or the overt threat of violence intentionally inflicted by one person or persons on another or others” in the public sphere. Protection responsibilities are reciprocal: the state has a duty to protect its citizens; citizens have the right and responsibility to

participate in ensuring security (Estevez, 2003, 22). The state is a legitimate security provider; citizens accept its authority. This state-society relationship is a function of state capacity and responsiveness, on the one hand, and social fabric and a participatory approach of citizens to security policies, on the other.

Capacity refers to the state's ability to exercise its functions: to provide basic services, public goods including security and justice, and an enabling environment for the economy (Picciotto, Olonisakin, and Clarke 2007, 12–14). It is conducive to the absence of violence since citizens receive these services and goods by nonviolent means. Responsiveness requires taking into consideration citizens' interests, facilitating their participation in designing (security) policies, accountability, and the ability to manage conflictive situations.

Social fabric is a web of relationships that holds society together. Just as clothing fabric is knit with fibres, social fabric is knit with social capital (Pizzigati 2004, 331) based on interpersonal trust that leads to a sense of community and civic cooperation (Almond and Verba 1989, 227-231). This is conducive to the absence of violence and to citizen security because “good citizens are those who learn to behave with civility towards each other” (Whitehead 2002, 166) and “where it refers to a man's relations with his fellow men [being civil] indicates abstention from the use of force” (Collingwood 1999, 326). Since social capital facilitates cooperation and stabilises democratic institutions (Putnam 1993, 163–185), a tightly knit social fabric strengthens a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship. Fostering considerate behaviour with respect to other citizens' rights, social fabric is the prerequisite for the active participation of civil society in governing violence through the design of social and public policies that protect citizens, including civic infrastructure to reduce insecurity (Inglehart 1997, 90, 172-174; Inglehart 1999, 96-104). This includes citizen security councils, education, youth programmes and alternative mechanisms for conflict-resolution (Chinchilla Miranda 2002, 18; Chinchilla Miranda 2003, 220–221; Rico 1999, 55-58). Only if citizens have agency by articulating their opinion on how to reduce threats of violence can the state be responsive.

Laurence Whitehead (2002, 172) argues that citizens must have a say in what is security. Its scope differs from one society to another: it can be understood as the protection of citizens from threats ranging from domestic violence through social violence, common crime and organised crime to corruption. Yet while citizen security has a specific meaning to each society, it is necessary for the universal objective of human security because it is “a condition to wider political and economic development, and not an end in itself” (UNDP 2009a, 18). In its broadest interpretation as outlined by the Human Development Report (1994, 24–25), human security comprises seven dimensions: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. Focusing on operationalising human security and human development, personal security refers to protection of individuals from physical violence (UNDP 1994, 30–31). “[Community security] emphasises the needs of the community and the importance of bringing together different groups to design common approaches to common problems” (UNDP 2009a, 18). Similar to personal and community security, the scope of citizen security is narrower than that of human security (UNDP 2013a, 1). However, citizen security points to the importance of democracy and human rights and therefore implies that security is more than the reduction of violence, and also includes the consolidation of state institutions that protect people in a participatory and sustainable way (UNDP 2013a, 6).

Citizen security takes account of people’s agency. It distinguishes between objective citizen security and subjective citizen security (Curbet 2009; González Placencia 2002; Duce and Pérez 2003; Casas-Zamora 2013, 16–37). Covering observable facts such as homicides and the extent to which citizens participate in reducing insecurity through establishing an appropriate civic infrastructure, *objective* citizen security is tied to the state’s capacity and responsiveness. Addressing people’s perceptions, such as fear and uncertainty, *subjective* citizen security refers to the socially constructed concept of citizen security and is contingent on context. Lucía Dammert (2012, 1) notes that perceptions of insecurity have “a deep social, cultural, and economic impact and may even contribute to defining (or redefining) the very structures of the State”. They impair interpersonal trust, eroding the social fabric necessary to exercise agency as citizens (Dammert

2012, 31–32). Similarly, Koonings and Krujit (1999, 15) note that “fear is the institutional, cultural and psychological repercussion of violence. Fear is a response to institutional destabilization, social exclusion, individual ambiguity and uncertainty”. Thus, “a society that is characterized by fear, as well as by the constant perception of threat and risk has serious limitations to consolidate active citizenship and a strong civil society” (Dammert 2012, 4).

To some extent, the levels of subjective and objective citizen security depend on the societal group. Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwaine (2004, 195) for example note that in their case studies in Colombia and Guatemala youth and young men are likely to experience physical violence whereas women, children and the elderly are vulnerable to fear and uncertainty which limits their mobility. However, we still lack understanding of the discrepancy between objective and subjective citizen security (Casas-Zamora 2013, 35).

Citizen security can be analysed on three interwoven analytical levels: first, on the individual level to analyse the absence of violence; second, on the community level to examine the social fabric; and third, on the institutional level to explore the state-society relationship, that is, democratic governance (UNDP 2013a, 8). The first two levels in particular are important to also account for fear and the psychological consequences of violence (UNDP 2013a, 7; WHO 2002, 8).

#### *Citizen Security in Latin America*

In Latin America, under authoritarian regimes throughout most of the twentieth century security policies centred on maintaining law and order through repressive and punitive means in accordance with a national security doctrine thinking (Tickner and Herz 2012, 92). The focus was on public security, according to which state institutions have the responsibility to protect persons and property from physical violence. This protection resembles one of Hobbes’s Leviathan’s classical state functions. It can be double-edged because “governments are in the business of selling protection...whether people want it or not” (Lane in Tilly 1985, 175). Indeed, although

governments claimed to protect their citizens from internal and external threats, these very threats often arose from the governments.

The concept of citizen security gained importance in the early 1980s when, with a “third wave of democratisation” (Huntington 1991), democracy became the prevalent political system in Latin America. The debate shifted from public order and repression to a normative thinking grounded in the creation of an “environment conducive to peaceful coexistence” and “activities to prevent and control the factors that generate violence and insecurity” (IACHR Executive Secretary as cited in OAS/IACHR 2009, 7, Art. 20). It was considered the state’s task, through its public and social institutions, to contribute to maintaining and promoting peaceful coexistence and human rights in the framework of law and culture.

In contemporary Latin American societies, violence, crime and fear have been consistently cited as among the most serious challenges to security (UNDP 2013b, 1). I therefore define the scope of citizen security as presented above, focusing on the absence of physical violence and subjective citizen security to account for fear. These citizen security issues are also at the core of public policy: UNDP (2013a) made citizen security the topic of its 2013-2014 Human Development Report for Latin America. Governments, think-tanks and international organisations have developed tools including surveys with indicators to measure citizen security (see e.g. INE 2010; Plan Seguridad Ciudadana 2008; LAPOP 2012; Latinobarómetro 2013). The Inter-American Development Bank (2011) for example established twenty-two indicators including administrative records of homicides, firearm deaths and theft rates as well as survey data on perceived insecurity, risk and fear.

Policymakers prioritise urban areas rather than borderlands when designing surveys. This urban bias is reflected in the still incipient literature on fear and citizen security which concentrates on crime in cities, especially in metropolises (see e.g. Caldeira 2000; Dammert 2012; Lacarrieu 2007; Carrión 2007; Heeb 2002). Consequently, data or studies on the topic to build on hardly

exist for remote borderlands. If they exist, such security indicators are incomplete due to the high number of unreported cases in rural areas and because the representation of perceptions of security in victimisation surveys tends to be distorted: scared by the presence of armed groups, people prefer not to tell the truth.<sup>12</sup> Hence, to complement the existing citizen security literature with a rural dimension and obtain a realistic picture of citizen security in marginalised borderlands, I mostly refrain from measuring citizen security and engage in a qualitative approach instead.

### 3.1.2 Borders and Borderlands

The world has been shaped by political border-drawing throughout history. Changes of borders such as the fall of the Iron Curtain and the European Union's creation entailed global and regional political, economic and social developments (Wilson and Donnan 2012a, 1–3). Realists emphasise borders' traditional military function: "borders are strategic lines to be militarily defended or breached" (Andreas 2003, 81). The state system's history is characterised by interstate conflicts aimed at territorial conquest and by the importance of borders in deterring military incursions (Andreas 2003, 81). Globalists argue that growing global interdependence has made borders progressively less relevant due to a continuing de-territorialisation (Brenner 1999, 60–67). Ken'ichi Ōmae (1990) suggests that we live in a "borderless world". Economic liberalisation, financial mobility and new communication and transportation technologies – globalisation – have transformed borders into "bridges for commercial transactions rather than economic barriers and fortified military lines" (Andreas 2003, 83). Globalists point to the decline of military border disputes yet power politics and boundary disputes still matter (cf. Klemencic and Schofield 2004, 63–64). Boundaries defined by religious, cultural and ethnic identities have been dominating world politics in the post-9/11 era (Andreas 2009, vii–viii). The "de-bordering" process of globalisation comes along with strengthened nationalism, economically promoted regionalism and the re-claiming of identities and culture, reinforcing existing, and creating new

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<sup>12</sup> The Venezuelan INE (2010, 160) for example asked citizens which is the primary group perceived to produce insecurity. When people fear victimisation by that group, they are unlikely to state their perceptions in the questionnaire.

boundaries (Morehouse, Pavlakovich-Kochi, and Wastl-Walter 2004, 7). Yet Sanjeev Kaghram and Peggy Levitt (2008, 24) argue that globalist analysis is not sufficiently nuanced to capture such transnational dynamics at regional levels.

According to a third viewpoint positioned in international political economy, “geopolitics is transformed, not transcended” (Andreas 2003, 108). Illegal economic cross-border movements are historic (Friman and Andreas 1999, 1). As Manuel Castells (2010, 172) put it, “crime is as old as humankind. Indeed, in the biblical account of our origins, our plight began with the illegal traffic of apples”. Transnational organised crime, refugee flows and free trade agreements indeed question the function of borders as delimiters or barriers (Slowe 1991), but exist due to the very persistence of borders. Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas (2010, 9) emphasise that “asymmetries’ in states’ taxation and regulation in a world of globalized demand create the incentives for engaging in “jurisdictional arbitrage” in the form of smuggling and trafficking”. Yet the scope of the activities belonging to the “Other Side of Globalization” is new (Abraham and van Schendel 2005, 4). Local smugglers are being superseded by global networks, common criminals join transnational terrorists, and chains of illegal drug, human or weapons trafficking expand past regions to extend across continents (Deville 2013, 63). Also state regulation, law enforcement and political awareness of illegal economic cross-border activities have changed (Andreas 2009, 15). New technologies did not reduce the importance of borders, but brought them to the centre of policy concerns. Whilst border controls have become stricter through sophisticated intelligence and surveillance technologies, these same technologies enable those who evade the law to circumvent controls and adapt to changing market conditions. This generates even more sophisticated law enforcement strategies, leading to a never-ending “border game” (Andreas 2009, 144). More border control to curb such activities may be counterproductive: the greater the risk associated with the illegal enterprise, the higher the profits and hence the incentives to engage in it (van Schendel 2005a, 59; Goodhand 2008, 235; Andreas 2009, 22–23). “The economic importance of smuggling demonstrates that there is not just a formal, aboveground dimension of regional and global interdependence but an informal,

underground dimension as well” (Andreas 2009, 19).<sup>13</sup> By using increasingly astute strategies those who evade the law endorse the very borders without which their activities would vanish (Goodhand 2008, 236).

#### *The Evolution of Borderland Studies*<sup>14</sup>

The history of Border Studies is characterised by the scholarship on territory, sovereignty and borders initiated by Political Geography and later taken on by Political Science and International Relations; and the scholarship on borders and identity, put forward by anthropologists and social theorists (Atzili 2012, 11–15). “The notion of centrality of borders to international relations is anything but new“ (Atzili 2012, 11). By the Middle Ages, natural boundaries served to delimit territories and thus to establish territorial sovereignty (Paasi 1999, 12). In the Westphalian understanding of the nation, the concept of borders became important as “fixed, legal geopolitical entities” (Goodhand 2008, 226–227), “political divides that were the result of state building, especially from the eighteenth century onward” (Baud and van Schendel 1997, 214). Borders confer sovereignty and territoriality to nation-states, ideas which have become norms embedded in international law, treaties and resolutions.

Scholarship on territorial sovereignty and borderlines started in the late nineteenth century (see Ratzel 1897). Since then, concepts such as boundaries and frontiers have complemented it (Prescott 1987).<sup>15</sup> After the Second World War, studying political geography on borders was often considered too sensitive in Europe because, mixed with racial theories, it had been (ab)used for expansionist ambitions by the Third Reich. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s Border Studies started thriving again (Paasi 1999, 14; Atzili 2012, 12–13). Atzili (2012, 12–13) argues that since then territoriality has been considered a variable rather than a constant. History would show that borders mediate exchange between different entities, not necessarily states. The relation

<sup>13</sup> The estimated value of drug trafficking alone is 320 billion USD a year (UNODC 2012).

<sup>14</sup> For overviews of border studies see Alvarez (1995), Eskelinen et al. (1999), Donnan and Haller (2000), Morehouse et al. (2004), Wastl-Walter (2011) and Wilson and Donnan (2012a).

<sup>15</sup> For the definition of boundaries and frontiers see Goodhand (2008, 226–227), for the difference between frontiers and borderlands see Korf and Raeymaekers (2013, 12).

between political entities, their boundaries and the population is variable (cf. Kratochwil 1986, 32). International borders have two dimensions: their location, manipulated by states, and their functions, for example in determining who stays in and who stays out, as in the process of the European integration (Atzili 2012, 13). These dimensions can be intertwined when the location is the border's most important function (Herbst 1989). All these works suggest the state delimited by borders to be the most important organisational form for nations in the short and intermediate term, although the meaning of borders is constantly evolving (Paasi 1999, 21).

Anthropologists and social theorists consider borders to be social constructs, not only a tangible reality (Atzili 2006, 141). Borders are mental expressions of territorial power which do not always agree with experiences on the ground. Pioneer Fredrik Barth (1969) researched how trans-border communities are affected by the border; another milestone was Cole (1974). Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson (1999), and Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004) have added dimensions of identity and everyday life to this research agenda.

Both disciplinary approaches – Geography and International Relations, and Anthropology and Social Theory – were most interested in borders in relation to territory and secession.<sup>16</sup> Only since the 1990s have researchers and policy analysts acknowledged the usefulness of focusing on borderlands “in their own right” (Goodhand 2013, 247; see also Zartman 2010; Korf and Raeymaekers 2013). The new emphasis on boundaries as context, i.e. the geographical spaces of borderlands, rather than on boundaries themselves “arose from contemporary interest in pluralistic approaches, the importance of context, and the need to place greater emphasis on localities and on their linkages to other scales of resolution” (Morehouse, Pavlakovich-Kochi, and Wastl-Walter 2004, 28). Anthropological interests include questions of how boundaries constructed through social discourse “serve as markers for relations of power between those on either side of the line” (Morehouse, Pavlakovich-Kochi, and Wastl-Walter 2004, 28), and of where the state's margins are (Asad 2004). Political scientists and geographers analyse the

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<sup>16</sup> With a few exceptions such as Barth (1969).

geographical space of borderlands and the political, economic and social dynamics that arise due to the specific location of borderlands, i.e. “what happens where the state ends” (Korf and Raeymaekers 2013, 5). I follow Benedikt Korf and Timothy Raeymaekers and other political scientists and geographers in their territorial approach to borderlands because it facilitates exploring how citizen security in borderlands is affected by VNSA interactions and how the geography of borderlands influences these dynamics.

### *Borderland Dynamics*

Niles Hansen (1981, 19) defines borderlands as “sub-national areas whose economic and social life is directly and significantly affected by proximity to an international boundary” (see also Zartman 2010, 1; Vorrath 2010, 86; Zeller 2013, 194). Heikki Eskelinen, Ilkka Liikanen, and Jukka Oksa (1999, 22) suggest that understanding borderland dynamics requires analysing how the border affects the life of borderlanders. Arguing borderlands constitute “a transition zone within which a boundary lies”, Prescott’s (1987, 13–14) definition emphasises the transnationality of borderlands. Goodhand (2008, 228) calls the zone a “region”, implying people also reside permanently in these zones. I adopt a definition that combines these characterisations: Borderlands are “regions situated on the edges of states which straddle an international border” (Goodhand 2008, 228; see also van Schendel 2005a, 44), “whose economic and social life is directly and significantly affected by proximity to an international boundary”.<sup>17</sup> This definition reflects the border’s influence on phenomena in these spaces, including the transactional character of borderlands, which Morehouse et al. (2004, 29) allegorise as follows:

Where boundaries slice and glue, borderlands airbrush differences, mix things up. Fundamentally, a borderland is an area through which a boundary line runs, but the most important key to understanding borders and borderlands, i.e. the territorial spaces along the boundary, lies in recognizing their transactional nature. Borderlands acquire their basic identity from interactions with the boundary and its rules, and from transactions that take place across the boundary, between inhabitants of the borderland territory.

Borderlands are a universal concept. Across time and space, they are traversed and influenced by

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<sup>17</sup> For internal borderlands see Jackson (2008, 268–288) and Goodhand (2008, 228).

an international border and physically distant from state centres (cf. Martínez 1994, xvii–xviii). Due to their transnationality, borders “divide and unite, bind the interior and link with the exterior, [as] barriers and junctions, walls and doors, organs of defense and attack” (Strassoldo 1989, 393 cited in Zartman 2010, 6). Korf and Raeymaekers (2013, 4) contend that “borderland dynamics [have to be considered] not just as outcomes of diffusing statehood or globalization, but also as actual political units that generate their own actions and outcomes”.

The breadth of borderlands is conditioned by the local context. According to Goodhand (2008, 228),

where the borderland periphery ends and the state-controlled centre begins may be conceptualised as a mobile, semi-permeable, internal frontier – a zone of transition from low to high administrative intensity and where the ‘border effect’ has become less significant than the ‘state effect’.

The size of borderlands depends on the extent to which cross-border transactions reach into areas distant from the borderline. Borderlands can be “quite narrow, huddling close to the boundary, or [...] may extend for many miles in one or both directions from the dividing line” (Morehouse, Pavlakovich-Kochi, and Wastl-Walter 2004, 30; see also Vorrath 2010, 86). Borderlands comprise both sides of the border; border zones adjoin the borderline from one side.

Borderland dynamics are studied in three major ways. First, focusing on borderlanders, Oscar Martínez (1994, xviii) highlights that within borderlands some people are more influenced by the border than others. Those whose livelihoods depend on the border because they are engaged in cross-border trade, work as customs officials, or have family members living on both sides have a stronger border experience. They differ more from heartlanders than others who are little engaged in trans-border activities.<sup>18</sup> Second, Korf and Raeymaekers (2013, 5) highlight the co-presence of several systems with state practices and rules and norms arising from transnational processes. This confluence in the margins produces dynamics that characterise how periphery and centre are

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<sup>18</sup> I define “heartlands” as the spaces where the influence of the political and economic centres of the states supersedes the border effect (cf. van Schendel 2005a, 49).

linked with each other because these systems can be complementary, parallel or competing. Third, Donnan and Wilson (1994, 8) and Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel (1997, 219) point to relationships characterised by the transnationality of borderlands: relationships of borderlanders with borderlanders from the other border zones, with heartlanders, the state, and borderland elites.

These approaches acknowledge the dynamic nature of borderlands regarding the spatial dimensions and the changes in the border's influence on borderland life. As Willem van Schendel (2005a, 46) notes, "there is nothing passive about borders; in borderlands, the spatiality of social relations is forever taking on new shapes". William Zartman (2010, 2) posits that "borderlands need to be understood, not as places or even events, but as social processes". They all imply the agency of borders shaping the social, political and economic phenomena in borderlands. Identities such as border guards, smugglers or refugees would not exist without the agency of borders (Zartman 2010, 4).

#### *Border Zone or Borderland Perspective*

According to state-centric perspectives in International Relations, global dynamics shape state centres, and these centres affect borderlands (Zartman 2010, 9). The power centres expand, militarise their borders in defence or make agreements on cross-border trade with repercussions for the borderlands (Zartman 2010, 11). Borderlands "are usually defined, 'nationalized' and symbolized by the power located in the heartland at the centres" (Eskelinen, Liikanen, and Oksa 1999, 10). Van Schendel (2005a, 44) concludes that "we know much more about how states dealt with borderlands than how borderlands dealt with states" (see also Baud and van Schendel 1997; van Schendel 2005b; Goodhand 2013). Itty Abraham and Willem van Schendel (2005, 5) note:

The contemporary social sciences are ill equipped to make sense of transnational flows due to their symbiotic history with the modern state and its interests. Most social science is expressly and unconsciously bound by state boundaries, categories that are reproduced within institutionally sanctioned academic specializations.

Overcoming the obstacle of considering the state as one analytical unit, I follow borderland scholars who take borderlands and borderlanders rather than heartlands as their starting point (see e.g. Newman and Paasi 1998; Donnan and Wilson 1999; Kolossov 2005; Newman 2006; Wilson and Donnan 2012b). Korf and Raeymakers (2013, 7) argue that borderland dynamics “radiate” outwards to the regions in which they are embedded. This “radiation” can extend to the state’s power centres: borderland dynamics shape state policies relevant to territorial sovereignty, national identity and the state’s embedding in the regional context. Accordingly, van Schendel (2005b, 385) holds that “many states stand or fall by how their borderlands handle them”.

I sub-divide this border lens into a border *zone* and *borderland* perspective and draw on both to analyse citizen security repercussions of VNSA arrangements in borderlands. Models of social relations in borderlands, such as Martínez’s (1994, 5–10) model on alienated, coexistent, interdependent and integrated borderlands, consider each border *zone* as a unit to examine the relationships between both sides of the border. A border *zone* perspective reveals the differences of repercussions in each border *zone* arising from the state policies and actors tied to and contained within the territorial limits of each bordering state. A borderland perspective considers the area of both sides as one spatial unit of analysis (Baud and van Schendel 1997, 216; van Schendel 2005a, 44). It facilitates analysing how borderlands are interconnected horizontally through the flow of goods, people and ideas, although they are separated vertically by borders. It reveals how the political and cultural systems of both sides overlap in the borderlands (Goodhand 2008, 230). Borderland communities develop commercial, cultural and social cross-border ties that entail a sense of belonging to a transnational community rather than to the national state; they have distinct identities and experiences from those who live further away from the border. A borderland perspective depicts the distinctiveness of citizen security impacts of VNSA interactions located in borderlands as opposed to more central regions. I agree with Abraham and van Schendel (2005, 55) on the importance of exploring how borderlanders and other actors relying on the border understand these transnational spaces:

If we want to understand how they “scale” the world, we must start from their cognitive maps – their organized representations of their spatial environment and their own place in it. Since these maps are rarely stored externally (in the form of a physical map), an essential part of studying the changing geographies of borderlands is to access cognitive “maps in minds”.

Therefore, my research approach emphasises listening to numerous borderland voices from diverse backgrounds to understand and map these spaces from their viewpoints.

### 3.2 The Analytical Framework

In the remainder of this chapter, I develop an analytical framework to explain how different forms of VNSA interactions in Colombia’s borderlands impact on citizen security and how the geography of borderlands influences these impacts. I adopt four assumptions about VNSAs: (i) the VNSAs’ behaviour follows instrumental rationality that is based on “*a prior context of power, expectations, values, and conventions, which affect how interests are determined as well as what calculations, given interests, are made*” (Keohane 2005, 75); (ii) they make cost-benefit analyses as part of their decision-making; (iii) they behave in certain ways based on fear of being cheated; and (iv) longer-term relationships among themselves will become more institutionalised (cf. Schmid 1996; McCormick 2003; Hoffman 2006; Crenshaw 2011b; Forest 2012; J. N. Shapiro 2012). Based on my empirical data and the relevant literature that I discuss below I have identified eight types of VNSA interactions informed by institutional factors (distrust-reducing mechanisms) and incentives (interdependence):

- i. Absence of arrangements,
- ii. Spot sales and barter agreements,
- iii. Tactical alliances,
- iv. Subcontractual relationships,
- v. Transactional supply chain relationships,
- vi. Strategic alliances,
- vii. Pacific coexistence,

viii. Preponderance relations.

### 3.2.1 A Typology of Violent Non-State Actor Interactions

The early literature on cooperation among social actors helps us understand how VNSAs interact. Game theoretical work explains how strategic interactions between rational actors rely on assumptions actors have about each other's future actions, important to prevent cheating (Von Neumann 1947; Schelling 1980). Regarding collective action, incentives for collaboration are shaped by the size of the groups between which it takes place (Olson 1965). Subsequent contributions reveal the importance of institutional arrangements to facilitate cooperation (Axelrod 2006; Ostrom 1990), and Bernard Williams (1990) and Elinor Ostrom (2000) point to the conditional motivations of social actors to cooperate. Ostrom presupposes that in addition to rational egoists, two types of "norm-using" players exist: "conditional cooperators" and "willing punishers".

International Relations literature discusses circumstances under which cooperation under anarchy emerges, and the strategies of states to change them so as to make cooperation feasible (Oye 1986). Like states, VNSAs experience anarchy where "cheating and deception are endemic" (Axelrod and Keohane 1985, 226). To facilitate cooperation, both types of actors create institutions to overcome distrust or draw on shared values because they positively shape expectations of future fulfilment of commitments. Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane (1985, 249) note that, in addition to institutional factors, actors undertake "deliberate efforts to change the very structure of the situation by changing the context in which each of them would be acting" to incite sustained cooperation. The actors' interdependence is therefore crucial: it produces "incentives for cooperation so that cooperation would be rewarded over the long run, and defection punished" (Axelrod and Keohane 1985, 249). Building on this literature, scholars working on rebel group alliances have analysed how allegiances shift (Kalyvas 2003), how rebels overcome commitment problems (Bond 2010; Bapat and Bond 2012) and how the balance of power among fighting factions shapes patterns of alliance formation (Christia 2012).

Overcoming distrust is essential in any kind of inter-organisational collaboration (Deutsch 1962; Thomas 1979, 217; Mishra 1996), especially under anarchy. It is critical for organised criminals, including mafia groups, due to the illegality of their businesses (cf. Gambetta 1990; Gambetta 2009, 30). Illegality enhances economic benefits because it confers high value on a good or activity, but the risks attached to it are also high: since arrangements on illegal issues are not legally binding, the possibility of cheating, betrayal and treachery is omnipresent: “People who are untrustworthy are also more likely to think that others are untrustworthy” (Gambetta 2009, 31). As Andreas and Duran-Martinez (2015, 382) note, these issues often involve violence: “Participants in illicit trade do not have recourse to the law to enforce contracts – and thus business disputes are more likely to be dealt with by shooting rather than suing”. This increases fear of being cheated and the need for these groups to base their consent to engaging in arrangements on the other party’s trustworthiness (cf. Gambetta 2009, 30–77). According to Diego Gambetta (1990, 217), trust is “a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both *before* he can monitor such action [...] *and* in a context in which it affects *his own* action”.<sup>19</sup> Trust arises in a “relationship with people who are to some extent free [and which] itself must be one of *limited freedom* [...] it must be possible [...] to refrain from action” (Gambetta 1990a, 219).

The literature on cooperation among states and mafia groups helps us understand the incentives and institutional factors that facilitate cooperation within a single category of VNSAs, but do not account for the many existing forms of interaction among different VNSAs. P. Williams’s (2002) conceptualisation of criminal organisations as business networks is more nuanced. The author postulates that interactions between groups can be conceived as “arrangements of convenience”: varied linkages to pursue specific interests, which can range from conflict and competition to

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<sup>19</sup> This definition of trust is founded on the agent’s vulnerability (see Deutsch 1977; Luhmann 1979; Barber 1983; Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman 1991).

coordination and cooperation (P. Williams 2002, 68). These links resemble those in the licit business world: “The collaboration may take diverse forms ranging from strategic alliances and joint ventures at the most ambitious level through tactical alliances, contract relationships, supplier customer relations, to spot sales at the most basic level” (P. Williams and Godson 2002, 326–327). To enhance mutual benefit and spread risks, groups form adaptable, resilient, and expandable networks. P. Williams applies this concept mainly to the interactions of criminal groups, but as Saab and Taylor (2009, 458) note, the works of Alex Schmid (2005) and Thomas Naylor (1993) suggest its instructiveness regarding different VNSAs. Schmid (2005) assesses the links between drug trafficking and terrorist groups and their convergence or mutation, emphasising the cost-benefit analysis on which these actors base their choice of interaction. Naylor (1993, 23) discusses short-term tactical alliances between insurgent and drug trafficking groups that help secure their finances. Such business links have become increasingly important to illegal economic cross-border activities (Castells 2010, 174):

[The] internationalization of criminal activities induces organized crime from different countries to establish strategic alliances to cooperate, rather than fight, on each other’s turf, through subcontracting arrangements, and joint ventures, whose business practice closely follows the organizational logic of what I identified as “the network enterprise” [...].

To build a typology of VNSA interactions I draw on the literature on cooperation among first, states; second, the mafia; and third, organised criminal groups. First, my typology takes into account the context of quasi-anarchy. Second, cooperation can be successful without trust (Cook 2005), especially when the activities at the core of the cooperation are illegal. I therefore emphasise the need to *reduce distrust* rather than *build trust*. Among mafia groups distrust-reducing mechanisms, such as signalling, can arguably be employed in any form of interaction (cf. Gambetta 2009). When interactions take place among different VNSAs the effectiveness of such measures depends on the types of groups involved. The danger of cheating for example is lower between ideologically aligned groups than between ideologically opposed ones. Hence, the mechanisms to reduce distrust among different VNSAs are more nuanced and encompass more factors than among mafia groups only. Third, I borrow P. Williams’s term of “arrangements of

convenience” because like “interaction”, “arrangement” (including conflict and coexistence) comprises more than “cooperation”.<sup>20</sup> The term describes VNSA interactions informed by thin, or calculative trust (Williamson 1983; Williamson 1993; Gambetta 2009, 37), rather than as cooperative undertakings based on “thick trust” tied to goodwill (cf. Putnam 2001). While P. Williams’ and Castells’s business models account for economic considerations only, I address relationships among different VNSAs that include, but are not limited to business links.

Given the context of illegality, VNSAs draw on enforcement methods with some form of (violent) punishment for non-compliance (Gambetta 2009, 33).<sup>21</sup> Yet this is not sufficient to overcome inter-group mistrust, unless there is a considerable power imbalance between the actors involved. As Gambetta (2009, 35) notes,

[w]hat [punishment] does not do is to increase the credibility of the promises of the tough guy. Being violent does not make one *generally* credible. If anything it has the opposite effect, as people fear that someone who uses force to protect himself from cheating will also use force to protect himself when *he* cheats.

Although Gambetta is referring to individuals rather than groups, his reasoning also applies to VNSAs: threat of violence is not sufficient for VNSAs to deter other groups from cheating, hence the necessity of more generally applicable distrust-reducing mechanisms. Furthermore, enforcement methods vary from case to case, even within the same category of arrangement, and thus do not allow conclusions to be drawn on categories of arrangements *per se*.

The distinct VNSA arrangements are driven by the availability of institutional mechanisms to reduce distrust. These mechanisms work on the basis of four broad categories of motivation of social interaction (Gambetta 1990, 168): interests, personal bonds, values, and power.<sup>22</sup> *Interests* include shared economic and other interests. They are used as mechanisms to cooperate in the

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<sup>20</sup> According to B. Williams (1990, 7) “two agents cooperate when they engage in a joint venture for the outcome of which the actions of each are necessary, and where a necessary action by at least one of them is not under the immediate control of the other”.

<sup>21</sup> For example, the son of group A’s leader is taken hostage by group B until group B receives the drugs for the money that they paid to group A. If group A dishonours the deal, group B kills the hostage.

<sup>22</sup> Gambetta (1990, 168) uses “coercion” instead of “power”.

context of illegality and distrust, for example through strategies such as hostage-taking (Cook 2005, 37): shared information on illegal acts of the groups involved renders them hostages of each other and therefore serves to reduce distrust (Campana and Varese 2013, 281). *Personal bonds* refer to friendly relationships with someone who is “trustworthy” regarding a specific issue. This meta-category speaks to concepts such as Karen Cook’s (2005, 37) third party and external sponsors that civil war actors use as guarantors (Bapat and Bond 2012, 795), and international institutions that increase the sustainability of arrangements among states (Axelrod and Keohane 1985, 234). *Values* comprise ideological, moral or religious beliefs. Kinship – cited by Gambetta (1990, 168) under personal bonds, and subsumed under hostage-taking by Paolo Campana and Federico Varese (2013) – can also fall under values. *Power* refers to the use or credible threat of coercion.<sup>23</sup> It relates to Cook’s (2005, 37) strategy of cutting off options.

Gambetta (1990, 168) argues that the mafia draws on all four motivations as mechanisms to overcome distrust. In the case of different VNSAs not all motivations are normally present. Rather, arrangements are shaped by the availability of these motivations to be employed as distrust-reducing mechanisms, the VNSAs’ evaluation of the costs and benefits and their capabilities in a specific context (Schmid 2005), and external factors including a government’s repressive capacity, which can alter cost-benefit analyses (Bapat and Bond 2012).

Interests and personal bonds are egoistic and non-egoistic micro-motivations respectively “to cooperate, on a given occasion or occasions, which does not imply any general motive to cooperate as such” (B. Williams 1990, 10). Values and power, which are a general disposition to cooperate, are non-egoistic and egoistic macro-motivations respectively (B. Williams 1990, 10). Shaping the durability of the VNSAs’ arrangements of convenience, the distrust-reducing mechanisms based on the motivations entail three clusters of arrangements. These clusters are

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<sup>23</sup> I define power as compulsory power. Accordingly, relationships between actors “allow one to shape directly the circumstances or actions of another” (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 49).

largely analogous to Alexander Wendt's (1999, 246–312) three cultures of anarchy: the Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian culture (see also Wight 1991):

- i. In the absence of a distrust-reducing mechanism, no arrangement is present. VNSAs are “enemies”, they interact with each other in a Hobbesian culture (cf. Wendt 1999, 259–278). Geography (urban or rural spaces), temporality (phase in the cycle of violence) and the type of VNSAs influence the extent to which violence is limited.
- ii. Interests and personal bonds facilitate short-term arrangements. As self-interested “rivals”, VNSAs cooperate pragmatically in a Lockean culture (cf. Wendt 1999, 279–297). They form sporadic alliances, for example to balance alliances among rivaling VNSAs (cf. Waltz 2010).
- iii. Personal bonds with a third party, values and power allow for long-term arrangements. In a Kantian culture VNSAs have durable relationships with the third party, comparable to the regime of Immanuel Kant's (1795) League of Nations. Shared “friendship” values make VNSAs appreciate each other over time (cf. Wendt 1999, 297–308). Power can be considered within the Kantian culture if other VNSAs consider such power legitimate and constitutive of their own security, which makes the arrangement durable (Wendt 1999, 305).

My typology of VNSA interactions also comprises incentives for cooperation that arise from varying levels of group interdependence. B. Williams (1990, 7) notes that “a situation in which two agents cooperate necessarily involves at least one of them *depending on* the other, or being [...] a *dependent party*”. In some situations of interaction “everyone in them is under the immediate control of everyone”, the groups are interdependent (B. Williams 1990, 7). When action is staggered, interdependence is relatively high.

Each VNSA arrangement is characterised by, first, a certain degree of interdependence that is determined, *inter alia*, by whether the action takes place simultaneously and in the same territory; and second, by a specific distrust-reducing mechanism:<sup>24</sup>

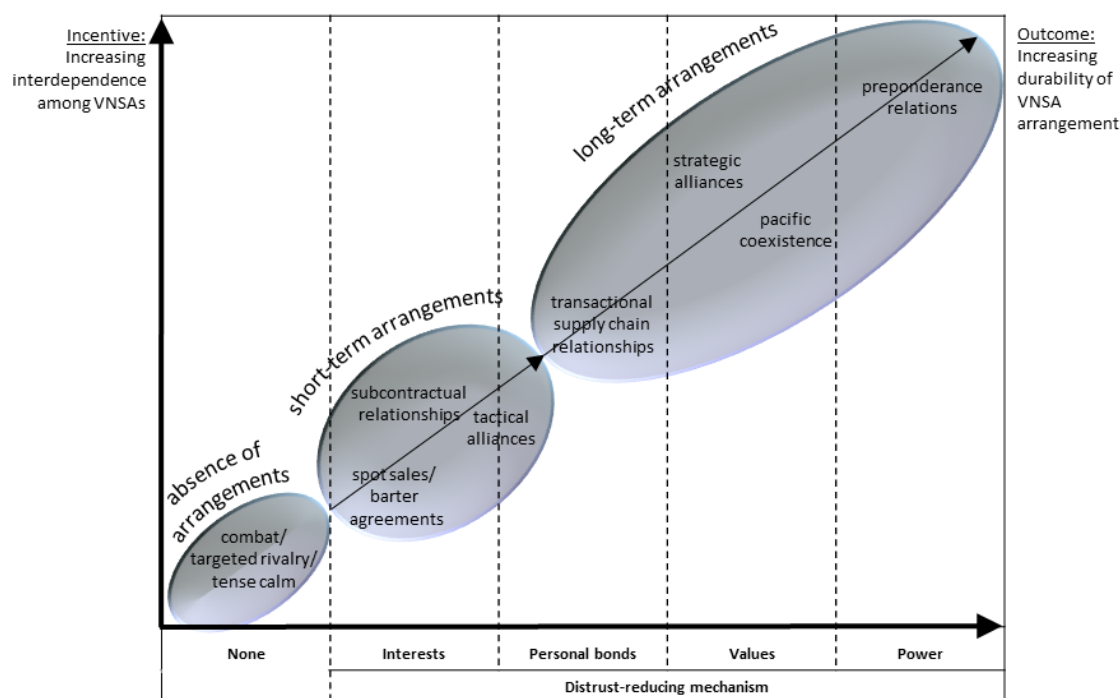
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<sup>24</sup> The number of VNSA groups involved is unlimited; the most common number in my empirical data is two.

**Table 1: Institutional factors and incentives for violent non-state actor relationships<sup>25</sup>**

<b>Distrust-reducing Mechanisms/ Relative Interdependence</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Interests</b>	<b>Personal Bonds</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Power</b>
<b>High</b>	n.a.	subcontractual relationships	transactional supply chain relationships	strategic alliances	preponderance
<b>Low</b>	absence of arrangement	spot sales/ barter agreements	tactical alliances	pacific coexistence	n.a.

I conceptualise the eight categories of interaction on a fuzzy continuum of three clusters of VNSA arrangements that captures the distrust-reducing mechanisms and degrees of interdependence which shape each arrangement and its durability:

**Figure 5: The fuzzy continuum of clusters of violent non-state actor arrangements**

<sup>25</sup> The degree of interdependence is indicated in relation to the arrangement types that are closest to the respective arrangement on the fuzzy continuum.

Bound to certain distrust-reducing mechanisms and levels of interdependence, the arrangements do not move beyond the clusters. Within each cluster however their positions are variable. Five factors inform the continuum's fuzziness, i.e. the uneven increments in group interdependence, and the fluidity of categories:<sup>26</sup>

- i. The arrangements are dynamic. They change over time and space and evolve from one into another. The changes are not necessarily continuous: tactical alliances for example may mutate directly into the absence of an arrangement or into a more durable strategic alliance.
- ii. Conditioned by context, the durability of arrangements varies. It cannot be defined by attributing a certain time period to them.
- iii. The arrangements are not mutually exclusive. One group can engage in various arrangements simultaneously. Different arrangements can be embedded into each other and form spatial enclaves.
- iv. The distinctions between different arrangements can be blurred. The groups' identities are not always clear. Some operate in the name of others and subgroups operate separately under the same name.
- v. Arrangements may vary across regions. VNSAs are seldom monolithic and their organisational structure matters. Group members can disagree on how to engage with other groups, especially if the group is structured as a network rather than a hierarchy.

VNSAs also engage in relationships with other actors, including state forces, local elites, external actors and the central state. Paul Staniland (2012) discusses how different political war orders depend on the civil war actors' relationships with the state. Enrique Desmond Arias (2010, 128) considers how collaboration between criminal networks and the state relates to the division of power between levels of government and the electoral system. Moisés Naím's (2012) "mafia states" build on governments' close relationships with mafia groups. Analysing these relationships is beyond the scope of this thesis, but I account for situations in which state actors influence relationships among VNSAs.

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<sup>26</sup> For an earlier version of this conceptualisation see Idler (2012b).

I now present eight types of arrangements of convenience and subsequently discuss their citizen security impacts.

### *Absence of Arrangements*

The absence of arrangements is the first cluster to the fuzzy continuum's left. Here, VNSA groups have conflicting interests and lack a distrust-reducing mechanism. Disputing control of territory or of (illegal) economic activities to enhance economic, social and/or political power, they operate independently from each other. The way the absence of an arrangement takes shape depends on space, the groups involved, the political situation and the phase in the cycle of violence. In rural areas combat is predominant. Defined as "fighting between armed forces" by the Oxford Dictionaries, combat most commonly exists in states with armed conflict.<sup>27</sup> In intra-state conflicts it refers to military clashes between civil war actors including rebel and paramilitary groups (Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas, I. Shapiro, and Masoud 2008; Arjona 2010), various rebel groups (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012), and the state and rebels (Staniland 2012). In urban areas targeted rivalry prevails: contesting groups selectively threaten to use violence or use violence against each other's members.<sup>28</sup> Targeted rivalry is common in conflict and non-conflict countries. The most widely analysed actors involved are criminals, gangs and drug cartels gangs (Juetersonke, Muggah, and Rodgers 2009; Rodgers 2006; Manwaring 2005; Strocka 2006). However, targeted rivalry also occurs in contexts where conflict and non-conflict dynamics are blurred and post-demobilised groups, militias, rebels and paramilitaries are involved, too. In targeted rivalry among mafia groups, groups aim for a lower profile than in combat because they coexist with state actors (cf. Gambetta 1993; Varese 2010; Glenny 2009). In other contexts, such as the dispute among Mexican drug cartels or Guatemalan gangs, highly visible violence attracts attention (Astorga 2007; Osorio 2013). Both practices are also employed by civil war actors.

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<sup>27</sup> Combat in a non-conflict country occurs when foreign civil actors fight each other on that country's territory.

<sup>28</sup> The lines between combat and targeted rivalry are not always clear-cut. Vargas (2009, 114) for example demonstrates how the town of Barrancabermeja suffered combat (what he calls urban irregular warfare) in the late 1990s.

Since VNSAs have to invest material, financial and human resources to sustain fighting, combat and targeted rivalry are temporally limited (cf. Kalyvas 2006). Referring to dynamics between the state and rebels, Staniland's (2012, 252) description of "non-cooperation", including "guerrilla disorder" (both parties are in the same territory), and "clashing monopolies" (the groups try to seize control over the other's territory), illustrates the cyclic nature of this violence:

Sometimes non-cooperation is a brief burst of extreme unrestrained violence amidst a longer pattern of bargaining or the endgame of clashing armies after a long process of escalation. More rarely, it characterizes the entire nature of the conflict. This relationship can also result from the breakdown of more cooperative wartime political orders into a spiral of escalatory violence. Political interests shape how capacity is deployed, but given the lack of political cooperation, outcomes in these orders are substantially a function of military power.

Combat and targeted rivalry are thus episodes of violence within longer periods of tense calm during which violence can erupt at any time.

#### *Short-term Arrangements*

The continuum's second cluster comprises short-term arrangements based on relatively low degrees of interdependence and informed by shared interests and personal bonds as distrust-reducing mechanisms. Given the importance of economic interests, short-term arrangements prevail in strategic transit zones or starting points of international drug trafficking routes where groups involved gain large financial benefits. Scholars have highlighted durable cooperation among organised criminals, including a *pax mafiosa* (Sterling 1995), but few have analysed the relevance of "small, flexible, and less durable alliances" (van Schendel 2005a, 51, 65).

#### - Spot sales and barter agreements

Spot sales and barter agreements are one-time financial or material transactions that last for short periods of time. In the latter case the deals involve commodities, for example illegal drugs or weapons purchased "on the spot", either on a cash basis or as a barter agreement (for example, arms-for-drugs deals). They can be destined for the internal market or for export. Spot sales occur

on different scales, ranging from small amounts of goods to business deals that involve large financial commitments. In this case the consequences for noncompliance are likely to be more serious. Spot sales and barter agreements arise from convergence of interests in a specific transaction. Groups involved have little interdependence. The arrangements are characterised by minimal regulation. At the time of switching products or paying cash for goods however, all parties involved have to share some common understanding of the deal because they depend on each other for the deal to be successful. This guarantee and restraint for both parties can be increased through enforcement methods, such as hostage-taking (Williamson 1983). Even if the groups do not perceive each other to be generally credible and act independently from each other, they overcome the problem of distrust in this particular instance. The business deals can materialise spontaneously. Leaders of hostile groups may undertake a deal one day because it brings mutual benefits, and fight each other the next day. These barter agreements can be embedded in transactional supply chain relationships. If the barter agreement takes place on a reiterative basis with the same parties involved, distrust is reduced more effectively and the business partner's credibility increases. The arrangement may shift to a tactical alliance or, if territorially segmented, to a transactional supply chain relationship.

- Tactical alliances

Devoid of initial expectations of long-term commitment (P. Williams 2002, 75), tactical alliances are fragile (Ávila and Núñez 2008) and minimally institutionalised. The groups are only interdependent to a limited extent and can easily abandon the arrangement. As with spot sales and barter agreements, the VNSA groups reduce distrust through shared economic interests with immediate and temporary benefits. However, personal bonds and considerations influence and, at times, supersede these interests in the capacity to reduce distrust. Personal considerations can be based on emotions such as longing for revenge or jealousy, conferring the alliances an incalculable and volatile character. Joining forces among two or more actors brings benefits vis-à-vis other actors (cf. Waltz 2010), thus, tactical alliances also serve to trump another group. VNSAs form tactical alliances by sharing intelligence to circumvent law enforcement measures,

using the same wharf or transport routes to ship their illegal goods, or purchasing equipment, such as munitions and weapons, or cocaine from the same brokers. These alliances break, for instance, if a leader feels humiliated by the actions of a member of the other group, if an alliance with a different group promises greater benefits, or if someone is suspected of being a traitor. For tactical alliances to be reasonably stable, some central control is necessary. Groups with a network structure of independent cells or nodes led by relatively independent middle-level bosses are fragmented and the alliances based on the personal bonds of their leaders produce volatility. This can tear the intra-group social fabric by fuelling mistrust. How can one be loyal to superiors if they might have switched allegiances? How can one rely on the support of fellow group members if they might be traitors engaging in a tactical alliance with the enemy to maximise their personal benefit? These dilemmas are less relevant in hierarchically organised groups.

- Subcontractual relationships

In subcontractual relationships one group accepts an offer from another group to provide services, such as security using modern mercenaries, or a one-time service such as a contract killing, over a defined period of time (cf. P. Williams 2002, 70). The groups involved are more interdependent than in spot sales and barter agreements and typically also more than in tactical alliances, making the arrangement more durable. Whereas in tactical alliances all parties act simultaneously, subcontractual relationships involve staggered action that requires some regulation: first, one party contracts the other(s); then, the service is provided; and after that (or before that) this service is rewarded. Both parties have more incentive to abide by the arrangement. Quitting the arrangement before the service is provided or before the provided service has been paid would entail financial loss or punishment for quitting. In tactical alliances and spot sales or barter agreements, both groups lose if one of them quits. In some cases, particularly in contract killings, a middleman is in-between the two parties. This broker is an additional guarantee to reduce distrust: the contracted party does not know the contractors' identity, making cheating less feasible. A broker also serves to spread the risk and increase impunity as law enforcement officials have more difficulty in tracing back the crime's initiator than in a direct crime. Like in

spot sales and barter agreements, in subcontractual relationships shared interests reduce distrust. Both sides benefit yet the line between mutual convenience and dependency is thin: in an asymmetric power constellation the subcontractual relationship can turn into a preponderance relation in which the weaker group complies due to fear of punishment rather than due to mutual benefit. Subcontracted groups can also turn against the contractors to gain power. Subcontractual relationships can emerge from simple favours, a practice common among mafia structures (Gambetta 1993; Varese 2001): a gang boss helps someone and then subcontracts this person to provide a service. Such favours are also feasible between groups, often arising from personal interactions among group leaders.

#### *Long-term Arrangements*

Comprising transactional supply chain relationships, strategic alliances, pacific coexistence and preponderance relations, long-term arrangements form the fuzzy continuum's third cluster. Similar to long-term relationships in the business world, they are characterised by high levels of group interdependence (cf. Dyer and Chu 2000; Handfield and Bechtel 2002; Johnston et al. 2004). Long-term arrangements are based on distrust-reducing mechanisms that provide for mutual credibility over long periods of time: personal bonds with a third party, values and power.

#### - Transactional supply chain relationships

In transactional supply chain relationships VNSAs participate in transactions along a supply chain. The VNSAs are at "arm's length". They are independent and on an equal footing. The groups typically respect territorial limits of influence within which each group exerts economic, social and/or political control.<sup>29</sup> This territorial segmentation arises from the division of labour in the supply chain of an (illegal) product or service in which each group assumes one or several functions (Deville 2013, 65). This specialisation maximises profits from the different stages.

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<sup>29</sup> The operational territories of VNSAs often coincide with an urban-rural divide (Tickner, García, and Arreza 2011; Laverde and Tapia 2009).

Although it usually leads to only limited commitment between VNSAs, they remain indirectly connected through financial or material transactions.

In the absence of trust these transactions require some form of regulation and enforcement (Gambetta 1993, 17; Felbab-Brown 2010, 179): a third party, a broker, reduces distrust through personal bonds with the VNSAs for the business deal, yet general mistrust persists. Based on a long-standing reputation for complying with his/her commitments related to these kinds of illicit business deals, he or she is trusted by all parties involved. The broker negotiates and mediates between the parties involved in the arrangement, entailing high interdependence between the broker and the groups, although the groups do not interact directly with each other. The broker facilitates the high institutionalisation and the longevity of transactional supply chain relationships.<sup>30</sup> As an intermediary negotiating between groups, the broker promotes stable relationships by bridging the “trust-gap” between the groups, particularly if they have different ideological or political motivations.<sup>31</sup> This explains why insurgents have durable transactional arrangements with post-demobilised groups although their ideological and political motivations are opposed. It also explains why in some cases rebels who protect coca cultivations and control the first processing step from coca to coca paste switch business partners for the final processing into cocaine and the shipment: the broker has found a higher bidder. The VNSAs are only likely to commit to the deal if the broker is perceived to be a reliable, impartial business partner.

Although transactional supply chain relationships constitute an anomaly within the typology of VNSA arrangements because group interdependence is replaced by a broker, the anomaly disappears when considering that all VNSAs need to trust the broker for the arrangement to be durable. While all VNSAs benefit from the broker’s capability to reduce distrust, they depend on the broker to purchase, sell or ship the illegal product, which limits their scope of decision-

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<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of brokers (“shadow facilitator”) in Liberia and El Salvador see Farah (2012).

<sup>31</sup> Williams (2002, 78) describes brokers as “engineering” cooperation by providing “trusted contacts to facilitate communications and linkages among different criminal organizations”. I found that brokers not only initiate, but also uphold the arrangement.

making as regards the income they derive from cocaine. A monopolist of the glue that holds together the transactional supply chain relationships, the broker has the parties involved at his mercy (Idler 2013).

- Strategic alliances

Strategic alliances are long-term commitments between different VNSAs that share a territory. They are characterised by high interdependence through information-sharing, entailing institutionalisation which can take shape in written memoranda on the arrangement between the groups. Strategic alliances differ from tactical alliances because of a longer time horizon and in the relationship's quality: the distrust-reducing mechanism of strategic alliances is typically shared values, including ideological, political or religious beliefs. These links and the interdependence enable the VNSAs to share intelligence, revenue and/or expenses and to engage in "war pacts" to fight jointly against a third group (Ávila and Núñez 2010). As values are shaped over a long period and do not change quickly as emotions or economic considerations, VNSAs do not simply adapt their values to another group's values. Strategic alliances are often established among ideologically aligned parties but less so among ideologically opposed ones. They are less frequent than other arrangements. By engaging in a strategic alliance, VNSAs necessarily lose some independence. Nonetheless, it can help when fighting a third party, particularly state forces.

- Pacific coexistence

In pacific coexistence, the VNSAs involved perceive each other to be credible over time and the groups are less interdependent than in other long-term arrangements. Each of them exercising economic, social and/or political control, they share territory, but operate in parallel without interaction. Contrary to the absence of arrangements which can provoke violent combat, in pacific coexistence VNSAs have tacit agreements of non-aggression and non-interference in each other's affairs (Ávila and Núñez 2010). The distrust-reducing "shared values" do not have to be religious, ideological or moral; they can also refer to the VNSAs' attitude vis-à-vis the state. If the groups share the same values, they are more likely to also be concerned by the same external constraints

such as aggressive or non-aggressive government policies against VNSAs. Values in combination with shared external circumstances are more solid mechanisms to reduce distrust than values alone. As the VNSAs operate independently, mutual credibility is more important to avoid non-compliance by either of the parties than for example in highly interdependent strategic alliances: without operating jointly, which would involve sharing information, the VNSAs have less constraints to defect. Hence, they have to convince the other party of the credibility of their commitment to the arrangement through shared values alone. The tipping points that lead VNSAs to break the arrangement are external factors such as state military operations, internal factors such as group members striving for a better position within the organisational structure, and geopolitical changes, for example triggered by elections.

- Preponderance relations

In preponderance relations power reduces distrust. The power of coercion of one group impedes even *limited* freedom of other groups. Preponderance relations are driven by asymmetric interdependence in which the preponderant group exercises economic, political and social control over a given territory and other groups adhere to the rules imposed by this group. Preponderance relations can be spatially limited or overlap with transactional supply chain relationships. Preponderance relations end if the weaker group is absorbed by the stronger one, for instance because the weaker group's members defect to the preponderant group, or because the stronger one obliges members to capitulate and join them and those who refuse are killed. They become part of the hegemon and no interaction with a second group takes place.

The fuzzy continuum of VNSA arrangement clusters illustrates differences between interactions that arise from varying degrees of interdependence and the distrust-reducing mechanisms: interests, personal bonds, values and power. The typology's fuzziness is analytically useful for this study: while the existing literature on VNSAs focuses on the organisational behaviour of single groups, dynamics and outcomes of arrangements, I study nuanced impacts of VNSA relationships on citizen security. As will be shown, the uncertainty and ambiguity arising from

(overlapping) VNSA interactions shape their citizen security impacts; hence accounting for the fuzziness helps understanding these phenomena.

### 3.2.2 Arrangements of Convenience among VNSAs and Citizen Security Repercussions

I now conceptually bridge the fuzzy continuum of arrangement clusters with citizen security. Analysing the complex relation between VNSAs and local communities enhances not only understanding of security dynamics, but also of “Latin American societies of fear” (Robben 1999, 125). Owing to varying degrees of group interdependence, the distinct distrust-reducing mechanisms and unique characteristics of each arrangement, the three arrangement clusters and the arrangements within each cluster have distinct citizen security impacts.

Employing the concept of citizen security to examine repercussions on civilians from VNSA interactions accounts for repercussions on the citizens’ social fabric and the state-society relationship – and hence citizenship. VNSA interactions impact on citizenship by informing the citizens’ conception of “appropriate behaviour”. The “logic of appropriateness” results from institutions which embody “values, norms, interests, identities and beliefs” and guide individual and collective behaviour (March and Olsen 1989, 17).<sup>32</sup> Action “is seen as driven by rules of appropriate or exemplary behaviour, organized into institutions” (March and Olsen 2008, 689; see also P. Hall and Taylor 1996, 939), rather than by long-term consequences. Citizenship is an institution in which behavioural rules and internalised norms arise from the state-society relationship. Whitehead (2002, 166) notes

for the great majority of acts by individual citizens the rule of law is only enforced to the extent that groups and individuals practise appropriate forms of self-limitation. The rights and restraints of citizenship are thus internalized rather than imposed.

Upholding these norms consolidates social fabric among the citizenry and loyalty towards the state in exchange for state capacity and responsiveness. Citizens accept these rules agreed upon by the state and themselves and identify themselves as members of the society (March and Olsen

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<sup>32</sup> Following authors such as Kjell Goldmann (2005), I consider the logic of appropriateness as overlapping with a logic of consequences.

2008, 691). If the state is not sufficiently capable and responsive, norms associated with citizenship become elusive. Often, it is the result of the state's institutional flaws, but external influences such as groups seeking a weak state as a base for their operation, may reinforce it (Schneckener 2009).

Owing to this logic of appropriateness, in territories with multiple VNSAs, *de facto* citizen security can be undermined without citizens perceiving it this way and *vice versa*. For example, if people have been living under VNSA rule over generations in the context of state absence, shadow citizen security, i.e. security based on undemocratic means, may be perceived as legitimate, and obedience to this rule appropriate, to ensure security, even if resistance might be more beneficial in the long run.

Variation in repercussions on citizen security is produced, *inter alia*, by the respective VNSA group's type, size, organisational structure and cohesion (Andreas and Duran-Martinez 2015, 383; Pearlman 2008; Fiorentini and Peltzman 1995; Staniland 2014; Saab and Taylor 2009), and the level of the VNSAs' control in space (Kalyvas 2006), and over time (Gutiérrez Sanín 2008). It also arises from distinct local contexts, differing state policies designed to the situation of armed conflict or to a neighbouring country of a conflict state and a third party, particularly state force, presence. These approaches explain how VNSA *presence*, but not *interaction*, affects citizens. They do not account for the complexity in today's conflict, post-conflict and violent settings where VNSAs have distinct arrangements with each other.

I anchor my analysis in the literature on civil war effects on civilians for the absence of arrangements; on gang violence for short-term arrangements; and on order in civil war and urban VNSA governance for long-term arrangements. Typically, security approaches focusing on quantifiable factors of insecurity and those focusing on perceived impacts hardly speak to each other. I build synergies from these two approaches and also consider structural, less visible repercussions of VNSA activities on society.

For understanding citizen security impacts in the absence of VNSA arrangements, the civil war literature that explores what drives insurgent or paramilitary groups to abuse civilians and how the contestation between insurgents and the state impacts on civilians is useful (Collier 2003; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Weinstein 2006; Kalyvas 2012; Weidmann 2011). According to Kalyvas's (2006; 2012) "control-collaboration" model of contestation between state forces and insurgents, different levels of territorial control result in different forms of violence for civilians: VNSAs with low levels of territorial control resort to indiscriminate violence, those with high territorial control resort to selective violence, and when both parties control equal shares of territory, violence is absent. The model has been challenged and modified (see e.g. Balcells 2010; Balcells 2011; Weidmann 2011; Kalyvas 2012), yet there is consensus that, in most cases, contestation among various armed groups entails some form of violence for local communities. Studying violence against civilians during combat between paramilitary and insurgent groups in Colombian Barrancabermeja in 1996, Gonzalo Vargas (2009, 130) notes that, in addition to homicides, kidnappings and extortion are forms of violence to be included. Hoover Green (2011) points to large repertoires of violence against non-combatants in Colombia. Dara Cohen (2010) and Elisabeth Wood (2008) analyse sexual violence as a consequence or part of combat. In addition to physical harm, violent conflict affects social capital (Moser and McIlwaine 2004, 156). According to Nat Colletta and Michelle Cullen (2000, 4-6), cited in Moser and McIlwaine (2004, 157), violence can both undermine and reconstitute social capital, and hence both tear and tighten social fabric, at the root of citizen security.

Thinking about gang relationships helps understand citizen security repercussions of short-term arrangements. Based on micro-motivations (interest convergence and personal bonds), in such arrangements mistrust among VNSA members, and between VNSAs and citizens, is high (Rodgers and Baird 2015, 7). Blinded by the prospect of high profits, "conditional cooperators" who would "tend to trust others and be trustworthy [...] as long as the proportion of others who return trust is relatively high" (Ostrom 2000, 142), are virtually absent. Yet not all actors

resemble “egoist rationalists” (Ostrom 2000, 141–143; Axelrod 2006, 6). Personal relationships and emotions such as jealousy, anger and frustration of group leaders can trigger break-downs or the establishment of group arrangements, preventing citizens from predicting certain behavioural rules. VNSAs also deliberately subvert the rules or distort them as a “by-product” of their activities.

To grasp the impacts of long-term arrangements on citizen security I draw on VNSA governance, in civil war contexts such as Colombia with the paramilitaries (Duncan 2006) and insurgents (Arjona 2010) and elsewhere (Wickham-Crowley 1987; R. Hall and Biersteker 2002; Kalyvas, I. Shapiro, and Masoud 2008; Mampilly 2011); and cases of criminal structures which “govern” urban areas, for example in Brazilian favelas (Arias 2006). In areas where the state-society relationship is dysfunctional, as, due to the weak state governance systems, is often the case in borderlands, “shadow citizenship” may arise. It is based on a VNSA-society relationship in which VNSAs provide public goods and services and define the rules of appropriate behaviour while citizens accept these rules and socially recognise the VNSAs’ authority. Providing governance enhances the VNSAs’ empirical legitimacy (R. Hall and Biersteker 2002, 216), that is, it is conducive to the Lockean consent of the governed.<sup>33</sup> Shadow citizenship can thus be described as a cluster of illegal institutionalised organisational structures that guide behaviour in VNSA-controlled territory (Idler 2014).

As opposed to concepts such as Mampilly’s (2011) “insurgent governance” or Rodney Hall and Thomas Biersteker’s (2002, 216) “illicit authority”, shadow citizenship focuses on the citizen-side rather than the “VNSA-side” and hence facilitates analysing repercussions on citizen security. Shadow citizenship differs from what Guillermo O’Donnell (1993) calls “low-intensity

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<sup>33</sup> Aware of the complexity of the concept of legitimacy with both empirical and normative conceptions, I use the term in the empirical, i.e. in the Weberian, sense when referring to VNSAs (cf. Weber 1978, 946-947). Accordingly, legitimacy is “a belief of subjects”; it is based on perceptions (Barker 1990, 25). Against this, normative legitimacy “is the right to rule, understood to mean both that institutional agents are morally justified in making rules and attempting to secure compliance with them and that people subject to those rules have moral, content-independent reasons to follow them and/or to not interfere with others’ compliance with them” (Buchanan and Keohane 2006, 411).

citizenship,” where local populaces have access to few (if any) effective government institutions, but can be empowered “in terms consistent with democratic legality” to transform this into “full, democratic and liberal, citizenship” (O’Donnell 1993, 1361). O’Donnell (2004, 41) explains how a democratic country can feature “blue areas” characterised by effective institutions and governance, and “brown areas” with ineffective governance and institutions, and that “these ‘brown areas’ are subnational systems of power that have a territorial basis and an informal but quite effective legal system, yet they coexist with a regime that, at least at the national political centre, is democratic”. In brown areas citizens have a low-intensity citizenship rather than “full” citizenship (O’Donnell 1993). Shadow citizenship also differs from James Holston’s (2008, 9) notion of “insurgent citizenship”, that emphasises the agency of citizens as a “new urban citizenship” in which the marginalised claim their citizenship rights through self-construction. Rather, shadow citizenship is an “alternative citizenship” similar to Barbara Oomen’s (2004) because it is oriented towards non-state actors instead of the state and emphasises both the citizens’ and the non-state actors’ agency. However, with these actors being violent, shadow citizenship compromises the validity of human rights, undermines democratic values, and distorts a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship.

The kinds of governance functions and their constellation matter for the VNSAs’ legitimacy. The form of governance and the prioritisation of the functions depend on civilian demands, the organisational structure, the influence of transnational actors, the type of VNSAs and their *raison d’être* (Mampilly 2011; Gutiérrez Sanín 2008, 5). In many rural areas insurgents win a social base because, in line with their propaganda against the government, they provide public goods such as road infrastructure. As a result, rural communities may tolerate strict rules and undemocratic practices (Wickham-Crowley 1987). Paramilitary and post-demobilised groups often only provide security and justice, hence their empirical legitimacy is based on their monopoly of violence (Duncan 2006). Urban citizens affected by high crime rates may prioritise security provision (Pécaut 1999, 150). Groups with primarily economic interests, such as drug trafficking or mafia groups, control the supply of protection in return for charging protection money, *viz.*, extortion

(Gambetta 1993; Varese 2010, 17), which arguably makes social recognition harder to achieve. While insurgents offer economic opportunities in the cultivation and first stages of cocaine processing, post-demobilised and drug trafficking groups typically provide jobs as messengers, informants, drug mules or contract killers. These group-dependent differences reveal how the VNSA-society relationship and the VNSAs' social recognition may differ in the same context.

Security that arises from a relatively consensual VNSAs-community relationship, in which the community complies with VNSA-imposed rules and receives security and justice, is what I call shadow citizen security (Idler 2012a). The communities' physical security is scarcely undermined, provided they comply with the rules.<sup>34</sup> Non-compliance is (undemocratically) punished by threats, torture and killings – hence, *shadow* citizen security. Shadow citizen security indicates that in the respective territory the group's control over the means of violence, an essential feature of Weberian statehood (Weber 1992), supersedes the state's capacity. Without VNSA presence, insufficient state protection prompts citizens to establish self-defence mechanisms such as surveillance committees, vigilante justice and arming themselves (Moser and McIlwaine 2004, 181; Buur and Jensen 2004, 144; Fumerton and Remijnse 2004; Koonings and Krujit 1999; Whitehead 2009, 282; Goldstein 2005; Pratten and Sen 2007). In regions with long-term arrangements, VNSAs tend to take over security functions or subcontract youth gangs to do so. When the state judicial system is absent or inefficient, people settle disputes among themselves. If available, they turn to VNSAs because the VNSA's parallel justice system is often considered more efficient than the state's: the VNSAs punish delinquents immediately, whereas the state justice system is protracted, sometimes without ever reaching a verdict. Kalyvas (1999, 259) refers to this as a “countersovereign authority” or a “counter-state”. The absence of violence is no longer tied to citizen security arising from a consensual state-society relationship. When acceptance of the illegal authority is based not only on respect but also on fear, paired with psychological pressure, their subjective citizen security is undermined even if objectively they are safe.

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<sup>34</sup> Such rules range from dress codes and employment restrictions to prohibiting contact with state officials.

Shadow citizenship and shadow citizen security have consequences for citizenship on the national level: communities respect that VNSAs become illegal monopolists of violence in a certain territory, and develop a sense of belonging to this “shadow community” rather than to a national citizenry. Within this “shadow community” the social fabric is likely to be dense because people have a common understanding of what behaviour is accepted. Nevertheless, they tend to be isolated from the “outside world”; the social fabric between them and those beyond their community is torn apart (cf. Moser and McIlwaine 2004, 158; Putnam 1993).

### 3.2.3 The Border Effect

Borderlands manifest distinct social, political and economic structures shaped by their geographic location (cf. Hansen 1981, 19; Zartman 2010, 1–5; Höhne and Feyissa 2013, 56). Borderland geography produces a “border effect”, which acts on, and at times, alters processes and outcomes of social, political or economic phenomena, including the citizen security impacts of VNSA arrangements.

Transnationality and the distance to the state centres make borderlands a universal phenomenon. This thesis focuses on borderlands of countries in the Global South where the states’ capacities and responsiveness tend to be deficient. In such countries, borderlands can be O’Donnell’s brown areas within a democracy, or ungoverned as well as illicitly governed spaces, threatening the centres (Clunan and Trinkunas 2010, 26).<sup>35</sup> This produces further characteristics: first, rooted in many states’ historical neglect of border zones, borderlands tend to have weak state governance systems. From a state-perspective, such borderlands are embedded in quasi-anarchy, analytically similar to the states’ anarchical international system. Second, they feature a low-risk/high-

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<sup>35</sup> Unless stated otherwise, in the remainder of the thesis I refer to the Global South’s borderlands when writing “borderlands”.

opportunity environment.<sup>36</sup> Connecting different economic systems, borderlands are conducive to economic activities because the decline or increase in value at borders makes exchange profitable (Clement 2004, 50–51; Goodhand 2008, 235). These features turn borderlands into an enabling environment for illegal economic cross-border activities such as smuggling, with high profit margins (van Schendel 2005a, 48–49; Martínez 1994, 14). As borderlands are often not properly integrated into the national economy, cross-border activities that are illegal for the state may be a licit means for borderlanders to sustain their livelihoods. Third, such borderlands are prone to impunity because borderlands are spaces where two different jurisdictions meet. The confluence of these characteristics shape the borderlanders' life, make borderlands attractive to VNSAs (cf. Idler 2014) and influence the citizen security impacts of the VNSA interactions.

Metaphorically speaking, in the Global South's borderlands, the border effect works as a magnifying glass. It bundles and concentrates the factors of insecurity in each type of arrangement, intensifying the harmful repercussions on citizen security and making borderlands hot spots of citizen insecurity. Thus, the citizen security impacts differ in their intensity from other geographical spaces. The border effect also contributes to the invisibility of citizen security dynamics from outside the regions.<sup>37</sup> The transnationality of borderlands conceals these dynamics, producing a discrepancy between the perceptions of citizen security and *de facto* citizen security. The centre's political awareness of the borderlands tends to be one of misperception or generalisation:

[T]he borderland is a site of extreme anxiety for the modern state. The state's partially obscured view of borderland activities, the gap between people's understandings of what they are doing versus the state's, inconsistent notions of illegality, and the presence of other legalities across the border, all make, for the state, the borderland an area where by definition criminality is rife and sovereignty under constant threat (Abraham and van Schendel 2005, 25).

These perceptions contribute to the marginalisation of borderlands and shape the borderlanders'

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<sup>36</sup> Goodhand (2008; 2013, 257) refers to a high-risk/high-opportunity environment. This describes borderlands traversed by a highly secured border such as the Mexican-US border, yet not the Global South's porous borders.

<sup>37</sup> The term invisibility has been used consistently by interviewees across all border zones.

own position vis-à-vis (shadow) citizenship and (shadow) citizen security. The transnationality of borderlands has induced a stigmatisation of these spaces, yet in some instances for the borderlanders “the border has become a resource rather than an obstacle, providing livelihoods and political status and serving as a sanctuary against mutual incursions” (Korf and Raeymaekers 2013, 4). As an income source, ordinary contraband overlaps with arms and drug trafficking dynamics, among others. Interdiction against VNSAs thus curbs not only the VNSAs’ activities, but also undermines the borderlanders’ perception of social justice (van Schendel 2005a, 61; van Schendel 2005b, 385). Since the border is their source of livelihoods, and life on the state’s edge means neglect and marginalisation, in borderlands the state-society relationship is likely to be distorted.

Referring back to the fuzzy continuum of clusters of VNSA arrangements, due to the border effect short-term arrangements become less durable and the interdependence among groups decreases. Short-term arrangements move left and down on the continuum, approaching the absence of an arrangement. Long-term arrangements feature higher group interdependence and become more stable because, due to the borderlands’s transnationality, the communities are likely to socially recognise the VNSAs. They are also alienated from the state. This allows the VNSAs to foster shared values and strengthen their power. Long-term arrangements are likely to move towards the upper-right corner of the fuzzy continuum.

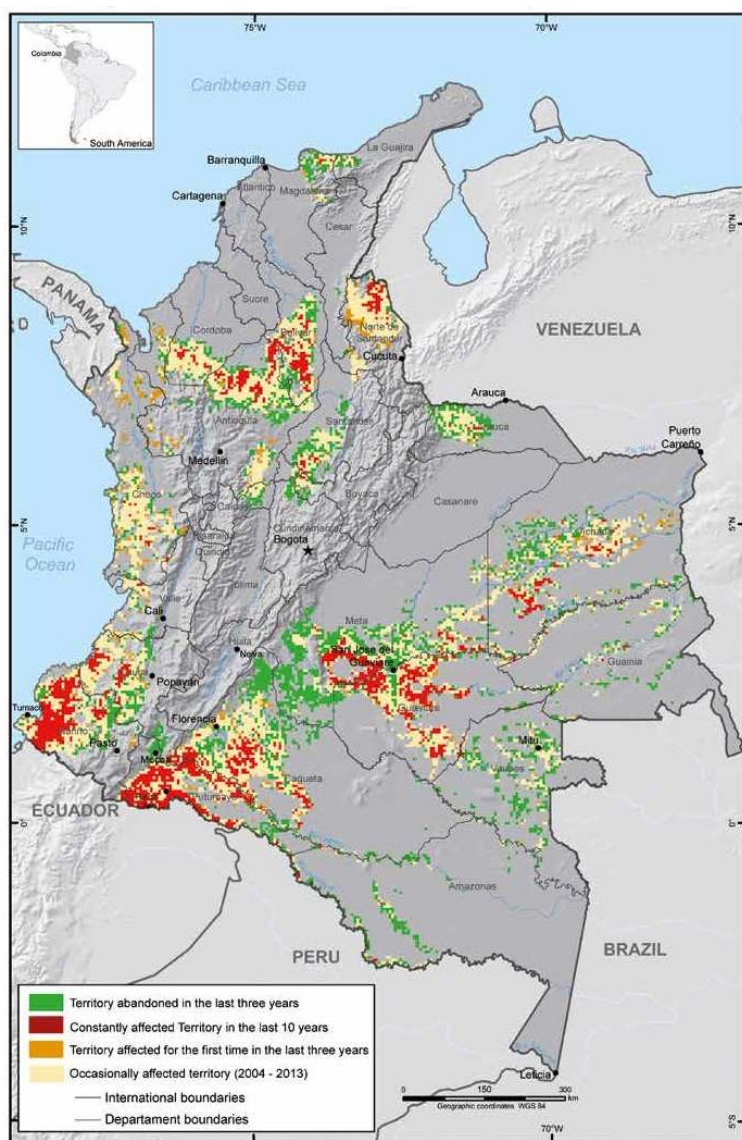
#### 4. MAPPING VNSA ARRANGEMENTS IN COLOMBIA'S BORDERLANDS

*There is insecurity. But this is the feeling of insecurity that something might happen if I did something [...]. We Venezuelans are afraid because we don't understand the [conflict's] dynamics. We think the population can be attacked at any moment.*  
Humanitarian organisation employee from Machiques, Venezuela (2012a)

This chapter contextualises the subsequent analysis of how VNSA interactions in Colombia's borderlands impact on citizen security. First, I provide a brief overview of security dynamics in the borderlands. Due to the shortcomings in existing data on objective and subjective citizen security discussed in the previous chapter, it is only an approximation of the real situation to situate the borderlands in the broader regional context. I then discuss state policies relevant to the borderlands and, subsequently, map VNSA interactions to illustrate their complexity and unpredictability, especially for non-Colombian borderlanders, as stated by the interviewee cited above. This is not an exhaustive account, but highlights those interactions which I could access data on and which I analyse in Chapters Five to Eight. Their fluidity necessitates that I illustrate them in varying time periods. Certain VNSA arrangements concentrate in specific geographical areas. Tactical alliances for example prevail at starting points of trafficking routes such as port towns. Preponderance relations typically exist in places where control over the population is important. The local context varies greatly along the two borders: topographic and climatic variation as well as distinct cultures and economic activities characterise life in Colombia's borderlands differentially, making each border region unique (for the Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands see Bustamante 2011; for the Colombian-Ecuadorian borderlands see S. Ramírez 2011b).

##### *Security Dynamics in Colombia's Borderlands*

In virtually all border regions, the confluence of drug trafficking, conflict and marginalisation impinges on citizen security, yet in varied ways. The local economy is influenced by the drug industry through jobs in coca cultivation, processing laboratories, the smuggling of precursors, money laundering and other related economic activities.



Source: Colombian Government - National monitoring system supported by UNODC

**Map 5: Regional coca cultivation stability in Colombia, 2004-2013 (UNODC 2014c, 20)**

sexual violence are further insecurity factors related to VNSA presence (cf. INE 2010; FOSIN 2012).<sup>38</sup>

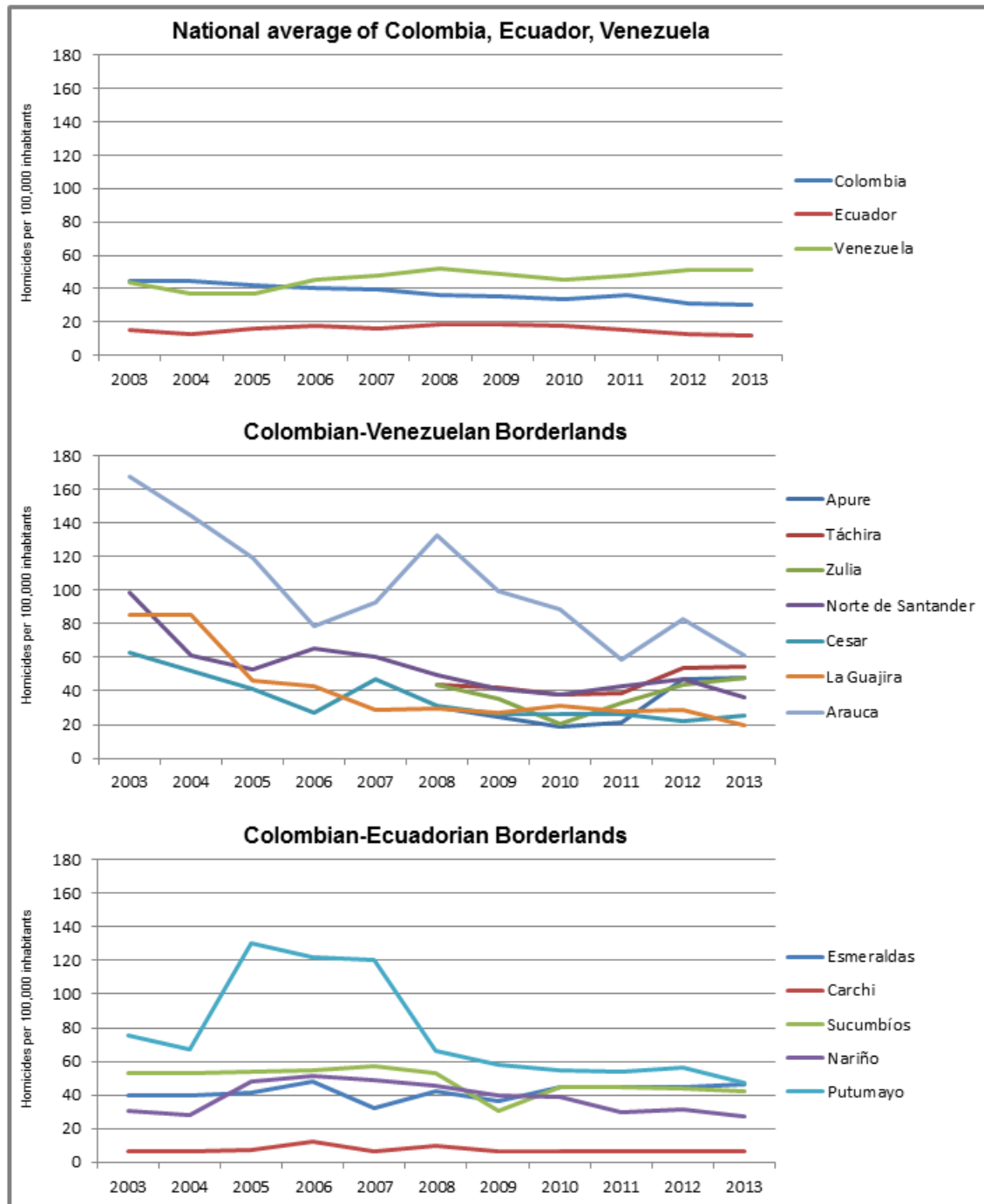
Levels of impunity are high. A citizen security analysis carried out for the Association of Ecuadorean Municipalities explains high rates of lethal violence in the Ecuadorean border zone through low police presence (2.9 for every 1,000 inhabitants in the Canton of Sucumbíos) and the inefficient justice system, which was confirmed by the Ombudsman's Office in Lago Agrio

<sup>38</sup> Citizen security data do not exist for all border regions and where they do, numbers vary considerably depending on the source consulted. Many borderlanders do not report incidents to the authorities or refrain from correctly responding in victimisation surveys due to fear of retaliation by VNSAs.

As Map 5 shows, areas of coca cultivation have decreased in many Colombian regions, but in Colombia's border zones, particularly Norte de Santander, Nariño and Putumayo, they have persisted or increased.

VNSAs, mostly Colombian ones, operate on both sides of the Colombian, Ecuadorian and Venezuelan borders, influencing security dynamics in all three countries. All Colombian border areas feature high homicide rates (see Figure 7). Kidnappings, forced disappearances, violent threats, extortion, armed robbery and

(Salinas 2012, 21–22, 34; \*human rights defender, Lago Agrio (EC) 2012). According to the UN’s Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston (2011, 8), only about one out of every three or four killings in Sucumbíos is reported to the police.<sup>39</sup>

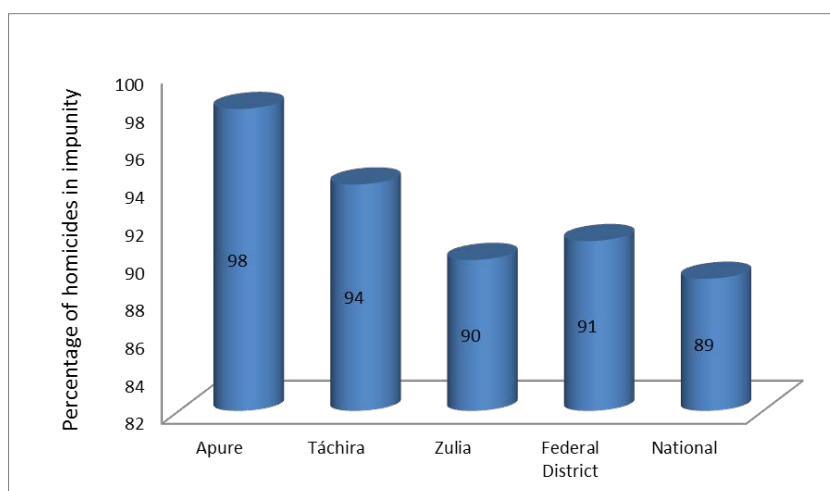


**Figure 7: Homicide rates per 100,000 inhabitants in Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela<sup>40</sup>**

<sup>39</sup> Nation-wide, 1 to 3 per cent of reported killings in Ecuador result in convictions. Since many killings are not reported, less than 1 per cent of the overall number of killers are convicted (Alston 2011, 17).

<sup>40</sup> This is my own elaboration based on various sources including UNODC (2014), Colombia’s National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, Ecuador’s Ministry of the Interior, Venezuela’s Observatory of Violence and interview data.

In Venezuela, according to the Táchira police (2012), in 2009 there were 1,491 detentions for 16,047 homicides, i.e. in 9 per cent of cases.<sup>41</sup> In Táchira, the percentage was lower: for 502 homicides, 30 people were detained, i.e. about 6 per cent of cases. As Figure 8 shows, in Apure, levels of impunity are higher, arguably due to prevailing informal justice mechanisms implemented by FARC, ELN or the Bolivarian Forces of Liberation (FBL), a Venezuelan left-wing VNSA:

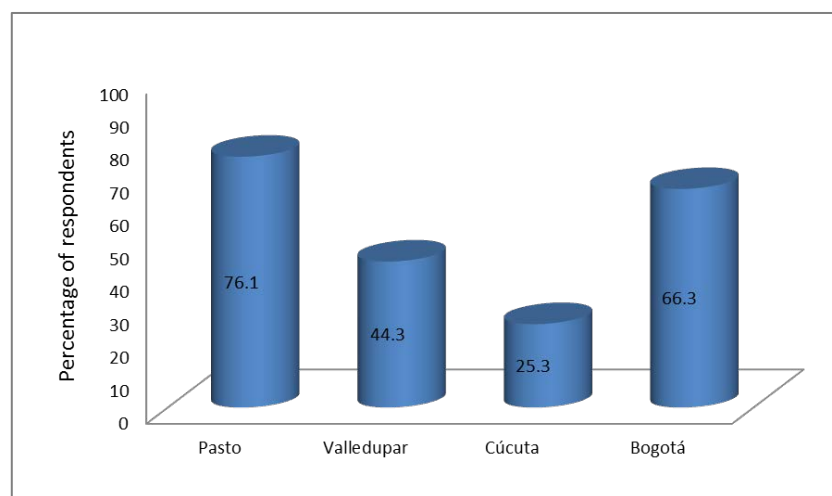


**Figure 8: Impunity in Venezuela’s border states, 2009 (Policía de Táchira 2012)**

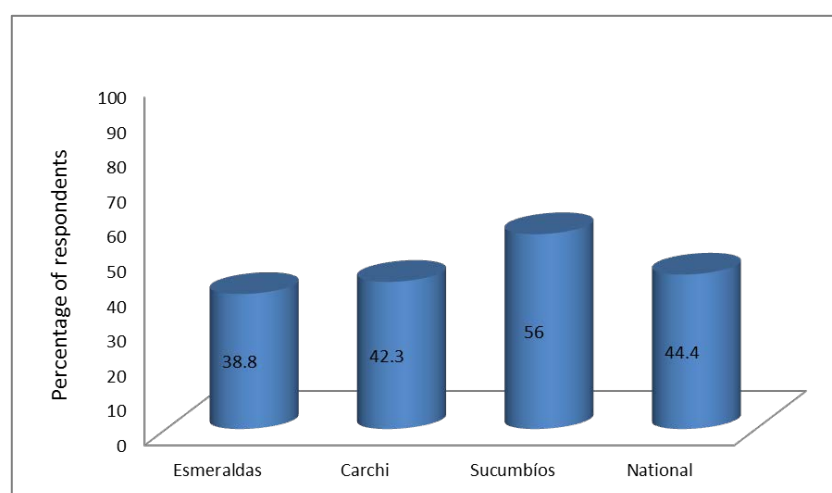
Citizen insecurity in Colombia’s borderlands also takes shape in less quantifiable ways. As I will show in the following chapters, there are instances where homicide rates are low due to VNSAs maintaining shadow citizen security rather than state-provided security. In such cases, borderlanders are affected by social control, psychological pressure and the presentiment of violence due to fear of punishment, for example. To some extent, such factors are reflected in perceptions of citizen security. Figure 9 shows perceptions of citizen security in selected border department cities and the capital city of Colombia according to a 2012-2013 survey by Colombia’s High Commission for Coexistence and Citizen Security (2013), and Figure 10 in border provinces of Ecuador according to a 2008 victimisation survey of the Ecuadorian National Citizen Security Plan (2008, 47). No similarly disaggregated study is available on the

<sup>41</sup> In Venezuela homicide and impunity rates are hardly obtainable: the Ministry of People’s Power for Internal Relations and Justice appoints the Body of Scientific, Penal and Criminalistics Investigations which manages the data gathered by the National Institute of Legal Medicine. As of 2011, it did not permit to disseminate such information in order not to damage the government’s image (J. D. Restrepo 2011).

Venezuelan border zone. However, a 2010 victimisation and citizen security perception survey by the Venezuelan National Statistics Institute (2010, 159) distinguishes between respondents from border states and respondents from non-border states. Accordingly, 62.4 per cent of the border-state respondents believe their situation of personal insecurity to be very bad (as opposed to 60.5 per cent of non-border-state respondents). In a 2009 survey by the Catholic University of Táchira in the Venezuelan border states of Táchira and Apure, respondents stated that they perceived a climate of intolerance in their communities and cited fear, powerlessness and anger as feelings generated by VNSA presence (Labrador et al. 2009, 242).<sup>42</sup>



**Figure 9: Perceptions of insecurity in Colombian cities, 2012-2013 (ACCSC 2013)**



**Figure 10: Perceptions of insecurity in Ecuadorian provinces, 2008 (Plan Seguridad Ciudadana 2008, 47)**

<sup>42</sup> For the survey's methodology see Labrador et al. (2009, 215–217).

These diverging numbers reflect that perceptions of security depend, *inter alia*, on the local context and past experiences, including a state's history of violence. Lund (2006, 693) notes that, "what is legitimate varies between and within cultures and over time, and is continuously (re-) established through conflict and negotiation". The historical, political and cultural context of a community informs their perception of what is normal, of legitimacy and of citizen security. It shapes the borderlanders' agency and responses to VNSA arrangements. This is most evident when, even if affected by the same VNSA arrangement, perceived citizen security in two border zones that form part of the same borderlands differs.<sup>43</sup> Colombians have been living in a decades-long conflict and, in many cases under the authority of VNSAs, over various generations. In most Ecuadorian and Venezuelan regions, VNSA presence is a relatively new phenomenon, specific to regions near the border with Colombia.

## **4.1 The Colombian-Ecuadorian Borderlands**

### **4.1.1 State Policies**

The Colombian-Ecuadorian borderlands span a 585 kilometre borderline and comprise two Colombian departments and three Ecuadorian provinces. They extend from the coastal area shared by Nariño (Colombia) and Esmeraldas (Ecuador), the highlands of Carchi (Ecuador) together with the eastern part of Nariño to the Amazonian Putumayo (Colombia) and Sucumbíos (Ecuador).

As historically friendly neighbours, Ecuador and Colombia have had few border tensions (Marcella 2008, 18). In 1979 they established binational border control instruments, and in 1996 the Binational Border Commission (COMBIFRON) (FSD 2008, 17–18). During Uribe's presidency, the bilateral relations progressively deteriorated. Ecuador rejected Plan Colombia, and responded with its own "Plan Ecuador", a peace plan based on development and centred on

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<sup>43</sup> Where cross-border ties are strong, the sense of belonging to a cross-border community evens out these distinct experiences to some extent.

human beings rather than territory in response to Colombia's war offensive (\*Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, Quito (CO) 2012; \*Technical Secretary of Plan Ecuador official, Quito (CO) 2012).<sup>44</sup> The toxic fumigations to eradicate coca cultivation employed by Colombia with support from the US affected crops and the population's health in Ecuador's border zone (TNI 2007). In 2006 Ecuador reached an agreement with Colombia to refrain from sprayings within ten kilometres of the border (El Universo 2014).<sup>45</sup> Colombia and Ecuador also disagreed on border security responsibilities. For Colombia, border control meant employing active interdiction measures. For Ecuador, border security consisted in ensuring Ecuador's sovereignty without actively fighting Colombian VNSAs to avoid interference in Colombia's internal affairs. While Colombia did not recognise Ecuador's border control efforts, Ecuador downplayed the threat of armed groups' presence in Ecuador to its territorial integrity (FSD 2006, 4–7). An unannounced Colombian military incursion on Ecuadorian soil in Angostura on 1 March 2008 that killed FARC leader Raúl Reyes sparked the rupture of diplomatic relations and the suspension of COMBIFRON (Marcella 2008, v).<sup>46</sup> Border security cooperation improved again with COMBIFRON's reactivation in November 2009 and increased intelligence sharing (ICG 2010, 9). In 2012, Colombia and Ecuador agreed on further border cooperation instruments (\*Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, Quito (CO) 2012). Yet the border also saw an increased militarisation and securitisation, along with abuses of the local population and stigmatisation of Colombian refugees (Alston 2011, 6).

According to internal information from the Colombian and Ecuadorian police and military, the Colombia-Ecuador border features at least 52 informal border crossings and two with migratory control; the bridge of Rumichaca between Ipiales and Tulcán and the bridge between San Miguel and Lago Agrio (\*international agency staff, Pasto (CO) 2011b; \*intelligence official, Quito (EC)

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<sup>44</sup> Plan Ecuador lacked proper implementation (various interviews in Quito, 2012).

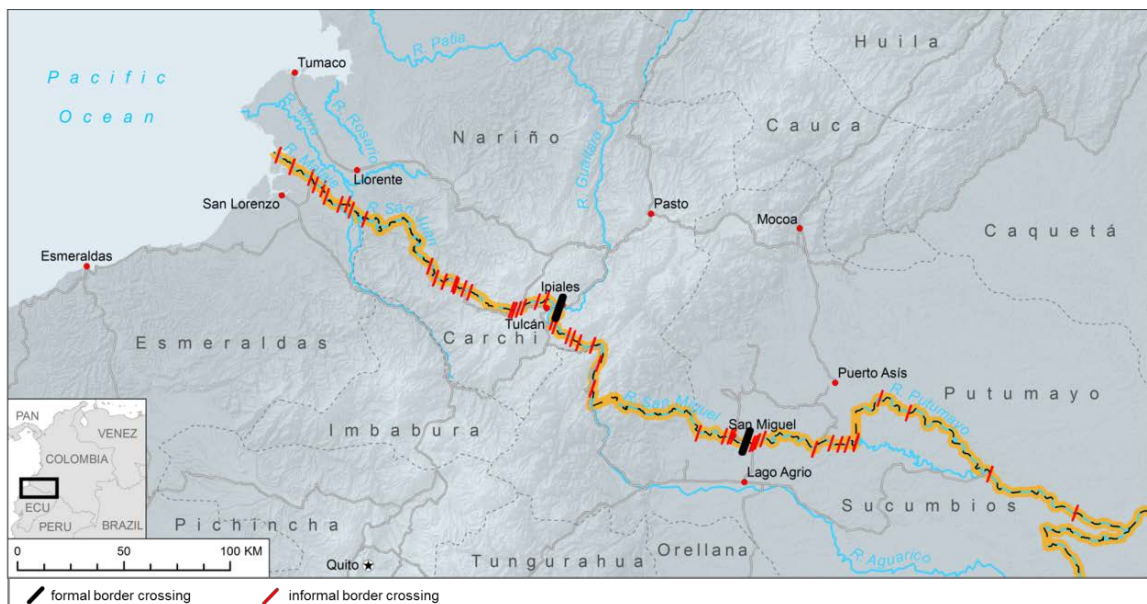
<sup>45</sup> In September 2013 Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa and Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos signed an agreement according to which Colombia will fumigate up to five and later up to two kilometres from the border (El Universo 2014). As of 20 August 2014 it has not yet been implemented.

<sup>46</sup> For a discussion on the impact of this incident on security and Colombian-Ecuadorian relations see Idler (2009).

2012c; \*intelligence official, Quito (EC) 2012a).<sup>47</sup> Based on this information, and triangulated with the accounts of borderlanders, I have marked the exact locations of these border-crossings in Map 6. Borderlanders use informal border crossings to exchange goods, go shopping, participate in bi-national soccer matches, go to school, or visit relatives. They are important for everyday life (\*civil society representative, Pasto (CO) 2011):

There are two ways to see the border: first, the border's edge, the line. People enter Ecuador from here to there with cars from Ecuador, merchandise from Ecuador [...]. People look badly on the Colombians. They check your documents, you can't enter with a vehicle, and merchandise only flows under suspicion [...]. But the entire department is a border department; the dynamics of Ecuador influence the dynamics in Colombia. When they broke diplomatic relations it affected many people in Colombia, for example in Tallambí, Mayasquer, Jardines de Sucumbíos, La Victoria. It affected the bridges constructed by the community, not by the state. These are illegal bridges. The military even say the guerrillas constructed them, but no, the community constructed them. Without them they would not be able to access anything. People access Ecuadorian health centres to have vaccinations and dual nationality.

VNSAs also use these border crossings to traffic drugs, arms, ammunition, equipment and human beings.



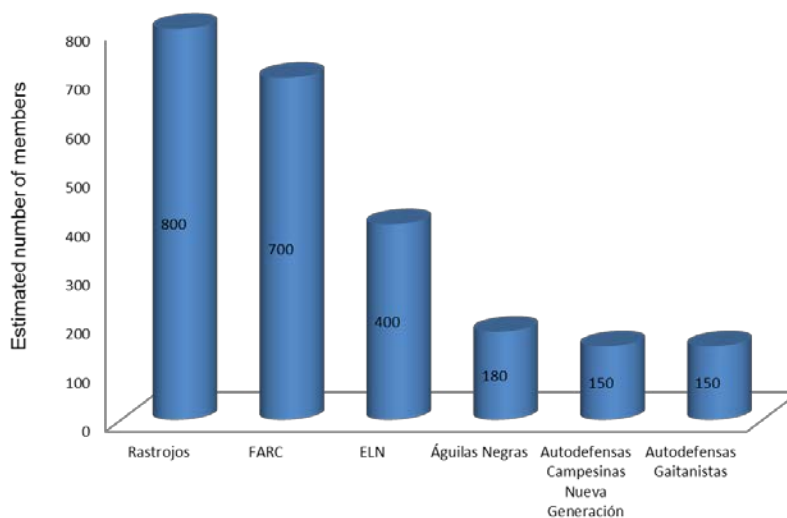
**Map 6: Border crossings along the Colombian-Ecuadorian border**

<sup>47</sup> In August 2014 Bogotá and Quito announced the formalisation of three further border crossings: Chiles/Tufiño, El Carmelo/La Victoria and Puerto El Carmen/Puerto Ospina (Ministerio de Defensa Nacional 2014).

#### 4.1.2 VNSAs in the Colombian-Ecuadorian Borderlands

##### *Nariño and Carchi - Esmeraldas*

As Figure 11 shows, the Colombian think-tank Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris estimated that 2,300 VNSA group members operated in Nariño in 2008:



**Figure 11: Groups and estimates of member numbers in Nariño, 2008 (Ávila and Núñez 2010, 29)**

This high VNSA concentration relates to the impact of Plan Colombia in Nariño's neighbouring Putumayo department. Owing to intense aerial fumigations and the state forces' military operations, both coca cultivations and armed groups shifted westwards to Nariño where these groups have been gaining strength over the last decade.

In Nariño all stages of the cocaine production chain are present: despite recent decreases, with 13,177 hectares of coca cultivation in 2013, Nariño has the largest area of coca cultivation of all Colombian departments, favoured by propitious climatic and geographic conditions (UNODC 2014b, 17).<sup>48</sup> The territory is also much used to process coca leaves into coca paste, and crystallise this paste into cocaine. 348 cocaine-base laboratories and 21 hydrochloride cocaine laboratories were destroyed in 2013 (UNODC 2014b, 101). Further laboratories have been

<sup>48</sup> In 2013 there were also 73 hectares of opium-poppy cultivation (compared to 154,000 hectares in Afghanistan in 2012) (UNODC 2014b, 66–67).

detected, but not destroyed (and presumably more have not even been detected). Having a land border (with Ecuador) and a maritime border (with the Pacific Ocean), Nariño features important starting points of international trafficking routes. Along the coast, cocaine is loaded for example on partially submersible vessels (semi-submarines) to be transported with fast speed boats via the Galapagos Islands to Central America, or via Mexico to the US. As well as the drug business, the VNSAs acquire resources from other economic activities, particularly mining. Nariño is also strategic for supplies: VNSAs cross over to Ecuador to buy medicine, arms, food and uniforms. The VNSAs' demand partly sustains the borderland economies (Lauret 2009, 156).

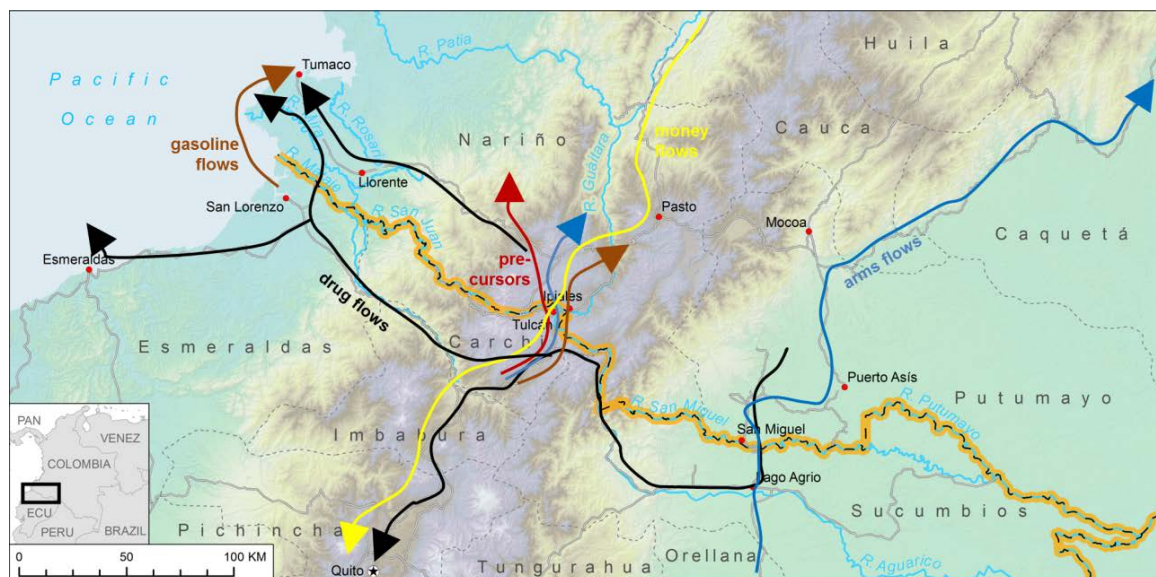
The city of Tumaco, Colombia's second most important port on the Pacific coast after Buenaventura, is the starting point of a key international drug route and a hot spot of VNSA operations. Tumaco lacks civilian state institutions and citizen participation, allowing VNSAs to control large shares of the cocaine business. Weak state governance distinguishes the city from other border towns, such as Ipiales with a supply function in the cocaine business. State presence and citizen participation being more solid in Ipiales, VNSAs manage financial flows with a low profile to avoid interdiction by the state (\*local government official, Ipiales (CO) 2011). Lying on the Pan-American Highway and connecting with its Ecuadorian twin town Tulcán, Ipiales allows for the flow of resources to and from Ecuador (see Map 7). Arms, precursors and gasoline enter Colombia and money flows are channelled through Ipiales to enter Ecuador's dollarised economy by money laundering (\*local government official, Pasto (CO) 2011a). Barter agreements, financial transactions and spot sales are commonplace in Ipiales.

VNSA presence in Nariño follows three features of the department's geography. The first is the rural-urban divide. While FARC and ELN dominate rural areas, the post-demobilised groups are predominantly present in urban areas. Secondly, the river system is crucial. River Mira is a route along which drugs are transported towards the Pacific coast.<sup>49</sup> Traditionally in charge of protecting coca cultivation, FARC dominate the river's upper and the middle part where coca is

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<sup>49</sup> River Patia further north plays a similar role.

cultivated, whereas, as of 2011, the Rastrojos dominated the lower part that leads to the ocean (\*local government official, Pasto (CO) 2011a). In 2014, FARC have been gaining more control over the river's lower reaches.



**Map 7: Trafficking flows along the Colombia-Ecuador border**

Thirdly, road infrastructure is essential for VNSA dynamics, particularly the road that connects the departmental capital Pasto with Tumaco, as explained by a local government official in Pasto (2011a):

**Official:** The road is fundamental because it's the central axis where the groups have limits [...] parallel to the road. There is a sector of the road between Mayama, Piedra Ancha and Tumaco, but more between Mayama and Llorente, a sub-municipality of Tumaco. In this sector – we are talking about more or less 120 kilometres – [...] the groups have their crossing corridors. They communicate with each other. For example, they place a bus or a car with explosives across the road [...] in the middle of this sector so that they can pass. It always happens there. One knows that, in some way, the groups are on the move.

**Me:** *When the groups want to cross over to the other side of the road?*

**Official:** Yes, they put obstacles so that state forces cannot advance.

**Me:** *Who controls these corridors?*

**Official:** Currently the state forces control the road. If you go from Tumaco to Pasto [...], I think it's the world's most militarised road. How many checkpoints did you count [when you travelled from Tumaco to Pasto]?

**Me:** *Maybe seven or eight...*

**Official:** Counting the police stations in the urban centres, there are 18 checkpoints!

**Me:** *How can these groups maintain these crossing points?*

**Official:** That's the thing! They would have to put a policeman, a soldier, every 50 metres to control it. No single army would be able to do that. It's difficult. The zone's topography, a mountainous zone, pure jungle, benefits the groups. [...]

**Me:** *What occurs on the other side? Is there [VNSA] presence as well? [...]*

Official: Yes, they look after themselves due to the diplomatic issue [...]. They know that if they are visible it's not the same to be in a Colombian zone and confront the Colombian army as to generate an international conflict between states. All groups protect themselves from this.

Me: *Also the [Colombian] army?*

Official: They are more cautious. Since they are the state, they have to. They know that this is very serious.

Me: *The groups benefit from this?*

Official: As well. There are zones, this zone of Tumaco [...]. If one group has to bring arms from Ecuador, let's say from Guayaquil. Do they have to control it? Passing them through the entire jungle and bringing them into Colombia and to [Nariño] is much more expensive than bringing them in a container via Ipiales. This is a matter of rationality of resources. The [...] logistics and the movement of resources are much cheaper via the Pan-American Highway than a journey of one month to reach a certain point.

The road is crucial to limiting the state's and the VNSAs' presence and to transport illicit goods to Tumaco – presumably bribing their way through the check points.

VNSA presence in Nariño has been changing over the past ten years. On 30 July 2005 the paramilitary Liberators of the South Bloc demobilised in Nariño (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2006, 42). Between 2005 and 2006 the Águilas Negras and the Autodefensas Gaitanistas gained strength, yet were afterwards widely co-opted by the Rastrojos who started to pervade Nariño in 2007 and expanded their presence in subsequent years (Núñez 2012, 73). They were the principal post-demobilised group in the department until 2012 when the Urabeños became their main rival in the entire country. In 2013 the Urabeños superseded the Rastrojos in many regions. As of 2011 three FARC “structures” were present in Nariño: the Front 29 in the municipalities of Payán, Roberto Payán, the northern parts of Barbacoas, El Charco, Cumbitara, Policarpa and Leyva to control the exit to the Pacific;<sup>50</sup> the mobile column Mariscal Sucre was present in the western mountainous parts; and the mobile column Daniel Aldana operated in the municipalities of Cumbal, Cuaspud, Carlosama, Ricaurte and Tumaco. Structures from Cauca and Putumayo occasionally enter the department to secure the mobility corridors. ELN's Front Comuneros del Sur was present in the municipalities of Samaniego, La Llanada,

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<sup>50</sup> FARC are organised hierarchically into Central High Command, the Estado Mayor Central, and into Blocks with several Fronts that include Columns with Companies, Guerrillas and Squads (FARC 2013, 8–10).

Guachavez and Leyva and the Front Héroes de Sindagua in Pizarro and Tumaco. ELN's Fronts Comuneros del Sur, Héroes de Barbacoas, Mártires de Barbacoas and Comuneros del Sur operated in Barbacoas (Núñez 2012, 72).



On the other side, in Carchi and Esmeraldas, the situation is similar. Tulcán, capital of Carchi, is a major trade hub of legal and contraband

**Figure 12: Informal border crossing between Tufiño and Mayasquer**

merchandise. VNSAs have little permanent presence in Tulcán except with informants and militias. In Tulcán and the remote border villages I visited, including Maldonado, Chical and Tufiño, shown in Figure 12, FARC members buy equipment and other goods that are cheaper and easier to acquire in Ecuador than in Colombia (Lauret 2009, 156). In these areas, River San Juan separates Colombia from Ecuador and unites them to transport goods to the Pacific coast.

West of Chical, Carchi borders Esmeraldas. Similarly to Nariño, the topography near the border consists of dense, hardly accessible jungle. There is little road infrastructure from Chical towards the coast, yet as shown in Figure 13, there is a 102 km stretch of road that connects Chical with Tulcán (Lauret 2009, 128), and one that connects Tulcán via Ibarra with San Lorenzo, twin town of Tumaco.



**Figure 13: Road between Chical and Tulcán, Ecuador**

Generally, road and communication infrastructure as well as electricity, education and health service on the Ecuadorian side are more developed or more easily accessible than in Colombia (Lauret 2009, 124–134, 156).<sup>51</sup> Many Colombian children go to school in Ecuador and the guerrillas bring their injured members to Ecuador to receive medical treatment, as an ex-member (2011) of FARC’s financing front explained:

Ex-guerrilla: I was in Tumaco around six years ago [...]. We went there to transport a sick [comrade] who was going to be taken to Ecuador. [...] We went in a jeep to Tumaco and there we handed him over. [...] He was a [fellow FARC member]. [...] They treated him in Ecuador, I don’t know where exactly. In any case, they took him with them.

Me: *Who attended to him, the organisation [FARC]?*

Ex-guerrilla: No, I don’t know. Ecuadorian doctors do the treatment.

This unequal development has produced grievances and, as I will discuss in subsequent chapters, increased the isolation of the Colombian borderlanders from the state which is perceived to neglect them while the Ecuadorian state delivers (\*civil society representative, Pasto (CO) 2011).

Many Colombians told me that Colombian villages are in the dark whereas Ecuadorian villages

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<sup>51</sup> During my travels I noted how the Ecuadorian government drew travellers’ attention to the newly refurbished roads with signposts “Citizen Revolution – Progress” whereas in Colombia signposts with “Danger of Death” highlighted the poor state of the roads.

are “on the bright side” (illuminated by electric street lamps). A government official of Nariño (2011a) illustrated how infrastructure helped fight the war in Ecuador:<sup>52</sup>

There is an issue with the border which is the unequal development. Consider the border bridge of Rumichaca on the Pan-American Highway. If you leave the Pan-American Highway from here on the Ecuadorian side towards the Pacific coast there is road infrastructure. If you take the Highway on the Colombian side, via Ipiales, you only get to Cumbal. From there onwards there is nothing. There is no connectivity at all. Further down there also isn't any electricity, any communication, nothing. This is also why the Ecuadorian state has been much more successful in stopping the war reaching the country's interior because it has infrastructure to confront it. By contrast, in Colombia, this doesn't exist. Even for the army it's difficult to reach the border. From the Pan-American Highway, it takes them five days on foot to reach the remote border zone [...] and the [VNSA] groups use this situation to their comparative advantage.

Feeling abandoned by the Colombian state, communities develop ties with neighbouring Ecuadorian communities to benefit from Ecuador's more advanced development policies.

Like Tumaco in Colombia, San Lorenzo is one of Ecuador's poorest and least developed towns (see Figure 14). Its residents believe that violence in Nariño has spilled over to Esmeraldas, particularly San Lorenzo.



**Figure 14: Drug business influence in San Lorenzo, Ecuador**

Contract killings have been widespread in Colombia at least since the 1990s, yet in Ecuador they only became more common in the early 2000s, when “contract killing schools” were established

<sup>52</sup> Opposed to the central government's military approach, the governments of Nariño have implemented development programmes to address deficient infrastructure (Idler and Paladini Adell forthcoming).

in Esmeraldas (Carrión 2008; \*Ecuadorian academic, Quito (EC) 2012). A Tumaco government official (2012) described San Lorenzo as an appendix of Tumaco. Most residents of San Lorenzo have family links or commercial relations with the town. Certain practices in Tumaco are “exported” to San Lorenzo. They include trends among youth, for example the type of clothes they wear, but also those related to VNSAs such as contract killing, participation in drug trafficking, extortion and social control through imposing behavioural rules.

The coastal areas near San Lorenzo are characterised by numerous small islands, many inhabited. I conducted interviews on the islands of Pampanal, Palma Real and El Viento, the last points before crossing over to Tumaco on the waterway (see Figure 15). Since the islands’ large mangroves are used as hiding places for cocaine to be shipped abroad, pirates who steal motors for fast speed boats to transport the drugs have become common in that area (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Esmeraldas (EC) 2012). San Lorenzo has direct access to the open Pacific and is only 24 boat hours away from the Panama Canal, making it a strategic point on international trafficking routes (UNDP 2009b, 7). Both FARC and post-demobilised groups, supposedly the Popular Revolutionary Anti-Terrorist Army of Colombia (ERPAC) and Águilas Negras, have been present (González Carranza 2008, 216–218; \*cleric, San Lorenzo (EC) 2012).



**Figure 15: Harbour of El Viento, Ecuador**

A five-hour bus ride south along the coast takes one to Esmeraldas, the provincial capital, and another major starting point of illegal drug routes. This became public through media coverage in 2012 of the involvement of the head of the Esmeraldas police in a major trafficking ring. In partnership with an NGO of Spanish residents in Ecuador, they shipped goods to poor children in Africa, a strategy used to traffic hidden cocaine via West Africa to Europe (El Universo 2011; La Hora 2012; \*international agency staff, Esmeraldas (EC) 2012).

The overlapping VNSA presence in Nariño and Esmeraldas entails interactions among them with the following ones mentioned by several interviewees. In 2010 ELN and FARC were in combat in Barbacoas municipality. According to an ex-FARC member (2011a), under ELN's control this region had been a transit zone for FARC's trafficking route. When ELN asked them to pay to let them pass and took a share of the cocaine from them, it "upset" FARC, leading to the outbreak of a violent dispute (\*ex-guerrilla, Pasto (CO) 2011a). FARC and ELN stopped fighting each other in 2010, yet in July 2011 the same region suffered clashes between FARC, Águilas Negras and Rastrojos (\*civil society representative, Pasto (CO) 2011).

In urban areas of Nariño short-term arrangements prevail. The village of Llorente, on the road connecting Tumaco with Pasto, is notorious for spot sales and barter agreements. In 2007 Llorente resembled a "business centre" where VNSAs met to negotiate shipments of drugs and precursors, and made payments to access trafficking routes or purchase illegal goods (Tickner, García, and Arzeza 2011). In Tumaco, as of 2011 the Águilas Negras, Rastrojos, FARC militias of the mobile column Daniel Aldana, the Mexican Sinaloa cartel and other criminal groups were to different degrees involved in tactical alliances (\*Afro-Colombian leader, Tumaco (CO) 2011a; \*Afro-Colombian leader, Tumaco (CO) 2011b; \*indigenous leader, Tumaco (CO) 2011; \*civil society representative, Pasto (CO) 2011). For example, the Águilas Negras and Rastrojos apparently entered an alliance though previously they had fought each other (\*local government official, Pasto (CO) 2011b; \*local government official, Pasto (CO) 2011a). Tumaco also featured subcontractual relationships; the Sinaloa cartel supposedly contracted the Águilas Negras to

provide security services (\*international agency staff, Pasto (CO) 2011c). Colombian post-demobilised groups subcontracted youth gangs across the border in San Lorenzo to provide security services (\*community leader, San Lorenzo (EC) 2012; \*human rights organisation staff, San Lorenzo (EC) 2012). In Esmeraldas, several Colombian post-demobilised groups have tactical alliances, spot sales and barter agreements with each other (\*police official, Esmeraldas (EC) 2012).

Given the extensive areas of coca cultivations in Nariño, VNSAs also have transactional supply chain relationships. As of 2012 along the River Mira FARC's mobile column Daniel Aldana controlled Bajo Mira, where they protected the cultivation and the first processing stages. A broker bought the coca paste to sell it to a group which transported the paste to the laboratories in Alto Mira and Frontera, apparently under control of the Rastrojos, who were in charge of further processing and transporting. Another broker negotiated with criminal organisations such as the Mexican Zetas or the Sinaloa cartel, who bought cocaine to ship it to the US (Tickner, García, and Arreza 2011).

The strategic alliance between ELN and FARC is another long-term arrangement in Nariño. In 2011, they operated jointly in the municipalities of Santa Cruz, Samaniego, Cumbitara, La Llanada and Los Andes (SAT 2011c). Near the border, including in Cumbal, FARC are preponderant. This preponderance reaches beyond the borderline: as of 2012 FARC exerted cross-border authority in remote areas of Carchi including the villages of Chical, Tufiño and Maldonado.

#### *Putumayo – Sucumbíos*

Putumayo, part of the Amazon basin and bordering Sucumbíos and Peru, has historically been a guerrilla stronghold. It was pervaded between 1980 and 1982 by the insurgent group 19<sup>th</sup> of April Movement (M-19), and, in certain areas, between 1984 and 1991 by the Popular Liberation Army (EPL). The M-19 demobilised in 1990, and EPL members in Putumayo in 1991, yet FARC,

which entered the department in the 1980s, persist until to the present day (Fundación Paz y Reconciliación 2014, 7). Towards the end of the 1980s, paramilitary structures linked to the illegal drug business arrived. The first paramilitary base was reported in 1987 in El Azul (now Puerto Asís). The AUC appeared in the mid-1990s (González Carranza 2011, 43). The violent paramilitary incursion of the Putumayo Central Bolivar South Front in the 1990s entailed massacres such as the one in El Tigre and El Placer (CNRR 2011). 504 paramilitary South Front members demobilised on 1 March 2006 (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2006, 80).

As in Nariño, Putumayo's geography influences the VNSAs' activities. In the 2000s, the state forces initiated Plan Colombia in Putumayo and later the department became one of the government's Consolidation Plan's target zones. As a result of the fumigations that were carried out in the context of Plan Colombia coca cultivation moved elsewhere and decreased, however, it still exists in large parts of the department. In December 2013 Putumayo had the second largest coca cultivation area (7,667 hectares) after Nariño (13,177 hectares) of all Colombian departments (UNODC 2014b, 17). Many laboratories were near River San Miguel, used to transport chemical precursors that are required to produce cocaine. Local farmers told me that cocaine paste was transported via Jardines de Sucumbíos to Estrella or La Victoria in Nariño, where it was processed into cocaine and transported to the Pacific coast. Proximity to Ecuador helps acquire cheap arms, supplies and gasoline (SAT 2010a). The extractive industry also matters. In 2011 Putumayo was declared a "Special Mining District" (Fundación Paz y Reconciliación 2014, 13–14). Locals claim that Putumayo's increasing militarisation in recent years serves to protect the extractive industry rather than communities. This reflects the relationship between residents of Putumayo and the state (M. C. Ramírez 2009, 312):

The Amazon region has historically been seen as little more than a destination for people displaced from other parts of Colombia. This has been the defining characteristic in the formalization of state policy toward the region and is key to the sense of marginalization and abandonment that drives the discourse of the region's people when they refer to the central state.



**Figure 16: Plaza of Mocoa, Colombia**

Walking through the streets of Mocoa confirms this sense of marginalisation. With a poverty rate of 52.6 per cent (Alcaldía de Mocoa 2012, 25), it feels more like a remote jungle town than a departmental capital (see Figure 16).

Although many people came to Putumayo from other parts of Colombia, the department also comprises 14 local ethnic groups that have suffered discrimination and, for example, stigmatisation as guerrilla collaborators (Lozano-Mancera 2012, 116).

Ecuadorian Sucumbíos was established as a province in 1989, but had already attracted attention in 1967 when the first oil well was drilled. Since then, it has been dominated by the oil industry (Celi, Camilo, and Gabriela 2009, 32), including an influx of migrants who came to work in the sector, particularly in Sucumbíos's capital Nueva Loja (commonly called Lago Agrio). This produced social problems, including prostitution offered in mobile brothels in which young women are brought to their clients. In my field notes from conversations with people in Bajo Putumayo and in General Farfán I wrote:

There is prostitution for the oil workers, soldiers, *guerrilleros*. They say they are girls from the interior of the country, but the majority are from Putumayo. They go for one weekend to sell magazines, or clothes from a catalogue, but in reality they go to prostitute themselves. Sometimes they never go back because they have seen things and therefore they are killed.

Ecuadorians commonly perceive Ecuador to be “contaminated” by the Colombian conflict since the beginning of Plan Colombia (González Carranza 2008, 38–48; Carrión 2013, 95; Gómez 2013, 100). This has fuelled xenophobia within communities because, owing to family and

commercial ties, Colombians and Ecuadorians or Venezuelans intermingle on both sides of the border. In Sucumbíos this perception is particularly strong, as illustrated by this account of a local radio station employee (2012):

Since 2001, when Plan Colombia started to operate [...], the province's social situation has changed due to the presence of [...] the Colombian conflict's jurisdiction. When [...] the Colombian government intensified the war with the illegal groups, we felt how the conflict started to be displaced to Ecuador. In the mediate term, we rarely noted the groups' movement here. They came here to our country and organised acts of revenge. They confronted each other. It became a scene of violence because it had always been reported as a country with many assassinations, but everything indicated that these were the groups that fled Colombia and came here. This contaminated our population and affected the peaceful coexistence which previously prevailed in this area.

The Colombian conflict's displacement brought many consequences, extended violence increased and, gradually, the civilian population in the border zone ended up between a rock and a hard place: on one side the regular forces, [on the other side] the irregular forces. The civilian population that doesn't participate in this conflict ends up in between and is pressured from both sides. People start to flee or to leave their farms, their towns or their provinces. They don't want to become involved in the conflict. There is nothing good about it. People have to change their way of life and leave their towns or farms [...]. Up to 2006 it was critical, then the intensity decreased [...], but the issue is still latent. It's not that it disappeared and everything would have become normal again. The issue continues to be latent.

Violence increased during the implementation of Plan Colombia, but it had been elevated in the border departments long before, when compared to the rest of Ecuador. The population is reluctant to report crimes due to the risk of authorities being linked to the perpetrators (\*human rights defender, Lago Agrio (EC) 2012). Several reports have shown that members of the Colombian (neo-)paramilitary groups and of the Colombian state forces have links (ICG 2010, 14; Human Rights Watch 2010, 99). Furthermore, Ecuadorian military officials have been directly or indirectly involved in human rights violations (Alston 2011, 7). If VNSAs commit crimes and citizens report them to state forces, they risk retaliation.



**Figure 17: River that forms the border between Putumayo and Sucumbíos**

The borderlands of Putumayo and Sucumbíos, separated by the border river (see Figure 17), primarily feature long-term arrangements. When the AUC were still intact they fought against FARC, yet since their demobilisation in 2006, there has hardly been direct confrontation. That year the Rastrojos started to consolidate their presence in Putumayo while FARC attempted to regain territorial control (Fundación Paz y Reconciliación 2014, 13–14; SAT 2009c). In most parts of Putumayo FARC, the Rastrojos and other post-demobilised groups operated in territorially segmented transactional supply chain relationships that concentrated around the first production stages.<sup>53</sup> In 2009, FARC and Rastrojos fought each other in the Puerto Caicedo municipality (SAT 2009c, 6). In the same year the Águilas Negras threatened presumed FARC collaborators in Putumayo (Diaro del Sur 2009).<sup>54</sup> The civilian population was scapegoated by both sides and affected by combats between the insurgents and state forces.

Around 2012, FARC dominated rural areas and the area surrounding Puerto Guzmán. The Rastrojos and others including the Urabeños were primarily present in urban areas. The Rastrojos

<sup>53</sup> This explains why only one hydrochloride laboratory, part of the second production stage, was destroyed in Putumayo in 2013 as opposed to twenty-one in Nariño (UNODC 2014b, 101).

<sup>54</sup> This information was confirmed in email correspondence with María Clemencia Ramírez.

in particular dominated Puerto Caicedo, and various different VNSAs including FARC militias controlled Puerto Asís, with the Rastrojos as the most powerful group (\*civil society representative, Mocoa (CO) 2012; \*police official, Puerto Asís (CO) 2012; \*international agency staff, Puerto Asís (CO) 2012). The trafficking route from northern parts of Colombia via Putumayo to Sucumbíos and Quito connects these three places. Puerto Caicedo is a crucial transit point for drugs and arms. If groups such as FARC passed their illicit goods through the village, the Rastrojos charged “taxes” or took a share of the cocaine (\*female community leader, Puerto Caicedo (CO) 2012; \*international agency staff, Puerto Asís (CO) 2012). Thanks to this arrangement FARC could pursue their function within the supply chain without being attacked by the Rastrojos who profited financially or materially. The income of most VNSAs in the region stemmed from trafficking illegal drugs, chemical precursors, arms and ammunitions, from contraband of oil derivatives, and from extortion (SAT 2010a).

These transactional supply chain relationships overlapped with preponderance relations. FARC’s Front 48, in charge of finances and the trafficking of arms that enter Colombia from Peru via Ecuador (Ramsey 2012), controlled most of the border fringe towards the east of Putumayo and were involved in barter agreements – drugs-for-arms deals – with Ecuadorian traffickers near the border bridge San Miguel (see Figure 18).



**Figure 18: Border bridge San Miguel between Putumayo and Sucumbíos**

According to Salinas (2012, 13), FARC's Front 48 had 200 troops in 2012. Towards the West, FARC's Front 32 was present with another 200 troops, and the mobile column Daniel Aldana dominated the area that borders with Nariño (Salinas 2012, 13). The mobile column Tufiño supposedly provided military support to these financing fronts and was in charge of explosives.<sup>55</sup> This preponderance extended across the border to Sucumbíos. FARC allegedly controlled the village of General Farfán and surrounding areas and had recuperation and reorganisation camps in more remote regions (\*intelligence official, Quito (EC) 2012c). Direct cooperation among various VNSAs such as strategic alliances is absent, not least because ELN, which shares similar values with FARC, is not present in that region.

## **4.2 The Colombian-Venezuelan Borderlands**

### 4.2.1 State Policies

“Of all Colombia's borders with its neighbours, the one it shares with Venezuela is the most active and troublesome” (Malamud 2004). Extending along 2219 kilometres, this territory comprises seven Colombian departments and four Venezuelan states (Bustamante 2008, 9). The borderlands extend in the northern extreme from the arid Guajira Peninsula shared by La Guajira and Zulia, the mountainous lower parts of Zulia and Cesar, and the Catatumbo region in the northern parts of Norte de Santander to the urbanised areas of Táchira and the metropolitan area of Cúcuta, the capital of Norte de Santander. Further south, Apure borders Arauca and a small part of Boyacá. They are remote jungle regions. At the southern end are the departments of Vichada and Guainia, which adjoin with Venezuela's Amazonas.

From the 1980s to the mid-1990s Venezuela engaged in hot pursuit operations across the border to curb violence emanating from Colombian armed groups on Venezuelan territory. The perceived threat of violence led to the creation of the Colombian-Venezuelan Neighbourhood

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<sup>55</sup> Field notes from conversations in Puerto Asís and other parts of Bajo Putumayo.

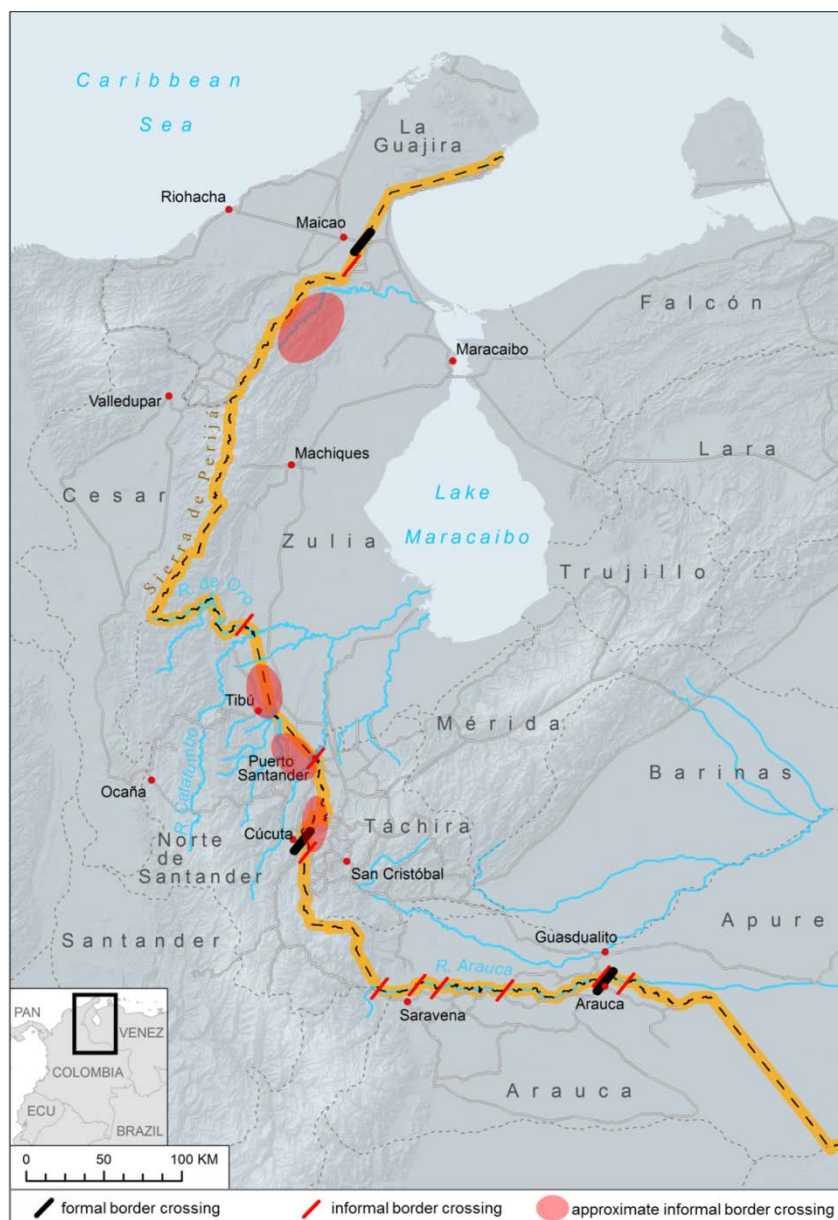
Commission in 1989, complemented in 1994 by the Binational Border Commission (COMBIFRON) to exchange intelligence. This perception changed after 1999 when Chávez was elected president. While Venezuela regarded the guerrilla as a Colombian problem, Colombia accused Venezuela of complicity with FARC and ELN, leading to the suspension of most border cooperation agreements including COMBIFRON (Malamud 2004). This enabled VNSAs to increase their presence in the borderlands. After Uribe became president in 2002, tensions between Venezuela and Colombia heightened, yet some border cooperation mechanisms such as the Presidential Commissions on Integration and Border Issues were still in place (Labrador et al. 2009, 234). Cooperation gradually diminished. In 2009 the only bilateral security cooperation still in force was between the Colombian National Police and the Venezuelan Border States' police forces (C. A. Restrepo 2009, 27), a situation which deteriorated in 2010 when Venezuela broke off diplomatic relations over Colombia's allegations of Venezuela actively permitting armed groups on its soil (S. Ramírez 2011a, 60–61). Diplomatic relations were re-established and improved after Juan Manuel Santos assumed the presidency of Colombia in August 2010 and under Chávez's successor Nicolás Maduro. However, the controversy over FARC's presence in the Venezuelan border zone continues. According to a humanitarian organisation employee (2012) in Maicao and many other Venezuelans across different social classes along the borderline (e.g. \*international agency staff, San Cristóbal (VE) 2012), FARC presence in Venezuela helps protect Venezuela from a US invasion:

I will tell you the truth. If the US [...] invade Venezuela, they invade via Colombia and Zulia. Whom do we need at the border as the first line of resistance? FARC! [...] We need FARC at the border; we permit them to be at the border because they will protect us. Because the Venezuelan soldier, as soon as he hears the first shot, runs away. Now we are already better prepared, but previously we have never been at war. Colombia has always been at war [...]. We need FARC at the border due to our fear, but also due to the paramilitaries, you know there was an incursion...<sup>56</sup>

The Colombia-Venezuela border features numerous informal border crossings and three with migratory control. Based on confidential information from an international agency, various local interviewees, and Ariel Ávila and Carmen Rosa Guerra Ariza (2012), I illustrate them in Map 8:

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<sup>56</sup> Caracas has been trying to counteract such a discourse, but in the border zone it is still common.



**Map 8: Border crossings along the Colombia-Venezuela Border**

#### 4.2.2 VNSAs in the Colombian-Venezuelan Borderlands

##### *Arauca-Apure*

The geostrategic significance of Arauca for Colombia's armed conflict and international trafficking routes attracted FARC, ELN, the paramilitary Conquerors Bloc of Arauca, and later its successor groups, including Águilas Negras and ERPAC. These actors benefit from Arauca's richness in natural resources, particularly oil, its connection with other strategic Colombian regions, the porosity of Arauca's border with neighbouring Venezuela and weak state presence.

For example, a woman in a border village in Arauca told me that “the only day on which you can get sick is Thursday” because this is the only day a doctor is in the village. Local people claim that of the 15,000 state troops based in Arauca as part of the government’s Consolidation Plan, 80 per cent protect infrastructure rather than the population. Indeed, when I accompanied an international organisation in this area we passed through the highly militarised zone of the Caño Limón pipeline where vehicles have to stick strictly to 60 km/h.

The guerrillas have been present in Arauca and Apure since the mid-1980s. Towards the end of the 1990s, the paramilitaries entered the region, provoking a humanitarian crisis (OBSAR 2011, 2–3). When the paramilitaries demobilised in 2005, violence decreased. Shortly after that the guerrilla war between FARC and ELN started, fuelling further violence, particularly after 2007 when ELN strengthened their presence by collaborating with the Colombian state forces (and supposedly the local government of Apure and the national government of Venezuela) to fight against FARC (Ávila and León 2012, 81). The guerrilla war ended in 2010 (Núñez 2012), but violence, poverty and institutional deficiencies persist (Ávila and León 2012, 80).<sup>57</sup> As I will discuss in Chapter Seven, the VNSAs provide governance functions and thus achieved legitimacy in a way that the states never had. Today, Arauca is one of the Colombian departments with the highest homicide rates (see Figure 7); the civilian population is affected by kidnappings, recruitment of minors, anti-personnel mines and forced displacement (Defensoría del Pueblo 2011; SAT 2010b).<sup>58</sup> The livelihoods of local farmers are negatively affected by the fumigation of coca plantations. However, coca cultivation and processing laboratories have decreased in Arauca; at the same time, it has increasingly become a transit zone. VNSAs use the border area for economic activities including drug trafficking, gasoline smuggling and extorting from smugglers.

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<sup>57</sup> In June and July 2012 FARC increased attacks in Arauca, arguably to be stronger when they went into the peace talks in October 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Arauca is Colombia’s third most land-mine-affected department (SAT 2010b, 3).

The VNSAs allegedly invest part of their income in the local economy to control local businesses and politics. Like other border areas, Arauca also serves VNSAs to recover and to acquire supplies. With border cooperation slightly improved, but still deficient, the VNSAs can easily cross the border to avoid enquiries into their illicit activities (UNHCR Colombia 2012). In March 2012 the Venezuelan government introduced a “chip” to regulate the amount of gasoline that each vehicle can transport across the border in the Venezuelan states that border Colombia. It made gasoline smuggling in the region more difficult: in Puerto Lleras, for example, 500 to 600 barrels used to be smuggled per night. In April 2012 it was only 100. In La Playa where a smuggler had earned 200,000 pesos (about 105 USD) in one week, in April 2012 he only earned 20,000 (about 11 USD) in the same period (UNHCR Colombia 2012). The reduced income from extortion made VNSAs increase their kidnappings (\*human rights defender, Arauca (COL) 2012).

Previously a zone of rest, recreation and recovery for Colombian VNSAs, in the 1990s Alto Apure (and Táchira discussed below) became a zone of political influence and a source of collaborators and supporters (Labrador et al. 2009, 217). Given the high levels of poverty and resulting grievances of the population, Páez municipality has been especially vulnerable. The VNSAs’ activities led to the region’s militarisation, but not more aggressive actions towards the VNSAs. Instead, it fuelled violence and abuse towards the local population (Labrador et al. 2009, 228, 236–237), provoking the communities’ mistrust of state institutions, and their isolation from the state and alignment with VNSAs.

After years of combat between FARC and ELN from March 2006 to November 2010 (OBSAR 2011; Defensoría del Pueblo 2011), these groups established a non-aggression pact and engaged in a strategic alliance in Arauca. As of 2011 the following structures were present: ELN companies of Rafael Villamizar, Camilo Cienfuegos, Ernesto Che Guevara, Barquiley, Compañero Tomás, Omaira Montoya Henao, Martha Elena Barón and Domingo Laín. FARC presence was with its Fronts 10, 28 and 45 as well as the mobile column Alfonso Castellanos and the mobile company Reinal Méndez. In 2011 these alliances included not only joint attacks

against state forces or infrastructure, but also the recognition of the mistakes committed by both groups, the return of displaced people, respect for the territorial dominion of both groups, refraining from imposing taxes on their social bases, the rejection of coca cultivation, sharing territory in Venezuela without engaging in armed activities that could bother the Venezuelan government; and clarity on the same enemy: “the empire” (Defensoría del Pueblo 2011).

The post-demobilised groups that entered the department via Casanare are preponderant in urban areas. The residents often do not know which group is present since the same people seem to operate under changing names. In the city of Arauca, the Águilas Negras were apparently present between 2011 and 2012; in Tame the presence of a group called “Vencedores” had been reported. To what extent post-demobilised groups operate in Alto Apure is less clear. People have seen pamphlets with death threats in Guasualito, the capital of Apure, yet some argue these pamphlets had been brought from Arauca where they were distributed.

The pacific coexistence of FARC, ELN and FBL in Apure is an open secret. In the 1990s ELN “mentored” FBL so FBL’s activities to acquire income now resemble those of the Colombian group. However, in 2003 they fell into dispute. Some analysts argue that FBL had a strategic alliance with FARC (Sweeney 2004). From 2006 to 2010 ELN and FARC fought each other in Arauca and in Apure. As of 2009, ELN partly ousted FARC in Apure (Labrador et al. 2009, 221). In 2010 FARC and ELN stopped fighting and started a strategic alliance in Colombia and pacific coexistence on the Venezuelan side of the border. Still, FBL continued to resist ELN presence. In September 2011, for example, a protest march against ELN took place in El Nula, a village in Alto Apure. Organised by farmers’ fronts, FBL supposedly initiated it (\*civil society representative, El Nula (VE) 2012; \*cleric, El Nula (VE) 2012a). Thus, rather than violently opposing the Colombian guerrillas on Venezuelan territory with violence, FBL tried to rally public support behind them (Rodríguez 2011; \*cleric, El Nula (VE) 2012b). As of 2012 they had been coexisting peacefully with the territory divided in different sectors: the south-east side, especially El Orza, was FARC, and towards Táchira, particularly the area near El Nula, was ELN

and FBL.<sup>59</sup> Guasdualito featured all three groups (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Guasdualito (VE) 2012a; \*cleric, Guasdualito (VE) 2012; \*male citizen, Guasdualito (VE) 2012; \*female citizen, Guasdualito (VE) 2012; \*male citizen, El Nula (VE) 2012). All three had an interest in former president Chávez's re-election in September 2012. They maintained a low profile to avoid the attention of the media which could have cited high rates of violence to accuse Chávez of mishandling the situation in the border zone.

#### *Norte de Santander-Táchira*

The first armed confrontations in Norte de Santander's recent history were related to grievances of farmers during "La Violencia", followed by clashes between state forces and guerrillas in the 1970s (Fundación Progresar 2010, 38–45). FARC, ELN and a section of EPL, present in rural areas with militias in urban areas, positioned themselves and expanded their activities to border areas (SAT 2011d). In the early 1990s, coca cultivation became common in Medio and Bajo Catatumbo in the River Catatumbo Basin (Machado, Novaes, and do Rego Monteiro 2009, 110), allowing the groups to link themselves to transnational networks of arms and drug trafficking as well as money laundering (SAT 2011d; Thoumi 1995; Thoumi 2003). Para-state groups had already been operating violently from 1982 onwards, but in the mid-1990s the officially-constituted paramilitaries conducted brutal massacres to fight the guerrillas while pursuing the drug business. Between 2000 and 2002 via the Peasant Self-Defence Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU), and later the AUC, the paramilitary Border Bloc and the Catatumbo Bloc consolidated their presence in Norte de Santander, leading to a peak in violence in the region (Fundación Progresar 2010, 38–39).

In 2006, when the AUC demobilised in Norte de Santander, the Águilas Negras appeared, spreading more violence and fear. When the Águilas Negras leader died in 2007, the Paisas and the Urabeños disputed the Águilas Negras's preponderance between 2007 and 2008 (\*high-ranking police commander, Cúcuta (CO) 2012). They mainly came from Córdoba, Urabá,

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<sup>59</sup> Supposedly, alias Grennoble, FARC leader Mono Jojoy's brother, was killed in El Orza (Semana 2012b).

Antioquia and the Atlantic Coast, and, according to the Ombudsman's Office, comprised farmers, youth from marginalised neighbourhoods, and recruited children and demobilised AUC members. In 2009 the Rastrojos entered the territory and positioned themselves in the urban border areas of Cúcuta, Villa del Rosario, and Los Patios to control the international trafficking routes (SAT 2011d, 8).

In 2011 and 2012 targeted rivalry between the Rastrojos and the Urabeños characterised the security dynamics in Cúcuta. At the same time, the town continued to be a hub of illegal business deals (\*international agency staff, San Cristóbal (VE) 2012). The shopping centre "Alejandría" was the site for financial transactions of spot sales and barter agreements among VNSAs, particularly with the Rastrojos. As a high-ranking police commander in Cúcuta (2012) explained, the Urabeños tried to oust the Rastrojos to control the drug route, i.e. the logistics linked to the physical space where the drug is transported:

[The Urabeños] have to dominate territory to handle the business, the routes, the logistics chain. When we talk about these things you often hear [...] that the criminals even sell a "route". [...] In the criminal arena, when they say the Rastrojos sell a route, they sell the entire logistics chain: [...] the know-how, how they do it and who is there [...]. They say: "Look, I know [...] who has the coca production sites. I know how they bring the precursors into this sector and I have the contact. I know where the laboratories are and who can process the coca leaves first into coca paste and then coca paste into cocaine. I know about the entire process and where we can stockpile [cocaine]. I know with whom and where we can get it out [of the country] and what to transport it in and who will receive it abroad, in Spain, in the US or in export countries. I know how to transport the money because I have the contacts. This is a route.

In Ocaña, the second largest city of Norte de Santander, a four-hour drive north-west of Cúcuta, and a crucial transit point of the trafficking routes from the heartlands of Colombia towards the border with Venezuela, Catatumbo and the Caribbean, VNSAs have short-term arrangements, particularly subcontractual relationships. Homicide rates are lower than in Cúcuta where there had been no arrangement between VNSAs. Powerful post-demobilised groups in Ocaña allegedly have contracted youth gangs to control neighbourhoods (\*human rights defender, Ocaña (CO) 2012).

On the other side of the border, in Táchira, the VNSA dynamics resemble those in Cúcuta. After the paramilitaries entered Norte de Santander in May 1999 ELN, EPL and FARC withdrew to and across the border. Soon the paramilitaries followed. FBL has been present in the Fernández Feo municipality (Labrador et al. 2009, 221), but in urban areas near Cúcuta and the Pedro María Urena and Bolívar municipalities, post-demobilised groups are prevalent. In 2011 and 2012 the Rastrojos and the Urabeños extended the targeted rivalry in Cúcuta across the border to San Antonio de Táchira (\*international agency staff, San Cristóbal (VE) 2012). Some interviewees considered San Cristóbal, the capital of Táchira, the logistics centre where VNSAs can meet with a low profile to avoid attention and violent clashes (\*community leader, Cúcuta (CO) 2012). Subcontractual relationships were also used for this purpose: as of 2009 post-demobilised groups subcontracted local criminal groups to conduct illicit activities for them, such as extortion, and thus become an important “employer” in a region with high unemployment rates (Labrador et al. 2009, 221).

The groups’ interests in controlling strategic areas in the drug trafficking route reinforced their expansion into Venezuelan territory. The northern parts of Venezuelan Colón municipality, particularly the village of Coloncito, are crucial for this purpose: Coloncito lies on the Pan-American Highway, used to transport drugs towards the coast of Venezuela from where they are sent via the Caribbean islands to the US or Europe. It connects with Puerto Santander, a Colombian border village through which the groups transport Venezuelan gasoline used to process coca paste into cocaine in laboratories in Colombia. The gasoline station from where the groups smuggle gasoline across the border via Puerto Santander southwards is only few kilometres away (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Cúcuta (CO) 2012). Gasoline enters Colombia across the river that separates the Venezuelan town of Boca del Grita from Puerto Santander (see Figure 19). Cocaine is transported on the same route in the opposite way (see Map 9).



**Figure 19: Border post Boca del Grita, Venezuela, and international border bridge between Colombian Puerto Santander and Venezuelan Boca del Grita**

In 2012, the Rastrojos dominated Puerto Santander. Since they controlled the gasoline-drug business, there were few violent disputes (\*community leader, Cúcuta (CO) 2012):

On this side, there doesn't flow as much blood of the dead as flows in the zones of La Parada, Cúcuta or Ureña. There doesn't flow much blood because the only things that flow are dollars, coca[ine] and gasoline.

Alluding to Puerto Santander's function as key point on the trafficking route, when I visited Puerto Santander a local government official (2012) remarked: "This is not the *puerto* (port), this is the *portón* (huge port)".



**Map 9: Trafficking routes through Puerto Santander**

Further north along the border lie Catatumbo and southern Zulia. Catatumbo has been one of the conflict's epicentres and is highly militarised. Between 2000 and 2004 an average of three to five murders a week occurred in Tibú municipality (Vicepresidencia de la República 2004; Vicepresidencia 2007). Tibú also accounted for almost 68 per cent of the cases of disappearances (346, of which 233 are reported as enforced disappearances) in Norte de Santander between 2000 and 2009 (Fundación Progresar 2010, 51–52).<sup>60</sup> Within Tibú, in the village of La Gabarra that I visited, 245 of these victims were recorded. In El Tarra municipality, another site I went to, 27 enforced disappearances were recorded.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> For the definition of “enforced disappearance” see the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (OHCHR n.d.).

<sup>61</sup> In Cúcuta in the same period there were 374 cases of disappearances. Only 25 were recorded as enforced disappearances, presumably due to the victims' fear of retaliation (Fundación Progresar 2010, 51).

Rather than the targeted rivalry and the short-term arrangements in urban areas near Cúcuta, in Catatumbo the VNSAs have long-term arrangements. In late 2007 and early 2008 FARC and the Águilas Negras supposedly operated in pacific coexistence in Norte de Santander (Ávila and Núñez 2008, 58). As of 2011 and 2012, FARC and the Rastrojos seemed to be operating in transactional cocaine supply chain relationships.

In 2012 ELN and FARC seemed to have a strategic alliance: in rural areas near Tibú there were graffiti of the two group names on house walls, painted in the same colours and the same style, suggesting that they had been done by one person. As several local interviewees argued, if either of the two insurgent groups had objected to the graffiti, they would have removed them (\*cleric, Tibú (CO) 2012; \*civil society representative, Tibú (CO) 2012a; \*international agency staff, Cúcuta (CO) 2012; \*cleric, La Gabarra (CO) 2012; \*cleric, Filo de Gringo (CO) 2012).

The repercussions on the other border side, in southern Zulia, intensified in the aftermath of the paramilitary Catatumbo Bloc's demobilisation in Norte de Santander. As Figure 7 indicates, in 2003 homicide rates in Norte de Santander were 98.7, but only 31.3 in Zulia, where they subsequently rose. Despite these numbers, given Norte de Santander's history of violence, citizens have adapted their lifestyle to the presence of VNSAs. Violence has become a "normal" feature of life (Pécaut 1999, 142). The day a car bomb exploded in Cúcuta in April 2012, local residents of three different generations said to me: "It's been a while since we had a car bomb", "Of course we will go out tonight, this is nothing unusual!", "That's one block from here, we should be fine. If it hits us, it hits us anyway, so don't worry". In Catatumbo, people commented that things had been calm in the last two years:<sup>62</sup> they went out during the weekends and life continued as usual (\*cleric, Tibú (CO) 2012). In Jesús María Semprún and Catatumbo municipalities in southern Zulia bordering this region Colombian VNSAs started to operate with a relatively high profile only in the mid-2000s. Not accustomed to VNSA-imposed rules,

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<sup>62</sup> In 2010 homicide rates were between one and two per month (SAT 2011a, 10).

Venezuelans felt extremely insecure due to the VNSAs' activities, although, objectively, impacts on citizen security were more pronounced in Colombia.

### *Cesar-Zulia*

Cesar department, whose economy relies heavily on coal, is another strategically located border region for the VNSAs' drug and mobility corridors (UNDP 2010, 17). It connects with the departments of Bolívar, Magdalena, La Guajira and Norte de Santander, as well as Venezuela. Cesar is divided from neighbouring Venezuela by the Sierra de Perijá, making cross-border interactions difficult, yet indigenous people who live in this mountainous region and VNSAs who use them as a zone of protection, move back and forth between the two countries.<sup>63</sup> FARC and ELN entered the region in the 1970s to rest and recover. In the 1980s, they increasingly worked politically and sustained their power in the region with kidnappings.<sup>64</sup> When the paramilitaries invaded Cesar around 1995, they decimated the guerrillas locally (UNDP 2010, 32). Attempting to control the entire Caribbean coast between the Gulf of Urabá and La Guajira, they engaged in a second wave of violence after 1999, backed by an alliance between the paramilitary North Bloc and the local political elite with the open complicity of the state forces (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 388; UNDP 2010, 40).

While in the 1990s the local population faced high kidnapping rates, in the 2000s civilians were the primary victims of murders, displacements and massacres. In 2000, when the Central Bolívar Bloc was consolidated, massacres in Cesar soared with 103 victims of 19 massacres (UNDP 2010, 40). In 2006 the AUC demobilised in Cesar and the alliances between paramilitaries and politicians became public as the "para-politics scandal".<sup>65</sup> Similar alliances have been continuing with the post-demobilised groups (\*civil society representative, Valledupar (CO) 2012a). In 2011 FARC were present in Cesar with the Fronts 59, 41 and 33, and ELN with the Front Camilo

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<sup>63</sup> Cesar is Colombia's second most ethnically and culturally diverse department with seven different indigenous groups and a large Afro-Colombian population (UNDP 2010, 13–14).

<sup>64</sup> The M-19 was also present and engaged in kidnappings.

<sup>65</sup> This term refers to the links between several Colombian politicians, including congressmen, and the AUC (see Verdadabierta 2013).

Torres Restrepo. They operated in a strategic alliance. The Rastrojos, Urabeños and Paisas were also present. The Rastrojos engaged in spot sales and barter agreements involving gasoline and drugs, in La Paz municipality, near the department's capital, Valledupar.

### *La Guajira-Zulia*

In La Guajira, north of Cesar, and which shares the Guajira Peninsula with Zulia, there are important starting points of (drug) trafficking routes via the Caribbean and Central America to the US, or, via Venezuela and West Africa, to Europe. According to an international agency staff member (2012) in San Cristóbal one mode of trafficking, for example, is for planes to drop drug shipments over the Atlantic ocean near the coast and for small boats to pick them up to take them to Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean islands.

Though common to all border regions discussed here, in the Guajira Peninsula the lines between the legal and the illegal are particularly diffuse. This can be explained by the region's cultural and historical context. The indigenous Wayúu have been living in Colombian and Venezuelan territory in the Guajira Peninsula since before the border existed. 48 per cent of La Guajira's and 8 per cent of Zulia's population are Wayúu (Presidencia 2010, 1). Trade and contraband as prevalent economic activities date back to the sixteenth century (Peralta et al. 2011, 7). The Wayúu perceive contraband, including gasoline smuggling, although illegal, to be licit. They have decentralised political and judicial systems to solve disputes among different clans, with punishment and enforcement measures based on violence (\*Wayúu representative, Paraguaipoa (VE) 2012; \*Wayúu leader, Maicao (CO) 2012a). The Wayúu are also among the most affected victims. They have suffered stigmatisation, displacement, targeted killings and massacres (CNRR 2010).

Between the second half of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s La Guajira experienced a marijuana boom (Britto 2010, 159; Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 361). During this period, the Wayúu's private armies were co-opted by external VNSAs that started disputes over the control

of territory (Peralta et al. 2011). The cities of Riohacha and Maicao have been contested historically. Constituting starting points of the international trafficking routes, they are more strategic than for example Valledupar, which is a transit zone (\*civil society representative, Valledupar (CO) 2012a).

FARC's Front 4 from Magdalena Medio and ELN entered Cesar and La Guajira in the early 1980s. They consolidated their presence first in the Sierra Nevada, and then in the Sierra de Perijá (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 361). Despite having lost power in La Guajira, as of 2011, FARC's Fronts 59, 41 and 19 have dominated Sierra del Perijá's rural areas and so did ELN's "Mixed Commission" (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 353). The Rastrojos, Urabeños, Paisas, the group Alta Guajira and several private Wayúu armies were mostly in urban areas (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 361). These groups have been engaging in rapidly changing tactical alliances. They also interact in barter agreements across the border, most notably in gasoline trafficking between Zulia and La Guajira. Venezuelan traffickers smuggle gasoline to Colombia. The supposedly empty cars and lorries return to the Venezuelan side with cocaine hidden inside them (\*human rights organisation representative, Paraguaipoa (VE) 2012; \*humanitarian organisation staff, Maicao (CO) 2012; \*civil society representative from Riohacha, Valledupar (CO) 2012; SAT 2012, 11).

When the AUC came in, they established ties to the local political elite of La Guajira as in Cesar, influencing elections and other aspects of public life. On 8 March 2006 and on 10 March 2006 the paramilitary Northern Bloc demobilised in Chimila (El Copey) and in La Mesa (Valledupar) respectively. Yet as the capture in 2013 of Juan Francisco "Kiko" Gómez, the Governor of La Guajira, demonstrated, these links have continued under the post-demobilised groups.<sup>66</sup> Members of state forces have also been conniving or complicit to profit from the VNSAs' illegal economic activities. They consider this a compensation for being based there: given La Guajira's

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<sup>66</sup> He was accused of multiple crimes including several murders and links with the alleged narco-broker Marcos "Marquito" Figueroa García, AUC leaders and post-demobilised group leaders (Wells 2013).

marginalisation in Colombia, representing the state forces in that territory has never been attractive, as Figure 20 shows. It translates: “Never compare this paradise with a punishment. Enjoy it!”



**Figure 20: Border police station Castilletes, La Guajira, Colombia**

When I visited Maicao, a humanitarian organisation employee (2012) explained:

Here you can't distinguish the illegal from the legal actor, the state, because here is no state. When you talk about the state you also talk about citizens. State actors do not represent the state. They belong to the state apparatus, but [...] most of their activities are illegal. Example: contraband. They don't confiscate the contraband. They only confiscate it when it suits them. In other cases they exact payment like any armed actor. Another example: the army's activities. Here, especially in La Guajira, you have to have clarity on the legal and the legitimate. These two terms have to be addressed. For the Wayúu it is legitimate, for us who are not Wayúu it is illegal. For example, trade. For us, it is illegitimate, for the *wuachaco* [smuggler] it's simply contraband. [...] They [...] don't use the term “binational”, instead they are one nation, like one people, the nation Wayúu. [...] They say “we are the same people”. When you cross [the border] from here to there, it's the same people, the Wayúu, they are neighbours. When you are in Cúcuta and cross over to San Antonio it's the same people. Equally when you go to Arauca and cross to Apure it's the same people because I know Arauca and I know Norte de Santander. When you go to the other side, it's the same. The same crops, the same customs...

The VNSA dynamics are to some degree mirrored on the Venezuelan side of the Guajira Peninsula. As along the Ecuadorian northern border, Venezuelans argue that violence has been “exported” from Colombia. A journalist from Maracaibo (2012) noted that in May and July 2012 there were grenade attacks against a municipal institution and the local newspaper in Maracaibo. New to Maracaibo, this had been common in Riohacha in Colombia. His conclusion was that

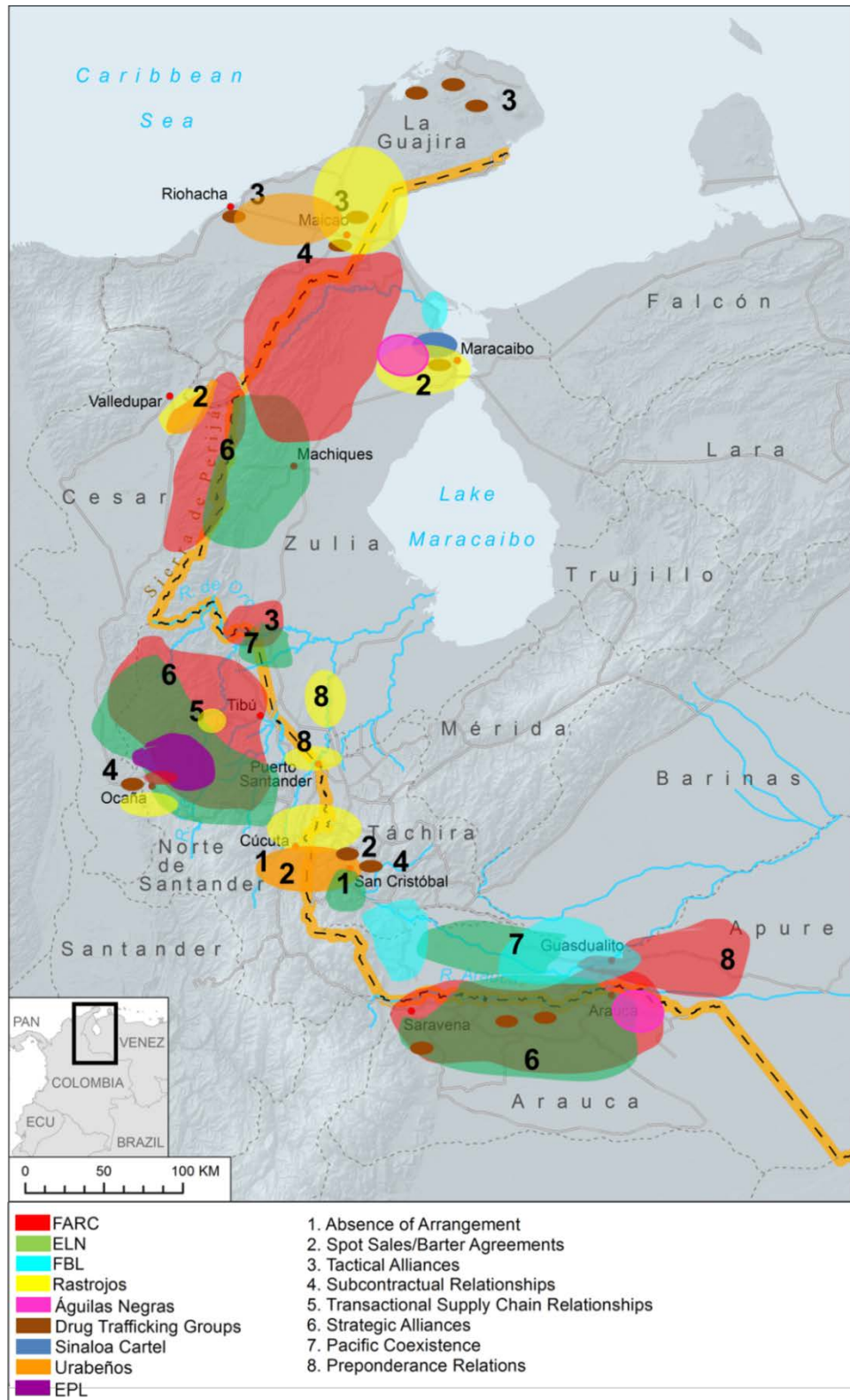
those who attacked Riohacha crossed the border to expand their area of operation. Nevertheless, the presence of Colombian VNSAs in Zulia is not new. Both the Colombian Cartel del Norte del Valle and the Cali Cartel were present in Zulia since 1997 and it later became the base of Rastrojos and Urabeños (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 361). According to Ávila and Guerra Ariza (2012, 357), the Mexican Zeta cartel is allied with the Rastrojos in Zulia. The local population tends to refer to post-demobilised groups as Águilas Negras, which have also been reported in all municipalities (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 356–357). Furthermore, as of 2011, FARC were present in all seven border municipalities, ELN in five out of these seven and FBL in one, Mara municipality. These groups had different arrangements. In some of the above mentioned areas, FARC were preponderant. In towns such as Guayabo, post-demobilised groups are dominant. In other regions, various VNSAs, including FARC, engage in barter agreements, for instance, to trade cocaine for arms. This cocaine is shipped on trafficking routes that start near Lake of Maracaibo and continue through West Africa to Western Europe.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

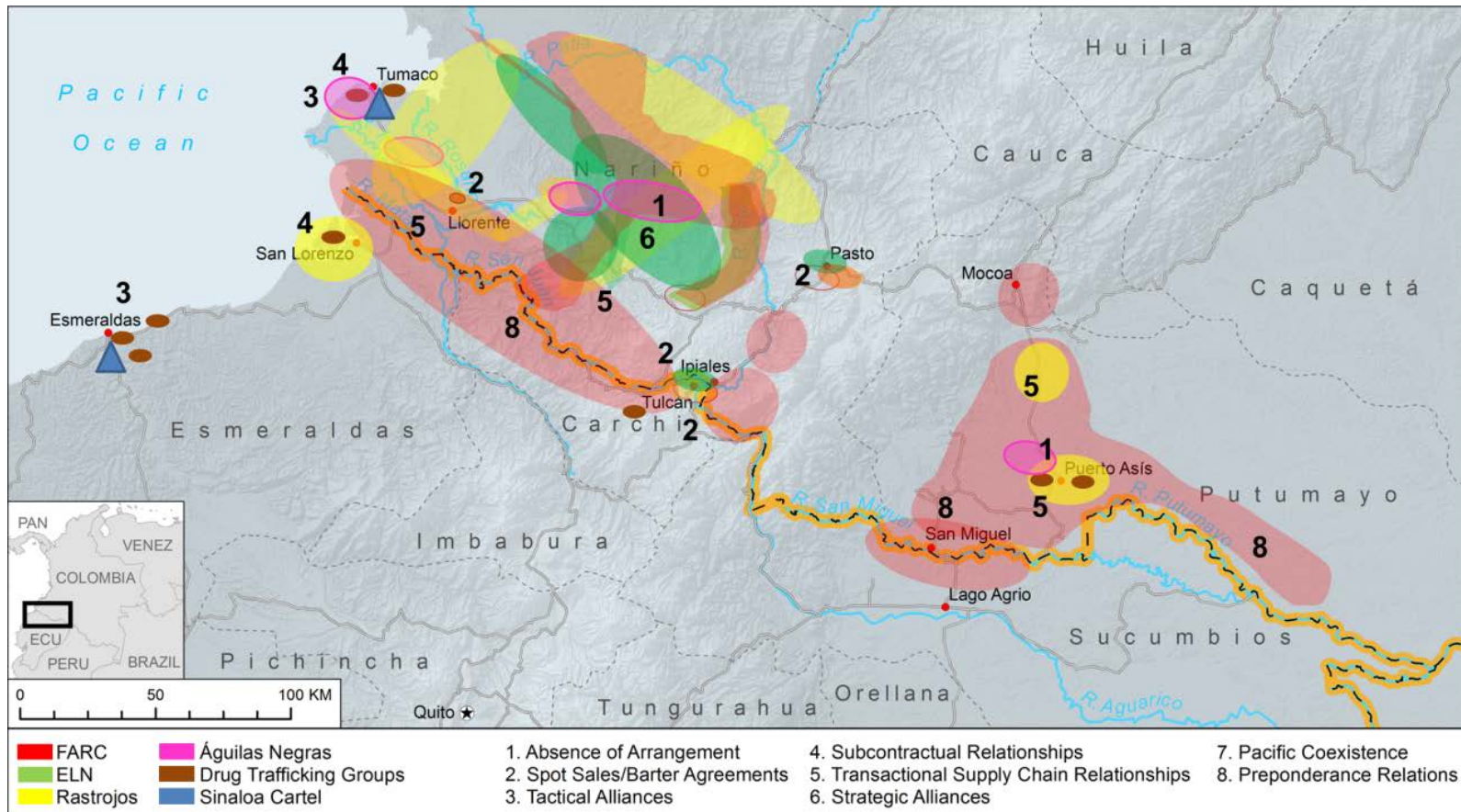
Discussing state policies on the Colombian-Ecuadorian and the Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands has shown that Colombia tends to assume a hard-line, confrontational approach to VNSAs in the border zone while the strengthening of civilian institutions remains insufficient. Ecuador's policies changed from passivity to heavier militarisation combined with investment in development. In Venezuela, connivance seems to most aptly describe state action towards Colombian VNSAs on Venezuelan territory. Mirroring these policies, in the Colombian conflict zone VNSAs are more likely to resort to violence than in non-conflict settings where they avoid aggressive state responses to use these spaces as logistics and financial hubs or recuperation areas.

VNSA interactions across Colombia's borderlands are complex and dynamic. VNSA arrangements change unpredictably and often several of them exist within the same territory.

Group identities and the lines between VNSAs and citizens are not always clear. Map 10 and Map 11 summarise the VNSA interactions I identified. They are not exhaustive and do not capture the nuances that exist in reality, but offer an analytical overview.



**Map 10: Arrangements of convenience along the Colombia-Venezuela border (2011-2013)**



Map 11: Arrangements of convenience along the Colombia-Ecuador border (2011-2013)

## 5. CITIZEN SECURITY IN THE ABSENCE OF VNSA ARRANGEMENTS

*You always have to be careful because talking openly about the paramilitaries or the guerrillas produces risks. It's not that we don't talk about this, but only with caution and certain norms because we are in a conflict zone.*  
Citizen of Lago Agrio, Ecuador (2012)

*Now it's calm. Well, there are deaths in the villages, but this is between them or with social leaders, activists...*  
Farmer from Samaniego, Colombia (2012)

I will now discuss citizen security impacts of those situations in Colombia's borderlands that resemble the first cluster on the fuzzy continuum of arrangement clusters: the absence of a VNSA arrangement. In this cluster distrust-reducing mechanisms are absent and groups are independent of each other, reducing mutual accountability and restraints on fighting each other. Depending upon variations in space and time, the absence of an arrangement takes the form of combat, targeted rivalry or tense calm. In addition to physical violence, impacts on citizen security include fear and erosion of the social fabric necessary for citizens to jointly participate in designing security policies. As the state does not fulfil its protection responsibilities, the state-society relationship is undermined. In combat citizens typically know how to behave to reduce insecurity because the frontlines are relatively clear. However, this is not the case under short-term arrangements, presented in Chapter Six. In long-term arrangements citizens can follow different rules to ensure their security, as I will discuss in Chapter Seven. These three chapters show that differentiating between distinct VNSA relationships enhances understanding of security: it facilitates revealing the manifold ways in which both objective and subjective citizen security can be undermined and the strategies that citizens use to cope with, or reduce feelings of insecurity.

### 5.1 Combat

The most prominently cited impact on civilians of VNSAs in combat is the infliction of (lethal) violence (Staniland 2012; Kalyvas 2006). Staniland (2012, 252) notes that there are few clear rules regarding the type of violence used against civilians. Yet there are rules citizens can follow,

even in the midst of violence. If two or more VNSA groups in the same territory have constantly conflicting interests, the community in this territory usually knows who is on which side, at least regarding the combatants.<sup>67</sup> They can decide to defect or facilitate information as collaborators (Kalyvas 1999; Kalyvas 2006). Despite the risk of being detected, this can help increase protection by those with whom information is shared. Often, people do not have a choice; they may be forced to support one of the groups. Nevertheless, they know the respective group's expectations and can behave accordingly. These rules enhance certainty, i.e. the feeling of security, and reduce mistrust among community members, but citizens can still be affected by violence if they get caught in the crossfire or are punished by the group to whose rules they do not adhere. Furthermore, these rules do not protect citizens from long-term repercussions: the undermining consequences for the social fabric of a society that has to cope with extreme psychological stress and trauma for decades afterwards (CNRR 2011, 38; Martín-Baró 1989, 9).

### 5.1.1 Violence and Behavioural Rules

Combat between paramilitaries and guerrillas in Putumayo, and between FARC and ELN in Arauca and Apure, illustrate how high rates of violence can coincide with relatively clear behavioural rules. This often impacts people psycho-emotionally, with detrimental impacts on mental health, an important component of citizen security (WHO 2002, 21).<sup>68</sup>

#### *Counterinsurgency in Putumayo*

Putumayo has faced soaring violence in the 2000s with fighting between guerrillas and paramilitaries who supported the state's counterinsurgency. A displaced woman (2011) from Bajo Putumayo whom I met in Mocoa described daily exposure to death:

When they initiated fumigations in 2000 the first paramilitaries arrived. Oh my god, what can I tell you, the river didn't carry water anymore, but blood. They killed the poor. They killed the farmers, ordinary people. [...] When we lived in the countryside the soldiers [paramilitaries] attacked the guerrillas because there were a

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<sup>67</sup> This situation resembles to some extent Kalyvas' (2006, 240–243) “zone 3” type of territory which is contested by the parties.

<sup>68</sup> Behavioural rules are less clear when more than two groups are in combat. The lines between groups are more complex, fuelling general mistrust.

lot of them. There were bombs – boom, boom – from one side and from the other side. They came at night and took people with them. Afterwards, we thought we would have to leave the area because otherwise we would be lost. They entered houses and took people with them saying: “You have to show us the way because we are lost. We reached this point, but we don’t know where we are and you know the area!” They pulled them out of the door and the guerrillas took them with them. These were the guerrillas. On the other side, there were the soldiers. After a moment the soldiers came: “These guys passed by and you know about this, tell us where they went!” I was scared. It is not good to live in the countryside. I told my husband that we should live in the village. Sometimes we passed by the gas pipes and they exploded. We were stuck and couldn’t go to the village.

Communities had to follow whatever rules combatants imposed to reduce insecurity and were hardly able to protest. The lines between the two contesting parties and the rules they imposed entailed a “logic of appropriateness” (March and Olsen 2008). In the Colombian conflict, obeying rules does not necessarily represent ideological affinity, but an instrument to ensure protection (Pécaut 1999, 150). As the displaced woman (2011) continued, “[...] the guerrillas already controlled the village. People did what they told them to do. Back then, there was no law [state authority]”. The same applied to territories where paramilitaries were prevalent. The communities followed the rules of either insurgents or paramilitaries. This situation differs from the 1990s when the guerrillas were the only “authority”. At that time, they imposed rules, but also respected and were at times responsive to some of people’s concerns regarding their governance style (M. C. Ramírez 2009, 322). According to the displaced woman (2011) in the 2000s VNSAs were responsive neither to citizens nor to their own members:

You found dead people everywhere. You found one here, over there you found another one. They killed each other. We thought they sent the other ones for that reason, because they were fiercer. The [guerrillas] respected us at least. I don’t want to justify this, because this was a thing for which there is no justification, but I remember that the guerrillas killed [state forces], those who didn’t like them simply didn’t like them. The paramilitaries were different. Back then, the paramilitaries arrived and took a house in San Miguel. They entered the house, people say a man lived there. They caught him in the village and took him to the other side of the river and there they slaughtered him. [...] They also caught people in broad daylight, these people didn’t wait until it got dark, no, in broad daylight when the entire village was there. On a Sunday, they caught some people and took them with them. Everyone said: “No, don’t do that!”, and a woman shouted: “Please, don’t kill my husband!” “You also have to come with us, you are an accomplice! You know about this!” They took her with them. [...] Don Miguel who lived on the other side of the river [...] said: “Please, don’t kill me, please, please!” After that these people switched on their chainsaw and they cut him up like this and this and this! A woman screamed: “For god’s sake, don’t kill me, help, help!” The man had already died because he drowned in the river. Some people picked him up, he didn’t move. [...] There was

one paramilitary who deserted. He arrived at our door at night. “Who are you?” “I escaped from the paramilitaries, open the door!” “What happened?” “I left those guys, I don’t want to be a paramilitary. They already made me kill two guys, I had to kill two guys, those guys were like animals, they killed them and took out pieces of meat of the leg, they opened it like this and said, you have to eat it, but I said no, I don’t want to eat it, but the guy cut the meat with a knife”.

For each dead person they paid 800,000 pesos (400 USD). The more they killed the more money they made. They threw the first ones into the river and since in Puerto Colón where we live the river is the only water source because there is no aqueduct, there is nothing, the police inspector said “No!” He called them and the entire village was there. “What do you want?” “We would like to ask you a favour. You know our only water source is the river... We can’t consume this water because you kill people and throw them into the river”. “What do we do with the dead then?” “You shouldn’t kill”, a woman said. He took out the gun and killed her. These were the paramilitaries. They told us no-one would give them orders whether to kill or not: “If it’s my turn to kill my mum I kill her. No-one gives me orders”. After that they started to disappear people and did not throw them into the river anymore. They made them dig a hole. Then they killed them and threw them into the hole. Then they filled it in [...]. They killed them very terribly. They killed a man called Danilo. They killed and disappeared him. “Come with us or we kill you”. “Why should it be the mums’ fault if their sons decide to take that path? They caught a mother: “Where are these snitchers? Where are your sons?” “I don’t know”. They killed her and left her. At night her sons came back.

At the time of the interview, in October 2011, post-demobilised groups and guerrillas were still hostile to each other, but in a less deadly way: homicide rates fell from 130.3 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2005 to 53.7 per 100,000 in 2011 (see Figure 7). However, the VNSAs’ cruelty and irresponsiveness in the 1990s has long-term consequences arising from what Nordstrom’s (1998, 107–108) calls terror warfare:

Terror warfare is about destroying, not people, but [...] humanity. This form of terror is not directed at the destruction of life and limb, but against all sense of a reasonable and humane world. The strategy here is not to control people through fear of force, but through the horror of it.

The horror is reflected in the psychological state of these people less than a decade after the atrocities. Recalling details such as names, maybe inventing some details, the woman’s imagination and memories were marked by witnessing brutal violence inflicted on community members during fighting between paramilitaries and guerrillas. As the report of the National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR) (2011, 39) on the 1999 massacre of El Tigre, Putumayo, demonstrates, perceived insecurity with permanent fear, sadness and nightmares due to trauma is still high. Reducing the analysis of citizen security during combat between

VNSA groups to counting bodies and displacements obscures brutal memories. Listening to the stories of these community members that followed the VNSAs' rules without being able to refuse gives a more holistic picture including impacts on citizen security which outlast dead bodies and erode the social fabric in the long run.

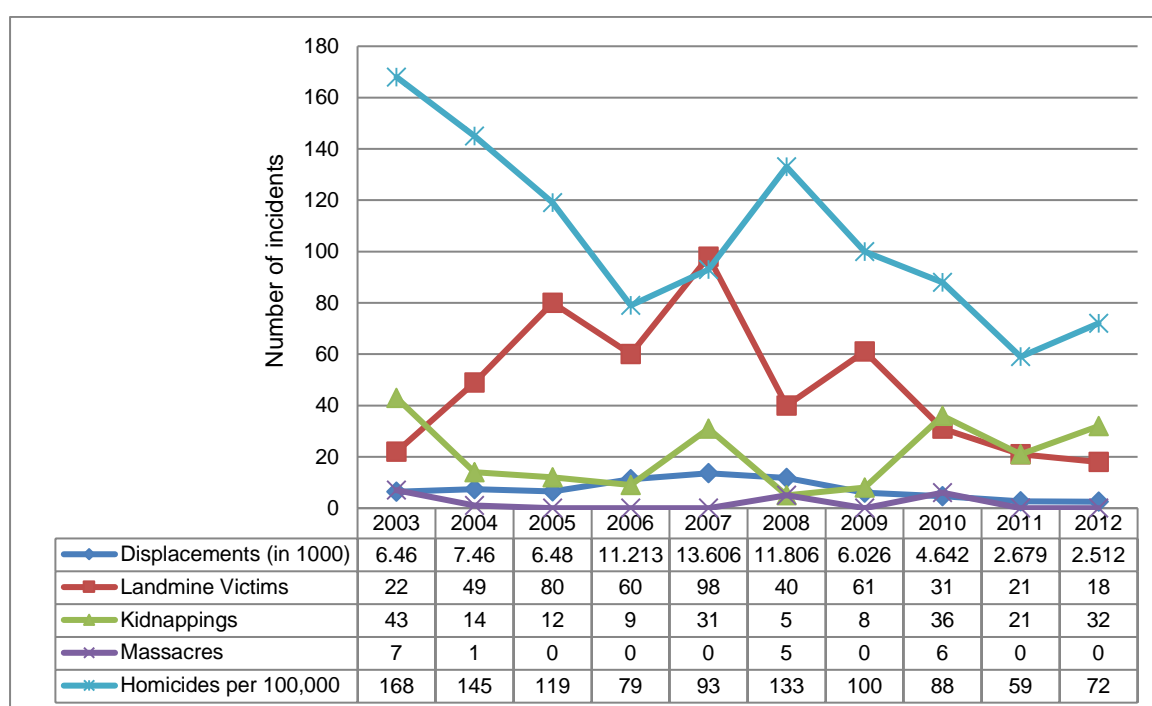
### *Guerrilla War in Arauca and Apure*

Combat between paramilitaries and guerrillas has received substantial scholarly attention, but only a few scholars such as Hanne Fjelde and Desirée Nillson (2012) have studied the repercussions of combat between rebels. Being less predictable, often occurring after previous mutual respect, if not collaboration, the violence inflicted on civilians by them is likely to unhinge people's world view of a "right world", strongly affecting mental health.

Between 2006 and 2010 FARC and ELN fought each other in Arauca. In the first half of the 2000s, President Uribe's Democratic Security Policy strengthened the state military in Arauca and the paramilitary Conquerors Bloc of Arauca weakened the guerrillas' social base: they seized control over land used for coca cultivation, over strategic parts of cocaine trafficking routes and over financial flows, for example from royalties granted by the state to the local administration (SAT 2009b, 9). The paramilitaries demobilised in 2005. The two guerrillas were left with less territory, income sources and local support. In response they sought to co-opt new parts of the population and re-gain territory, leading to disputes amongst them (SAT 2009b, 9). According to Magda Núñez (2012, 65), the trigger for the war that broke out between FARC and ELN in March 2006 (OBSAR 2011; Defensoría del Pueblo 2011), was the assassination of FARC's finance boss, alias "Che", by ELN's alias "Queca" (Núñez 2012, 65). The longevity of this guerrilla war, which lasted five years, can be partly ascribed to Colombia's state forces: they supposedly collaborated with ELN to counter the militarily superior FARC (Núñez 2012, 66).

Violence did not stop at the border. FARC and ELN have been also present on the Venezuelan side of River Arauca, in Apure, where they fought each other and involucrated the population in

this fight. This is demonstrated in the pamphlets distributed by FARC (see Appendix II). The Venezuelan FBL's presence in Apure adds complexity to the disputes among these armed groups. Several interviewees (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Guasdalito (VE) 2012a; \*female citizen, Guasdalito (VE) 2012; \*humanitarian organisation staff, Guasdalito (VE) 2012b) referred to the period between 2007 and 2009 as the most violent years they had ever experienced. In Guasdalito for instance, six to eight people were supposedly killed per day in violent disputes, “even in front of the police station” (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Guasdalito (VE) 2012a). According to Guasdalito residents who had been living in the area between 2007 and 2009, the victims were seldom locals, they mostly came from “outside”. This is in line with reports from the Colombian Ombudsman's Office which state many Colombians who fled to the Venezuelan side were killed there because the deadly disputes extended to that side (SAT 2009b, 3).<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 21: Citizen insecurity in Arauca, Colombia (SAT 2009b, 4; OBSAR 2011, 12–13; Vicepresidencia 2008)**

The guerrilla war induced a humanitarian crisis in Arauca (OBSAR 2011, 3). As Figure 21 shows, the numbers of displacements, landmine victims and kidnappings increased when FARC and

<sup>69</sup> See Chapter Eight for the security issues that arise from such intra-borderlands displacements.

ELN went to war in Arauca and only decreased in 2010, once hostilities were over. Massacres declined, arguably due to the paramilitaries' demobilisation. Between 2006 and 2010 more people were displaced than between 2001 and 2003, the brutal years of the paramilitary incursion in Arauca (Núñez 2012, 65).

Despite violence arising from the guerrilla war, people knew how to behave to fulfil the rebels' expectations. Help from the state to alleviate the communities' suffering never materialised or was insufficient. Between 2006 and 2011 the Ombudsman's Office issued four risk reports which were converted into Early Warnings, more than in any other region in the same time period, and yet violence continued (OBSAR 2011, 17). The two groups established zones of influence, exerted social control, conducted censuses (Núñez 2012, 65). As during fighting between FARC and paramilitaries in Putumayo, living in a FARC-influenced zone meant abiding by their rules and becoming their supporters. Living in an ELN-influenced zone meant doing the same for ELN. With the guerrillas' presence in Arauca over decades, the communities have been internalising their rules rather than state-imposed ones as the norm since before, during and since the guerrilla war. In 2012, residents of a border village in Arauca told me that guerrillas usually come and ask for favours, such as water. One would of course provide them with water.<sup>70</sup> In another village a farmer explained: "If you respect them, they respect you".<sup>71</sup> Many residents of Arauca's border zone stated they are safe "as long as we behave well" (UNHCR Colombia 2012).

Although clear, the frontlines of the guerrilla war were arguably less comprehensible than in the case of Putumayo. There, survival rather than ideological affinity led many to obey the rebels' or paramilitaries' rules, but combat itself was explained by their entrenched differences over decades, which arguably contributed to the normalisation of violence between these two fronts. In Arauca and Apure however, FARC and ELN (and FBL) had respected each other before the outbreak of war, as had their supporters. The sudden change from respect to brutal violence is

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<sup>70</sup> Field notes, 6 September 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

likely to have had a stronger psychological impact because it brought into question previously established norms and values.

Nordstrom (1998, 105) argues that “identity, self, and personhood, as well as physical bodies, are strategic targets of war”. In the aftermath of violence, community members often suffer posttraumatic stress disorder and, according to a study by Doctors without Borders in Colombia, have been suggested to carry a higher risk of suicide due to the psycho-emotional consequences (Bell et al. 2012, 6). Now that the guerrilla war is over (but armed conflict continues), Arauca is the Colombian department with the fourth highest suicide rate at 5.6 suicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2011, well over the national rate of 4.1, including ever more adolescents (Macana Tuta 2012, 254–262). During only one week when I was in Arauca in September 2012, there were three suicides and another attempted suicide, two of the suicides by minors (La Voz del Cinaruco 2012). No studies exist on this subject. However, these high suicide rates may be related to the violence of the guerrilla war witnessed by these minors. In Nordstrom’s words, these young personhoods may have been destroyed by the terror they lived and that had no explanation based on previous conceptions of who is whose enemy.

Exploring post-guerrilla war perceptions of security suggests that, when frontlines are less clear, the rules disappear. This increases uncertainty and hence mistrust. In La Esmeralda, a village in Arauquita municipality of Arauca, during the guerrilla war the lines between the two contesting groups were clear. In 2012, unknown post-demobilised groups fuelled uncertainty.

When I met with about twenty women from La Esmeralda in 2012, they said little had changed in the village since 2007.<sup>72</sup> According to them, public order was the same, if not worse. This perception contradicts “observables” of security: homicide rates in Arauquita were 61 in 2007 and 38 in 2011 (De-la-Hoz-Bohórquez 2007, 35; Ricaurte-Villota 2011, 83).<sup>73</sup> The women had not

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<sup>72</sup> The meeting took place during a mission of a humanitarian organisation which I accompanied.

<sup>73</sup> Towards the end of 2012 homicide rates rose again (Lozano-Mancera 2012).

heard a gunfight for a while; only the insurgent's bombs targeted against the electricity towers, which seem to worry them little. Rather than killings, changes in the VNSA presence shaped the women's perception of worsening public order. They explained that strangers had recently come to the village and intimidated them. This observation was confirmed independently by another group of women who also stated that unknown armed men dressed as civilians entered the village and threatened adults and the youth.<sup>74</sup> Reportedly, the armed men declared they disliked seeing people in public spaces after sunset. Shops closed at six in the evening because people were scared. Anonymous threatening pamphlets were seen in the streets. When I asked what they did about this, the women replied: "The attitude is not to get involved!" This is different from statements referring to earlier years, such as "behaving well" or "showing respect". The tension arising from the post-demobilised groups' presence was also obvious in the graffiti that spread in Arauca. The guerrillas mark their territory, a silent, yet omnipresent reminder of the constant terror that I felt myself there (Figure 22). According to locals, graffiti had not been that widely spread in earlier years.



**Figure 22: Guerrilla graffiti in Arauca, Colombia**

There were some rules on what *not* to do, like not getting involved, and others arising from the mistrust between guerrillas and these new groups: in the city of Arauca, I went to buy rubber boots because we were going on a trip by boat and then an hour by foot through a jungle area to visit rural communities without access roads. I was going to pick black boots, the only available

<sup>74</sup> In Saravena the Águilas Negras entered already in November 2008 (SAT 2009b, 5). Graffiti appeared; they threatened people with phone calls, text messages and pamphlets. They were also suspected of extorting phone cards, medicine, arms and ammunition from traders and ranchers (SAT 2009b, 5).

colour in my size, but my contact told me not to buy them: guerrilla militias wear black boots. Had I worn them, people might have identified me as guerrilla collaborator. I picked blue ones in a bigger size instead.

From 2012, when the new groups' identities and expectations were not clear, it was difficult to know how to behave appropriately or show respect. The women mentioned they lacked previously available protection: the guerrilla militias who used to protect farms supposedly fled to Venezuela to reorganise against the new groups. The nature of the security threats and the strategies to avoid them were less obvious than during the guerrilla war, and, therefore, the only applicable rule was not to be identified with anyone's side – not to get involved. This fuelled general mistrust, undermining collective action based on solidarity.

### 5.1.2 God's Plan and Just-World Thinking

In the context of insecurity caused by combat among VNSAs, citizens adopt coping strategies. Those who fail to obey the rules, especially those who defect, are victimised. Murder victims in Saravena municipality in Arauca for example were suspected to be ELN or FARC collaborators, killed to eliminate the enemy's social base (SAT 2009b, 3).<sup>75</sup> However, victimisation occurs even in the case of rule-compliance. Coping strategies help deal with repercussions on subjective citizen security both under rule compliance and non-compliance because they reduce fear and feelings of insecurity.

I identified two coping strategies, the first one applicable in situations of indiscriminate, unavoidable violence and the second one in situations of more selective violence. The first one is what Moser and McIlwaine (2004, 179–182) call a conciliation strategy through religion by praying for victimisers, or victims. Adhering to VNSA-imposed rules facilitates a perception of

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<sup>75</sup> Stigmatisation continues to be a problem in the aftermath of the guerrilla war: in Bocas del Ju Ju, farmers explained that people prefer not to declare themselves as displaced by FARC because the authorities would accuse them of being ELN collaborators and vice versa. Field notes, 6 September 2012.

being able to protect oneself and leaving the rest to God's plan or to fate.<sup>76</sup> There is no need to be constantly worried about being killed. As an informant (2012) in Puerto Asís, Putumayo, put it when I asked if it would not be too risky to visit a combat zone: "If it happens, it happens anyway!"<sup>77</sup> A Follow-Up Note on Arauca by the Ombudsman's Office (2009d) stated that children and an under-age girl who was four months pregnant were killed. Another document (SAT 2009b, 4) stated that a family father and his son were killed by land mines. In contexts of combat like Arauca such seemingly incomprehensible, indiscriminate acts of violence, even against those who do not deliberately disobey the rules, may make more sense if considered to be fated or part of God's plan for us.

The other strategy is just-world thinking.<sup>78</sup> According to psychologist Melvin Lerner (1980), we try to tell ourselves that those who do wrong will at some point have to pay for it while good deeds will be rewarded (see also S. Cohen 2001, 96). Hannah Arendt (1968, 446) describes common reactions to the Holocaust as: "What crimes must these people have committed that such things were done to them!" Similarly, in Putumayo, the displaced woman (2011) justified extreme violence in the 2000s during fighting between paramilitaries and guerrillas with the victim's viciousness:

There were bad people. I will tell you about a woman and her children. They were all killed because she was very bad. But we realised this only now, we didn't know what sort of people we were living with, with very bad people. Someone told us that she had workers with her, to work for her, and she made them work very hard. Afterwards she didn't pay them. She took them away and killed them. Behind her house she had a huge graveyard with all the dead workers... when these people came, they started to investigate and when they found out about it, they killed her sons, one by one. She saved herself because she left, but this shows that there are heartless people, bad people. They also killed another woman, they dragged her body right through the village, but this was also because they investigated her life and found out that she was a very bad person, therefore they took her. Now of course these women were bad, but there are also examples of good people who were killed [...].

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<sup>76</sup> Trusting in God is a common "security measure". When I told an interviewee that I was not comfortable crossing the international border bridge between San Antonio and Cúcuta alone after sunset as he suggested, he replied: "You won't be alone, God will be with you!"

<sup>77</sup> Other interviewees made similar comments.

<sup>78</sup> I am grateful to David Keen for pointing this out.

The bad-people-versus-good-people dichotomy stood out in many of my interviewees in Putumayo and Arauca. Killings are tolerated when victims are “bad people”. The normalisation of brutality can make it appear to be deserved (Bourgois 2010, 19–20). This reflects how just-world thinking helps cope with the situation: it reduces fear and hence perceptions of insecurity because if one is “good” one is less likely to be killed. This behaviour is also a form of “lifeboat ethics”. Like Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ (1993) description of Brazilian women who do not feel any affection for their dying children because they say the child was born to die, people detach themselves and do not feel pity for neighbours, acquaintances or others within their community who are killed this way by thinking they were doomed to die.

VNSAs themselves can adopt a similar just-world rationale to justify killings against specific societal groups. While this may increase perceptions of security outside the group, it undermines the citizen security of that group. In his reflections on Oedipus, René Girard (2013, 90) notes that societies in violence identify a scapegoat responsible for any ill they experience. VNSAs seek scapegoats for blows against them and hence punish marginalised groups, for instance, for collaborating with the enemy, as the following example of the indigenous Awá in Nariño shows. 2007 was a year of extreme hostility between FARC and ELN in Nariño, displacing more than 35,000 people (Núñez 2012, 74). The guerrilla war ended in 2009 in Nariño but, subsequently, fighting broke out between insurgents and post-demobilised groups.<sup>79</sup> In 2011, FARC massacred Awá in the Ricaurte municipality, who were stigmatised as collaborators with their adversaries (SAT 2011b, 6–9). At the same time, the Awá repeatedly pointed to disappearances and abuses committed by the post-demobilised groups, who accused them of being guerrilla collaborators. According to an Awá leader from Pasto (2011)

[the Awá] go to the village and on the way they meet [the BACRIM]. Then they start to accuse them. Only because you have long hair and walk around with boots you are already considered a guerrilla member. This kind of stigmatisation is common among the [Awá] communities and families.

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<sup>79</sup> In some areas guerrilla war *and* combat between insurgent and post-demobilised groups occurred before 2009.

The VNSAs' singling out of societal groups as scapegoats increases objective and subjective citizen insecurity of these groups. It also contributes to the fragmentation of society: not only are there two contesting groups and their supporters, but also further marginalised groups such as the indigenous Awá, which are mistrusted and mistrust others. As I will show in the following chapter, this is different from cases with short-term arrangements where mistrust *omnium contra omnes* erodes the social fabric even within groups, leading to the isolation of individuals rather than of groups.

## 5.2 Targeted Rivalry

In Colombia and in the border zones of Ecuador and Venezuela influenced by conflict in Colombia, targeted rivalry spread after the AUC's demobilisation. With the reconfiguration of new illegal armed structures, the VNSAs modified their dispute strategies to a more covert *modus operandi* in urban areas, enhancing efficiency in exerting social control, dominating illegal activities and interfering in politics (SAT 2011d, 8). Contrary to large-scale violence such as massacres in combat, in urban areas VNSAs use selective violence against their adversaries. In civil war settings civilians are not easily distinguishable from combatants (Slim 2007). In areas with targeted rivalry the dividing lines between bystanders and VNSAs are even more blurred, making uncertainty more pervasive than in combat. Situations of targeted rivalry resonate with Mary Kaldor's (2012, 6) "new wars" where the distinctions between "legitimate bearer of arms and the non-combatant" break down because "the monopoly of organized violence is eroded from below by privatization". Without knowing who is trustworthy, citizens perceive themselves to be "potential victims" (Rotker 2002b, 16).

### 5.2.1 Rivalry between ELN and Paramilitaries

Similarly to combat, in targeted rivalry citizens can distinguish between different VNSAs, yet the lines between VNSAs and bystanders are diffuse, entailing mistrust and uncertainty among the local population. The Venezuelan village of Rubio in Táchira is a strategic transit point for the

drug trafficking route from Colombia to the ports of Valencia and La Guajira. Therefore VNSAs have an interest in controlling the village (Niño Ascanio, Camargo León, and Cañizares Arévalo 2011, 88). Both post-demobilised groups and ELN are present and made their identities explicit to the local community. In 2008 for example, the post-demobilised groups distributed pamphlets in the village, calling on the residents of Rubio to stick to their rules including a curfew. As a consequence, no-one left their house at night for over two weeks, as if the curfew had been officially imposed (Niño Ascanio, Camargo León, and Cañizares Arévalo 2011, 88; Niño Ascanio, Camargo León, and Cañizares Arévalo 2012, 303).<sup>80</sup> As for the guerrillas, in Rubio between 1pm and 4pm everyone listened on 96.7 FM to “Antorcha Stereo”, ELN’s radio station, through which the group informed locals about acceptable behaviour (Niño Ascanio, Camargo León, and Cañizares Arévalo 2011, 28).

ELN and paramilitaries employed selective violence in Rubio to attack each other and enforce the population’s compliance. The following account of a resident of Rubio (2012) illustrates how VNSAs and bystanders became intertwined, fuelling mistrust.

In Rubio three taxi drivers were killed within one month. From the way in which they were killed, they had to be [supporters of the] paramilitaries. [ELN] had a meeting in the mountainous zone in Venezuela and convened the presidents of the taxi companies. They told them that they knew there were taxi drivers who transported the *paracos* to collect extortion money [...]. They told them to remove these people from here because otherwise... And that, if things continued like this, they shouldn’t pay extortion money because this would strengthen [the paramilitaries]. They gave them a deadline of three months. After these three months, they came down [from the mountains], and the president of this particular [taxi] company [...] was so frightened that he didn’t say anything to them. The other taxi companies indeed were “purified”. Since [...] they were not the owners of the cars, they told him: “You are suspended and you won’t take out the car!” The man got scared and yes they killed three taxi drivers within one month because of that. It was because of ELN. They killed those who supported the paramilitaries. These taxi drivers supported the paramilitaries and therefore ELN came down [from the mountains] and tried to weaken them.

Some taxi drivers were drawn into the conflict by aiding the paramilitaries: had they refused to do so the paramilitaries could have killed them. Taxi drivers were also used to gather intelligence (Niño Ascanio, Camargo León, and Cañizares Arévalo 2011, 83). When getting into a taxi,

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<sup>80</sup> Another wave of these pamphlets found on the Colombian side occurred in 2009.

people did not know whether they were dealing with a supporter of the paramilitaries and, if so, whether this support was voluntary or forced. In the paramilitaries' and ELN's targeted rivalry in Rubio the identities of the two antagonists were clear, allowing people to adhere to certain rules, as in combat in rural zones. Yet the uncertainty regarding who was involved in the VNSAs' activities and who was not muddied these rules. This example resonates with Edelberto Torres-Rivas's (1999, 293) account of life under military dictatorships in Latin America which demonstrates that uncertainty is strong for individuals experiencing the arbitrariness of violence:

In the life of those whose daily life is far from politics [...] it is traumatic to have to accustom oneself to living with extraordinary and abnormal conditions of pain and fear, insecurity and lack of confidence. It is what O'Donnell has called the 'normalization of the abnormal' and appears in those conditions where a climate of generalized uncertainty prevails: in other words, a climate that affects all levels of society. [...] The rules of the game are not known or, when they are known, are ignored by the officials of public order.

### 5.2.2 Disputing Preponderance and Victim Blaming

When one VNSA group disputes another's preponderance, there is mistrust due to the unclear lines between bystanders and VNSAs as in ongoing targeted rivalry, but citizens are more exposed to violence. Referring to civil war contexts, Kalyvas (2006, 111–243) argues that the form of violence – discriminate or selective – depends on the extent to which groups control contested territory. Citizens are more severely affected by indiscriminate violence when one group starts to dispute the preponderance of another than when both groups are in a continuing disagreement (Kalyvas 2006, 203). Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín (2008) argues similarly with regards to the Colombian paramilitaries and, with some modifications, it can also be transferred to urban areas where post-demobilised groups are prevalent (Vargas 2009). Based on indicators of violence, such arguments help understand “hard” security, but not citizens' perceptions of security. Where a dispute has just broken out, citizens face more uncertainty regarding appropriate behaviour: it is unclear whether defection from the first group is advisable because the new balance of power has not yet been established. The first group might prevail over the intruder. Furthermore, since the intruder's presence is recent, it may not yet have communicated

its rules, producing uncertainty among citizens and fear of not being compliant with the group's expectations.

Cúcuta's citizens faced uncertainty in 2011 when the Urabeños began to dispute the Rastrojos' preponderance in the town. According to a high-ranking police commander in Cúcuta (2012), the Rastrojos had "virtually achieved the imposition of their hegemony, their law, in Cúcuta because they penetrated many sectors by dint of corruption". Yet in 2010 they were increasingly weakened by the capture of some of their leaders. The Urabeños used this window of opportunity: in 2011, they re-entered Cúcuta to dispute the Rastrojos' preponderance in Cúcuta and across the border in Táchira (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Cúcuta (CO) 2012; \*community leader, Cúcuta (Co) 2011; \*international agency staff, San Cristóbal (VE) 2012). The police commander (2012) described the constellation of groups in Cúcuta as follows:

Normally, [the Rastrojos and Urabeños] don't ally together. Initially, they negotiate for money, to sell the territory the way it had been done before, or they fight for it by fire and sword. What happens here is a territorial dispute [...]. Here, we have the Rastrojos. This is a reality that is impossible to hide. They maintained hegemony more or less until last year. They managed to establish themselves [...]. Until May last year, they were in charge. They were the only ones and had the complete monopoly of everything: of drugs, of micro-extortion, of homicides [...]. When they started to hit them, to capture the leaders, and to expose the leaders, some very important operations led to some of them going to prison. This produced a breakdown of their structure [...]. The Urabeños took advantage of this situation. They don't come to negotiate nor to micro-distribute. They [...] try to take over the business because the others resist them. When the Rastrojos became even weaker and the leaders were captured, the [Rastrojos members] remained a long time without payment. They didn't pay them because they lost the capacity to pay the "grass root criminals". Many of those who were unpaid defected to the Urabeños because another boss came who told them "I'll pay you, come and work with me!", and this caused a big dispute. Here, they don't divide the business between themselves. With the pure drug business they do [...]. This does not happen here. Here, territorial disputes occur and each one wants to stay in their space to stay active in the irregular activities.

He continued, claiming that the Rastrojos and Urabeños

are generators of violence because one of the most evident forms in which the dispute in Cúcuta takes shape, is murder. This phenomenon stemming from organised crime, from criminal groups and from drug-traffickers affects security.

68 homicides were recorded between January and April 2012. As many occurred in public spaces,

everyone was a potential victim. During my stays in Cúcuta in 2011 and 2012, several people were killed on the much used international bridge over the border to Venezuela, which I crossed several times, others at the popular Malecón, a promenade along the river where many Cucuteños spend their evenings or weekends, and where I went for a run from time to time. In such places, anyone can get caught in the crossfire.

Since in urban areas VNSAs operate in plain clothes rather than in uniforms and task community members with certain jobs, it is hard to know whether one is dealing with people related to VNSAs or not, fuelling general mistrust. Striving for territorial and social control, the Urabeños killed the Rastrojos' informants and messengers who were hardly distinguishable from uninvolved civilians. As a civil society leader from Cúcuta (2011) explained, this served to impose their own informant network:

For the last two months [as of October 2011] the Rastrojos have permanently controlled the Hill of the Cross. But [the Urabeños] are coming. The week before last week they killed three security guards, people who keep watch in the zone. Here is a phenomenon. Here, the armed groups have always had their grand allies at night. They are young boys who go out with a whistle on the streets and whistle to let people know that there is someone watching. Usually those in this zone belong to the Rastrojos, and now they eliminated them. They killed them. The Urabeños killed them; the Urabeños are already coming in. They are already transforming the conflict in these sectors.<sup>81</sup>

Soaring homicide rates produce fear, shaping intra-community relations and the state-society relationship. Referring to the Guatemalan context Green (1994, 227) notes:

Fear destabilizes social relations by driving a wedge of distrust within families, between neighbors, among friends. Fear divides communities through suspicion and apprehension not only of strangers but of each other. Fear thrives on ambiguities. Denunciations, gossip, innuendos, and rumors of death lists create a climate of suspicion. No-one can be sure who is who.

Cucuteños faced uncertainty regarding the groups' *modus operandi* in their territory. Before 2011 the Rastrojos dominated Cúcuta. All of my 34 interviewees in Cúcuta – belonging to different social groups such as displaced people, clerics, community leaders, academics and local authorities including the police – knew about the Rastrojos' presence and power in the city, not

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<sup>81</sup> The Hill of the Cross is strategic because of the 360 degree view on Cúcuta from the top.

least because the local newspaper regularly reported incidents involving Rastrojos. When the Urabeños attempted to gain control the situation became confusing for Cucuteños because it was not clear which group would prevail and hence whose rules should be followed. Citizens had money extorted by both the previously preponderant and the newly present group, generating a dilemma: if they pay both, one of the groups may punish them for having paid the other one. If they only pay one group, the other group may punish them for not having paid. Generally, the groups charge small amounts of money: 1,000 pesos, or 0.50 USD per *pimpina* (gasoline canister), yet to a large number of people. This micro-extortion amounts to good profit each day, given the quantity of gasoline that crosses the border: between Táchira and Norte de Santander estimated 1.2 to 2.7 million litres and along the entire border estimated 4.1 million litres are smuggled every day (Niño Ascanio, Camargo León, and Cañizares Arévalo 2012, 329–330).

This is not unique to Cúcuta. In Maicao, the Rastrojos disputed the Urabeños' preponderance in 2010. They killed the Urabeños' leader in charge of extortion. The victims of extortion feared revenge from the Urabeños on all those who were reluctant to pay extortion as this could have been interpreted as collaborating with the Rastrojos (SAT 2010e, 4).

Given the volatility of such situations, the power constellation is not (yet) apparent; whether the situation will evolve into a continuing disagreement, or whether the previously preponderant group or the newly present group will prevail, making it difficult to assess which group one should adhere to so as to reduce insecurity. The dispute between Rastrojos and Urabeños can also be advantageous for third groups that enter the territory to pursue their own interests, increasing fear among the local population who do not yet know what to expect from these groups. The continuation of the interview with the high-ranking police commander in Cúcuta (2012) illustrates this:

When the Rastrojos begin to lose strength, the Urabeños arrive. The Urabeños, we, the police, we managed to trace them since they arrived. Last year [...] we inflicted an important blow on the Urabeños with operation Safari. Again they were weakened [...]. This is when the other organisations emerged, the Nueva Generación and the Bloque de Fronteras. Why do they emerge? Because there is a large

unemployed workforce, but a workforce qualified to commit crimes, not to do other things. This is why a territorial dispute between these organisations started [...]. After this blow, the Urabeños decide to leave, but those who brought the Urabeños here are a group of ex-paramilitaries in prison. They don't want to leave because they are from this territory and they stay, even though they came united with the Urabeños. The Urabeños say: "No, we lost this, this is very difficult. We leave as a group!", but the others say: "No, how can you go and leave us alone?" These ones stay and say: "We will use another name, Autodefensas de Norte de Santander". [...] The other group called Bloque de Fronteras emerged from all these orphans of the two groups, of the Rastrojos and the Urabeños. "Okay, our bosses left, we are going to join forces and continue to commit crimes". Because they don't know anything else but to commit crimes.

As he continued, it is also unclear whether local gangs evolve into more serious VNSA groups:

[Besides the BACRIM] some drug-traffickers dare to establish themselves on their own. They say: "We are going to send drugs directly; we are going to use the route through Venezuela. [...] We won't tell anyone about it. We think we don't need anyone. We are capable of doing this on our own. We don't have to coordinate with anyone. We go direct". If they are criminals, [...] they know very well how to do this, but when they steal the drugs, they end up being killed due to not having told them anything. If they are drug-traffickers from here, the [BACRIM] extort money from them. They pressurise them in order to get a share of the deal.

Most people know members of such local groups: a son, cousin, friend, or neighbour. Some decide to support them because they are close to them, while others distance themselves, even from relatives, because they know about the potential retaliation by the post-demobilised groups. This erodes the social fabric by isolating people from each other, thwarting a sense of community.

The absence of clear rules for citizens to reduce insecurity due to the uncertainty about the evolving power structures of old and new VNSAs provokes victim blaming (cf. Ryan 1976). People create their own behavioural rule: not to get involved. Victimisation must be the victim's fault because he/she did not stick to this rule. This is similar to just-world-thinking under conditions of combat. However, while under combat behavioural rules exist, in the case of dispute over preponderance these rules become void. Blaming the victim helps reaffirm the self-imposed rule of not getting involved and thus increasing certainty by pointing out that the victim did not comply with the rule. People are not blamed for being genuinely bad as in combat, but for having

done something bad. This reduces one's own vulnerability to being victimised because one can comply with the rule to ensure security.<sup>82</sup>

Victim blaming has become common in Cúcuta to cope with muddled lines between VNSAs and bystanders. People suppose the victim supported VNSAs and therefore had to expect to die (\*high-ranking police commander, Cúcuta (CO) 2012):

*Me:* *Do homicides only occur among the groups?*

*Commander:* People have this attitude. You can ask whoever you want...this is normal...and the homicides due to quarrels, or an assault, but this is the minority, usually people...it's not that they tolerate homicides, but they say: "He was involved in stories!" Most of [the homicides] are the product of the BACRIM. I don't justify these deaths. I mention that many of the homicides – a big percentage – 85 per cent in Cúcuta, are related to confrontations between BACRIM.

This coping strategy of victim blaming often reduces fear and increases perceptions of security, i.e. subjective citizen security. It helps make sense of numerous killings and distance oneself by dismissing them as something internal to the VNSA groups. In the citizens' eyes, this increases control over their own destiny by not getting involved.

### **5.3 Tense Calm**

Tense calm is part of a cycle of security dynamics that arises in the absence of VNSA arrangements. These periods are characterised by low rates of physical (or lethal) violence, combined with fear and anxiety due to people's presentiment of violence.

In Cúcuta, the periods of tense calm between the killings generated by the dispute between the Urabeños and the Rastrojos in 2011 and 2012 lasted only a few days. There was a wave of violence in Cúcuta in June and July 2011: within less than three weeks, sixteen people were killed. After that wave of killings, the city was calm. It was a tense calm: state forces had not

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<sup>82</sup> Examples of victim blaming during my fieldwork abound: it is careless to drive without locking car doors, with open windows, with a bag on one's lap or a phone in one's hands because this attracts thieves. A friend's colleague was assaulted when withdrawing money from a cash machine. My friend expressed disapproval that he unnecessarily exposed himself by going to a public cash machine instead of a bank.

defeated the VNSAs, nor was there a truce between the groups (Fundación Progresar 2011, 1). VNSAs were still present, devoid of any arrangement, manifested by graffiti of the VNSAs with written threats against each other in several locations of Cúcuta. For Cucuteños violence could erupt again anytime and anywhere. An employee of the diocese of Cúcuta (2012) said to me: “We expect a bloodbath, Anita”.

Contrary to these short periods of tense calm, in Ocaña tense calm lasted from January until April 2012. Historically a zone of transit and a clandestine operation centre for multiple VNSAs including FARC, ELN, EPL, the paramilitaries and later Rastrojos, Urabeños and Paisas, Ocaña has been exposed to conflict dynamics for decades (\*community leader, Cúcuta (CO) 2012; \*humanitarian organisation staff, Ocaña (CO) 2012; \*local government representative, Ocaña (CO) 2012). After January 2012, no more murders took place. On 25 April 2012 I talked to a senior local government official in Ocaña (2012) about the situation. He tried to convince me, or maybe himself, that four months without homicides is an indicator of an improvement in Ocaña’s security situation and people not going out is related to culture and a problem of public order, i.e. common crime. However, he did not trust the calmness:

Official: [The state forces] say that in Ocaña there is a complete calmness. As you can see, this is true: in the course of my government [...], since 1 January, and we are talking today on 25 April, in a region where we have a conflict, we don’t have any deaths caused by homicide [...] in Ocaña municipality. Both in the urban and in the rural sector [...]. Last year by this time we had already had thirteen. We have tried to demand a lot from the public forces regarding their operations, their strategies, the way they search people, they ask for their documents to identify the suspects. All of this has contributed to reducing criminality [...]. We haven’t had homicides again [...]. Four months without homicides, this has been a big achievement for us. One says that this leaves a feeling of...if there are criminal bands, they are respectful of the authorities or there is some kind of non-aggression pact or they don’t want to damage the municipality because it is a strategic point for movements, it serves them... I have a couple of hypotheses in mind. One doesn’t know if there is presence [of VNSA groups] or if there isn’t, or if this is complete calmness...Sometimes it worries me that I don’t know at what moment this all might explode and that I don’t know what is all going on underneath the surface. The perception that we have is that something complex might happen. [...] It is a tense calm, because one doesn’t know...with much tranquillity, and thanks to God, it is quiet...there aren’t deaths...but there is a tense calm, we hope that it is true that things are getting better...

*Me: Is it true that people stay home at night [...]?*

Official: [...] in this region we have always lived in conflict [...]. There haven’t been any homicides, but people look after themselves [...], avoid going out at night. This is

not a town with nightlife. It also isn't our culture [...]. Here, people come home, watch the news, their favourite programme, and then they go to sleep to get up early to go to work [...]. This is a cultural issue and there is also the issue of public order. One has to take certain precautions.

Green (1994, 231) calls this tense calm in the Guatemalan civil war context an “eerie calm”, “an unease that lies just below the surface of everyday life”. Other residents of Ocaña expressed similar feelings about this calm, for example this government official (2012): “114 days without homicides in the town, but there is an anxiety...Everyday I receive messages on my mobile phone: ‘Prepare yourselves, they will arrive!’” A human rights defender (2012) stated more directly that people suspect something bad was going to happen:

The drug has induced a relative calm to the zone, but those people who do not agree with these businesses have to leave the region and many of them have been killed [...]. Many of us speak out against this, but what happens is that they always silence us with threats. Yes, we also had deaths, but in the last three years they haven't killed any of our leaders. Nevertheless, we are scared because lately the police have undertaken much more their job of accompanying us without telling us why. We suspect that something is happening...and I received a note of a supposed complaint that I made against these groups and where they respond to this supposed complaint that I never made, because we don't make the complaints ourselves. It seems like someone leaked information [...]. I have talked to all the social leaders in Ocaña and they have doubled the security for all of them. They are hatching something...



**Figure 23: Pamphlets with threats in Ocaña, Colombia (La Opinión 2012)**

The news from Ocaña in the weeks after my fieldwork trip to the town confirmed this suspicion. From the beginning of May 2012 pamphlets appeared in Ocaña in which an anonymous group threatened social cleansing and ordered a curfew at 11pm (La Opinión 2012) (see Figure 23).

It included a list of 27 people with whom they were going to start the cleansing.

On 6 May 2012, three people on the street after the curfew were killed: a baker, a woman who sold “minutes” for phone calls and another one who sold mobile phones (Noticias Uno 2012).

This suggests that the tense calm was the calmness before an outburst of violence by means of which one of the VNSA groups attempted to impose itself. Ocaña's residents had experienced similar strategies implemented by the paramilitaries before their demobilisation. Knowing about the atrocities committed once the calm was over, in 2012 they relived this fear and the presentiment of violence.<sup>83</sup>

Objective citizen security is scarcely undermined in periods of tense calm because the rates of violence are low. Subjective citizen security is undermined by the anticipation of insecurity. The presentiment of violence without knowing when, how and where it will break out erodes the community's social fabric: it fuels uncertainty and mistrust towards those outside the circle of friends or family (cf. Pécaut 1999, 156). Any stranger in town, any unusual occurrence may trigger violence. As it may happen any time and people are most vulnerable at public places, people prefer to stay at home, isolating themselves rather than enjoying a sense of community.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

When VNSA groups lack distrust-reducing mechanisms and are independent of each other, citizens in rural areas are able to adapt their behaviour to rules arising from two opposing fronts. Adhering to these rules reduces community mistrust. The VNSAs are not responsive to citizens. VNSA-imposed rules are rooted in brutal coercion which often produces long-term psychological consequences for community members. In urban situations of targeted rivalry and when preponderance is being disputed, the absence of distrust-reducing mechanisms among VNSAs which operate independently of each other translates into low availability of behavioural rules. The lines between VNSA members and bystanders are obscured. Rules are virtually absent during periods of tense calm before or after the outbreak of violence. This uncertainty fuels anxiety, fear and mistrust among citizens, which thwarts a sense of community, and erodes social fabric. As

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<sup>83</sup> In addition to social cleansing, in May 2012 guerrillas repeatedly attacked the army, resulting in injured and dead police forces and civilians (El Tiempo 2012a).

the state does not protect citizens and sometimes even contributes to violence by supporting one of the conflicting parties (paramilitaries in Putumayo and ELN in Arauca), the state-society relationship is damaged.

In all instances of absence of an arrangement, citizens use coping strategies to make sense of violence and enhance feelings of security: conciliation strategies involving religion or fate, and just-world-thinking, expressed in victim blaming. Blaming the victims helps coping. It also contributes to further eroding the social fabric: instead of showing solidarity with the victims and taking collective action to respect and protect them, people distance and isolate themselves.

As I will show in the next two chapters, these impacts on citizen security differ from those of the other arrangement clusters, particularly the prevalence of violence, *and* of the logic of appropriateness through behavioural rules in situations of combat. In short-term arrangements there is violence, but hardly any rules of appropriate behaviour. In long-term arrangements there is comparatively little violence, but a logic of appropriateness.

## 6. IMPACTS OF SHORT-TERM ARRANGEMENTS AMONG VNSAS ON CITIZEN

### SECURITY

*The armed actor damages the morality of civil society [...]. They slowly beat, break the pearl, the pearl of the Pacific. The pearl is of a very hard and beautiful material, it is already scratched, almost subtly fractured, but it starts to be really fractured.*

Citizen of Tumaco, Colombia (2011)

In this chapter I explore impacts on citizen security of the second cluster on the fuzzy continuum, illustrated in Figure 5. It comprises three short-term arrangement types: spot sales and barter agreements, tactical alliances and subcontractual relationships. Owing to the distinct distrust-reducing mechanisms – shared interests and personal bonds – and the various levels of group interdependence, they erode the population’s social fabric and distort the state-society relationship to different extents. Due to the one-off nature or quick changes in short-term arrangements, the rules citizens follow to ensure their safety are unclear and short-lived. Avoidance strategies replace such rules. The blurred lines between citizens and VNSAs, and victims and perpetrators, increase disorientation and uncertainty, that fractures society in the long run, as the civil society representative explains in the case of Tumaco, “the pearl of the Pacific”, above. This uncertainty does not necessarily contribute to objective citizen insecurity, but it fuels perceptions of insecurity, fear and mistrust, preventing collective action and citizens’ agency in designing security policies. It alienates citizens from the state that does not protect them, inhibiting a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship as the groundwork of citizen security. While alienation also exists in the absence of VNSA arrangements, in short-term arrangements – especially in tactical alliances – it is increased through the arrangement’s short-lived nature. Under combat, citizens can demand state protection against the group not supported by the state. In tactical alliances, (corrupt) state officials may change sides as quickly as VNSAs, making distancing oneself from the state the safest option.

## **6.1 Spot Sales and Barter Agreements**

Featuring low group interdependence, spot sales and barter agreements are hardly institutionalised. Without a clear pattern of events that occur regularly, citizens cannot adapt their behaviour to these circumstances, unless the arrangements become regular and frequent. Based on interest convergence, spot sales and barter agreements are limited in time and space, typically conducted only among a few group members. Behavioural rules are therefore less essential than in other arrangements that endure longer, are more extensive and involve more stakeholders. Except for material transactions that require infrastructure and a labour force, the VNSAs do not need the local population's support, hence, a consensual VNSA-society relationship is difficult to achieve. VNSA groups overcome the problem of distrust temporarily due to shared interests in a business deal. Yet general inter-group mistrust persists because they lack "thicker" forms of trust such as shared values. Without a long-term horizon which would make violence costly, VNSAs can draw on violent enforcement methods to overcome this problem, inflicting violence on other VNSAs and citizens alike.

### 6.1.1 Financial Transactions and Avoidance Strategies

Spot sales with financial transactions among VNSAs do not directly involve citizens, but still expose them to violence. Instead of trusting other citizens and the state as a protector, or demanding protection from the state, citizens develop self-protection mechanisms to avoid victimisation (Pécaut 1999, 147). They are agents in ensuring citizen security, yet limited in movement.

#### *Alejandro, the Illegal Business Palace*

When spot sales with financial transactions are limited in space, citizens change their mobility patterns to stay safe: they avoid spaces where these transactions take place (cf. Moser and McIlwaine 2004, 178–180). Alejandro, called "San Andresito", is a shopping centre in the heart of Cúcuta, with shops that sell products cheaply, including counterfeit and smuggled goods (Caracol 2005; Noticucuta.com 2007; Laguado Nieto 2012; Contraluz Cúcuta 2012). As I

witnessed when I went there, during the day it is frequented by ordinary shoppers, yet in the late hours it becomes a hub of illicit business activities. While in some areas Cúcuta at night is calm with wide streets in which I used to walk alone with the eleven-year-old son of my host, the area of Alejandría was busy and hectic. A community leader of Cúcuta (2011) told me that people would start to whisper: “Listen, I’m going to buy strawberries!” Someone else would answer: “No, buy mango!” He explained these are codes to distract attention from Alejandría’s hidden function of being a “business palace” for illegal activities (\*civil society representative, Cúcuta (CO) 2011; \*women’s leader, Cúcuta (Co) 2012). In 2012 it was supposedly the “economic and intelligence headquarters” of the Rastrojos, whose office was in the centre’s basement (\*community leader, Cúcuta (Co) 2011), protected by an intelligence network: street hawkers surrounding the area watched every movement. Similar to “security rings”, they reported to the Rastrojos, and infiltrated those who did illicit business with them at San Andresito (\*community leader, Cúcuta (Co) 2011):

Until recently, Pedro [managed the office of the Rastrojos in Alejandría], but these guys change quickly.<sup>84</sup> They keep the enterprise, but change the management. They use this *modus operandi* because they have learned that you must not allow anyone to be visibly involved. They say: “This is the office and you go there to whoever is in the office!” They don’t negotiate over this. This place is small; it’s only two blocks, and yet, any illegal economy that you can imagine is moving there. Any military machine that you can imagine is moving there, and any drug trafficking as well. But of course, they themselves are not there. There, you find little. You turn everything upside down but you don’t find anything, not even them. They go to San Cristóbal.

Compliance with the deals is also violently enforced. In October 2011 for example, a man was killed by another in Alejandría’s parking area. He was supposedly being “punished” by an Urabeños member, also involved in business deals, for having invaded the Urabeños’ economic space (\*community leader, Cúcuta (Co) 2011).

Alejandría represents what Veena Das (2007, 7) calls the “mutual absorption of the violent and the ordinary”. Referring to post-Partition India, she speaks of people’s “descent into the ordinary” by attending to small things of everyday life, such as going shopping to *recover* from violence

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<sup>84</sup> I changed his name.

(Das 2007, 7). Given the extensive media coverage, most Cucuteños know about the lethal disputes in Alejandría among groups such as the Rastrojos and Urabeños at night (La Opinión 2013). They attend to the ordinary to *withstand* violence by continuing to do their shopping at Alejandría as usual yet recommend staying away when it is dark.

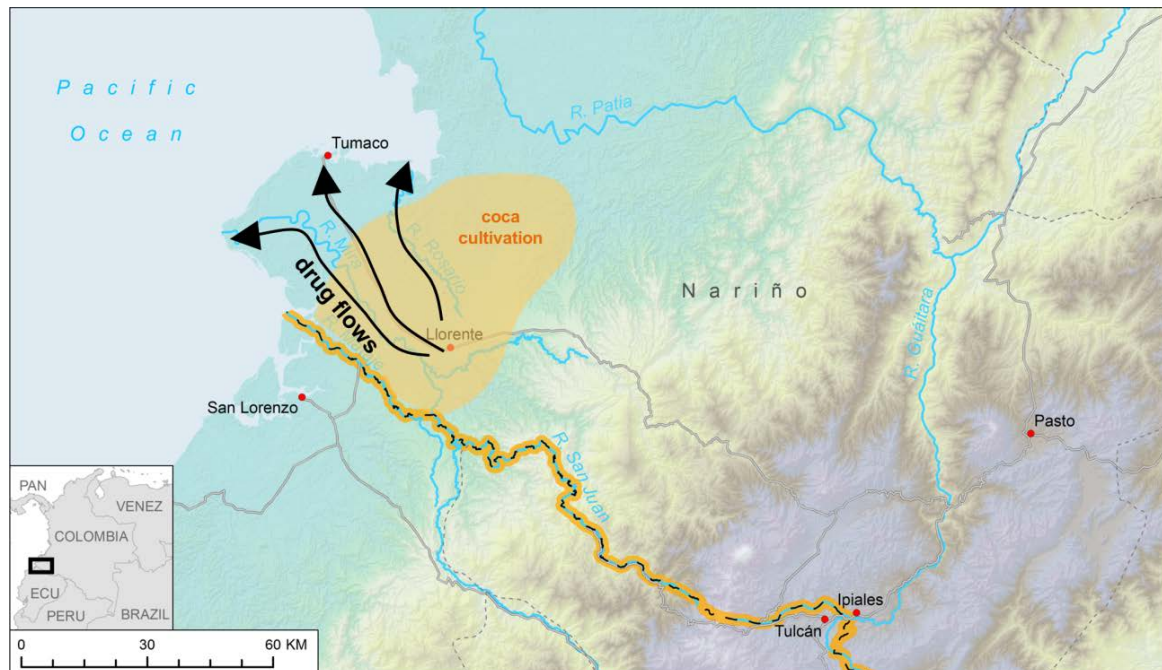
This avoidance strategy at night influences how people comment on murders in the area. It is the other side of the victim blaming coin: violence does not affect them because they avoid dangerous places. Killings in Alejandría are considered the victim's fault because instead of shunning the venue he or she exposes himself or herself to the danger.

In spatially limited spot sales avoidance is easier than when they are more widely spread as in Llorente and San Cristóbal, which I will discuss next, because it implies avoiding a limited space rather than changing one's entire lifestyle. Yet this increases the victim's stigmatisation, justifying the failure to investigate the case. It fuels impunity, leaving areas like Alejandría at the mercy of VNSAs such as the Rastrojos. Citizens are expected to be agents in reducing the risk of physical violence by shying away from dangerous places while the state fails to protect them. This suggests that the norms and principles that guide everyday life are produced through a self-help system rather than through citizenship. Such self-help systems ensure security to some extent, yet not *citizen* security in which the mechanisms to provide for security are based on a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship.

### *Spot Sales in Llorente*

Colombia's borderlands also feature less spatially limited spot sales with financial transactions. As the difference between perpetrators and bystanders who are mixed together in the same space is obscured, fear and interpersonal mistrust become prevalent. A spatial avoidance strategy is unfeasible if the citizens' homes are located within this area, as in the town of Llorente in Nariño on the road from Pasto to Tumaco. As Map 12 illustrates, the village opens up two strategic ways

on the drug trafficking routes: on one side to River Rosario which flows towards Tumaco and the ocean, and on the other side to River Mira (\*international agency staff, Mocoa (CO) 2011).



**Map 12: Drug trafficking routes that start in Llorente, Nariño**

Llorente became a centre for cocaine supply and movements of illegal merchandise to Tumaco (\*civil society representative, Pasto (CO) 2011; FIP, USAID, and OIM 2014, 14). As a citizen from Nariño (2011) explained, in the 1990s Llorente comprised only three houses, one made of “material” and two wooden ones. When the coca boom started in Nariño in the early 2000s, people started to move to Llorente. They “suddenly started to build houses of brick and cement” and migrants from the east and Caquetá arrived (\*international agency staff, Mocoa (CO) 2011). The village quickly acquired supermarkets. Money arrived, and with the money prostitutes, as in most places with a thriving narco-economy. Llorente became a town (Sierra 2002).

The anecdote below of a human rights defender from Pasto (2011) illustrates how in 2002 and 2003, in the absence of a VNSA arrangement, the paramilitaries tried to oust the guerrillas who had dominated the region:

Several men arrived at a house in Llorente where a man was painting a wall. They asked him to take them to the park and he replied that he wanted to finish the part he

was painting. They said they'd need him now. He answered: "Ok, I'm coming; you know that I always collaborate!" "What do you mean, son of a bitch, you always collaborate?" They hit him. They were not from the guerrillas who used to be present in the territory, but paramilitaries who had newly arrived in the village. As a punishment for being guerrilla collaborator they tortured him in public and tore his body into pieces. They left the pieces on the street and no-one could touch them. [...] How do you think people felt after that? The paramilitaries got things straight: "Here those who rule are us and look what happens to those who help the others!" This is impressive terror, politics of terror, of terrorising people, this means that I can't say anything, if they ask me to do something I don't even think about it: "Yes, of course, yes, yes, yes!"

In subsequent years, after the AUC's demobilisation in Nariño, the paramilitaries reorganised in new groups under names such as Águilas Negras, Mano Negra and Nueva Generación and recruited more young men (J. D. Restrepo 2006; Human Rights Watch 2010). Throughout the fragmentation and proliferation of these groups, Llorente developed into a hub for illicit business deals. The human rights defender (2011) described Llorente as a "commercial zone" in which multiple VNSAs were present: "We are all here, but we give way to each other. We are not at war, we give way to each other". An international agency employee (2011) confirmed:

Not only *narcos* go there to do business, also FARC and paramilitaries, both groups [...]. Everyone goes there for business. Those who go expose themselves to an imminent risk, but they know how to move about in these risks, they know how to sail through troubled waters.<sup>85</sup>

As in the case of Alejandría, the VNSAs enforced compliance via intimidations and violence, yet on a larger scale. In 2007, Llorente's peak year as a "narco-business hub" (\*international agency staff, Pasto (CO) 2011a; \*international agency staff, Mocoa (CO) 2011; \*civil society representative, Pasto (CO) 2011), the Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Commission of Nariño received the following complaint (SAT 2008):

In Llorente there are 60 armed guys dressed as civilians. During the day they sell female underwear, and at night they drive around in twos on motorbikes, heavily armed, despite the presence of the state forces.<sup>86</sup>

In 2007 it was common to see dead bodies at the roadside. Fearing retaliation by the murderer for showing compassion for the victim, no-one dared to pick them up (\*international agency staff,

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<sup>85</sup> People referred to the successor groups as paramilitaries.

<sup>86</sup> Two men on a motorbike is a common contract killing practice: the man on the pillion shoots the victim.

Pasto (CO) 2011a). Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman (2000, 8) call such behaviour “unlearning” normal reactions because “the old maps and charts that guided people in their relation to the ordinary have disappeared”. No rules apply due to terror in the entire town – not only in a specific area such as the shopping mall in Cúcuta.

The impacts on citizen security are twofold: on the one hand, directed towards those involved in business deals, violence was selective, rather than “terror warfare” (Nordstrom 1998) as in the case of the painter described above when there was no arrangement between guerrillas and paramilitaries. On the other, selective violence can be mistaken, therefore anyone can be victimised, increasing feelings of insecurity. Even though the form of violence differed, homicide rates under spot sales and barter agreements in 2007 were as high as under combat around 2003 (FIP, USAID, and OIM 2014, 27).<sup>87</sup> Since spot sales and barter agreements were spread over the town rather than spatially limited as in Alejandría, Llorente’s residents could not avoid where they are happening.

The only avoidance strategy is what Villarreal (2014) calls “logistics of fear”: adapting to the circumstances, particularly by isolating oneself and staying home. People impose the “rule of silence” (Pécaut 1999, 156): since it is difficult to know whom to trust, people prefer to only interact with people they know well. When I compared Venezuelan San Cristóbal in Táchira, which has a similar “business hub”-function like Llorente, I also found silence to prevail as self-imposed behavioural rule. While towns closer to the border are mostly Rastrojos- or Urabeños-controlled, San Cristóbal features many different VNSAs – allegedly including Mexican cartel members –, there to engage in business deals (\*community leader, Cúcuta (CO) 2012; \*international agency staff, San Cristóbal (VE) 2012). Many residents know that Colombian VNSAs visit San Cristóbal to do business yet, aware of risks for witnesses, keep quiet. A humanitarian organisation employee (2012a) told me in San Cristóbal: “If you say something, they kill you [...]. ‘Die silenced’ is a topic that is not touched by anyone”. Colombian VNSAs kill

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<sup>87</sup> No exact data on homicide rates in Llorente are available.

brutally to deter others from interrupting their illegal business deals: according to an interviewee from San Cristóbal (2012a), if someone is considered *sapo*, an informant, they cut out the murdered person's tongue and put it on the victim's body like a tie. Such symbolism is a strategy of terror to demonstrate what happens to people who speak out against VNSAs.

The generalised mistrust that invokes silence has consequences for the community's social fabric (Pécaut 1999, 145): it is strengthened on the micro-level among close friends and the nuclear family, but torn on the community level. Describing Guatemala's civil war, Green (1999, 69) notes that "silence can operate as a survival strategy, yet silencing is a powerful mechanism of control enforced through fear". In Llorente and San Cristóbal, this control mechanism is diffuse because it does not emanate from one specific group, but from the dynamics of mistrust and suspicion against anyone who might harm someone's illegal business. Blaming the victims as a strategy to reduce perceived vulnerability to violence is less feasible than in the case of Alejandría: if there is no particular place to avoid, no victim can be blamed for not having done so. Rather, more general, yet less reassuring, blaming of those who must have been involved somehow, as under dispute of preponderance, applies.

Outsiders' stigmatisation of Llorente's residents as collaborators adds to the community's fear. Blaming them for participating in the illegal business, outsiders denied the existence of victims (cf. S. Cohen 2001, 110–111). They distanced themselves from the occurrences in Llorente both mentally and physically. The village became a "no-go area". This isolation undermined not only the residents' livelihoods, based on commerce, but also their sense of being part of a wider community, of citizenship.

In 2011 the Rastrojos controlled Llorente; rates of violence decreased. Sometimes FARC militia entered the village to do business and left again, but did so "undercover" because FARC were in conflict with the Rastrojos in the region (\*civil society representative, Pasto (CO) 2011). The stigma of belonging to the illicit and violent business attached to Llorente's residents seemed to

have been overcome. While in 2007 people avoided stopping in Llorente when travelling from Tumaco to Pasto and vice versa, these precautions were no longer being taken in 2011. In fact, I had lunch in Llorente in October 2011 when travelling with a diplomatic mission from Tumaco to Pasto. What attracted my attention were the many hardware shops in the village, apparently supplying several VNSA groups, a visible remnant of Llorente's era as a "business centre".

The development in Llorente from guerrilla preponderance to combat between guerrillas and paramilitaries, spot sales and barter agreements among VNSAs, and the Rastrojos's preponderance demonstrates how citizen security impacts of spot sales differ from those of other VNSA arrangements. Under preponderance, citizens orient their behaviour to the VNSA's rules to avoid violence. Combat produces terror, and in spot sales and other illicit one-off business deals citizens face selective violence and fear. To sum up, spot sales and barter agreements among different VNSAs expose citizens to varying degrees of threats and punishment among VNSAs. Cucuteños can stay away from Alejandría because it is a specific shopping area in Cúcuta. The residents of Llorente and San Cristóbal have been embedded in an environment in which the VNSAs' enforcement methods are omnipresent. Even if they do not collaborate with any VNSAs, they feel insecure.

### 6.1.2 Material Transactions and Alienation from the State

When spot sales and barter agreements involve material rather than financial transactions, it is more obvious how the illicit economy distorts the legal economy. The relationship between VNSAs and communities tends to be parasitic (cf. Suárez 2000). Unless they take place in unpopulated areas, material barter agreements rely on the communities in which VNSAs operate, especially if the arrangement is repeated. The VNSAs need the infrastructure in which they are embedded to stockpile or sell goods, and community members as a labour force. Citizens are stigmatised as, or become – voluntarily or otherwise – collaborators, in barter deals to ensure their income. Without raising their voice or taking action against citizen insecurity generated by VNSAs due to their own (alleged) involvement, citizens' distance from the state grows. Financial

incentives paired with selective violence or threats thereof are employed to achieve the population's compliance, distinguishing material from financial spot sales in which the VNSAs rarely target the population.

### *Gasoline Trafficking in La Paz*

Changes in gasoline trafficking between Zulia and La Guajira and Cesar demonstrate the impacts on citizen security related to material barter agreements. The indigenous Wayúu traditionally controlled gasoline smuggling between La Guajira and Zulia (González Plazas 2008; Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012; Peralta et al. 2011; \*Wayúu leader, Maicao (CO) 2012b). When the AUC's Northern Bloc under Jorge 40 entered the region in the 1990s, paramilitary leaders, and after the AUC's demobilisation in Cesar in 2006 post-demobilised groups contested control of the business (\*civil society representative, Valledupar (CO) 2012b; Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 503; Peralta et al. 2011).<sup>88</sup> As Map 13 shows, gasoline smuggling is extremely lucrative: the value increases more than 52 times between Zulia and Bogotá.



**Map 13: Gasoline price in USD per container (21 litres) at the Colombia-Venezuela border in 2011<sup>89</sup>**

<sup>88</sup> FARC charge “taxes” on gasoline trafficked from Venezuela to Colombia.

<sup>89</sup> Own elaboration based on El Heraldo (2011) and UPME (2012).

Most gasoline is smuggled for regional distribution. Some is used to process coca leaves into cocaine (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 482). Gasoline smuggling is an open secret: when I crossed the border from Paraguaipoa in Zulia to Maicao in La Guajira, I saw many cars and trucks involved in this practice. At important border crossings such as Paraguaipoa-Paraguachón (Maicao) and Cúcuta-San Antonio, it is common to see cars of the brands LTD, Maverick, Ford Forlaine or Malibu because they have big tanks, allowing the smuggling of large quantities of gasoline (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 519; \*women’s leader, Cúcuta (Co) 2012; \*civil society representative, Cúcuta (CO) 2011; \*civil society representative, Valledupar (CO) 2012b) (see Figure 24).



**Figure 24: Typical car used for gasoline smuggling, Zulia, Venezuela**

In La Paz municipality, near Valledupar, community members started to smuggle gasoline in 1995. Two families who used to travel frequently from La Paz to Maicao in La Guajira to trade goods brought cheap gasoline from Maicao to La Paz to sell it at a profit (SAT 2012, 10). More families drove north to Maicao and brought gasoline south to La Paz. However, since 2011, public officials have been highlighting the Rastrojos’ and the Urabeños’ involvement in gasoline smuggling in La Paz (SAT 2012, 10), often in the form of barter agreements for cocaine.<sup>90</sup> Gasoline is brought from Venezuela via La Guajira to La Paz. The empty lorries are used to

<sup>90</sup> According to Ávila and Guerra Ariza (2012, 517), narco-broker “Marquito” controls this business (see Chapter Seven).

transport cocaine from municipalities in central Cesar via La Guajira to the Colombia-Venezuela border. There, the cocaine is handed over to trafficking groups operating in Venezuela, allegedly Mexican cartels (\*civil society representative, Valledupar (CO) 2012b; SAT 2012).

Gasoline smuggling has historically been a livelihood strategy for Cesar's and La Guajira's population. Although illegal, they do not consider it illegitimate (Peralta et al. 2011). Also in Cúcuta, where people sell gasoline bought in San Antonio (Figure 25), the high-ranking police commander (2012) confirmed that residents consider contraband, particularly smuggled gasoline, legitimate:

A specific phenomenon in Cúcuta is that people have been living a bit in illegality because it is a border zone. [...] Unfortunately, people have suffered the phenomenon of the guerrillas, the paramilitaries and the BACRIM. They come to believe that contraband is not illegal. They consider contraband normal. This contraband is the origin of many fictitious economies. [...] People end up accepting these things [...].



**Figure 25: Queue at gasoline station near San Antonio de Táchira, Venezuela**

At least three types of gasoline smuggling exist: first, large scale smuggling in tankers that transport between 12,000 and 16,000 litres (SAT 2012; Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 507–510). Supposedly, these tankers are increasingly used for gasoline-for-drugs-deals. Second, medium-sized smuggling, using modified Renault 18s or Mazda 626s. And third, *pimpineros*, people who

sell gasoline on the street as *pimpinas* (see Figure 26). Most gasoline smugglers fall into the second or third category. Only the first one involves VNSA-controlled drug trafficking. However, since the Rastrojos and Urabeños started to engage in barter agreements to exchange drugs for gasoline, gasoline smugglers have been stigmatised as drug-traffickers and collaborators with these VNSAs, restricting what they perceive to be their daily living.



**Figure 26: Pimpinas stall at the Colombia-Venezuela border**

The consequences for citizen security of stigmatisation due to the VNSAs' barter agreements primarily concern citizen participation and the state-society relationship. Stigmatisation increases the families' vulnerability vis-à-vis state institutions and VNSAs (SAT 2012). Refraining from reporting abuse or extortion because it would reveal their own involvement in illegal activities, they undermine a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship. Many consider extortion an unavoidable deduction from their income like taxes – a payment to receive protection from law enforcement and criminals (cf. Pécaut 1999, 149). VNSAs being both tormentors and protectors contributes to the VNSAs' leverage over the borderland population. VNSAs can manipulate borderlanders to make them behave in their interests while shielding themselves from the state's influence and the risk of punishment.

The empirical legitimacy of borderlanders' illegal activities alienates them from the state while drawing them closer to the VNSAs. As Korf and Raeymakers (2013, 5) note, such a “tendency

toward transgression” also questions the state’s legitimacy. The state may turn into a greater threat to the borderlanders’ livelihoods than VNSAs. For borderlanders, the border represents the state because any other expression of it is absent (Vorrath 2010, 85–87). Customs officials, and police and military officials are considered threats to people’s livelihoods. As Andreas (2009, 22) highlights, “smuggling is defined by and depends on the state’s exercising its metapolitical authority to criminalize without the full capacity or willingness to enforce its laws”.<sup>91</sup> The space that is opened up for smuggling through the gap between the state’s laws and its enforcement of these laws constitutes a limbo: borderlanders benefit from this incoherence, but are also damaged by it. VNSAs can pressurise them by extorting money from them.

The post-demobilised groups’ involvement in gasoline smuggling and barter agreements with cocaine has had impacts on the economic opportunities and security of La Paz’s residents. The post-demobilised groups apparently forced people to sell their properties including shops and private homes to stockpile the gasoline they receive in return for drugs (SAT 2012; \*civil society representative, Valledupar (CO) 2012b). The groups also pressurised locals to launder money originating from gasoline or drug spot sales. They offered money to residents to invest in the purchase of gasoline and of gasoline tanks to stockpile (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 517). This distorts competition. Resisting the offer or not paying back the money jeopardises one’s security. According to Colombia’s Ombudsman’s Office (2012) for example, in March 2011 the Urabeños threatened a La Paz resident’s life by pressurising him to pay back what they had lent him.

The inter-group mistrust persisting in spot sales and barter agreements leads to citizens becoming victims of selective killings. Following the just-world logic of other interviewees, according to a human rights defender from Valledupar (2012b), most murders affect people linked to the illegal economy or local armed structures. Yet these include locals who are not necessarily voluntarily involved. Violent punishment may be avoided among group leaders because they strive to be credible (cf. Gambetta 2009, 35). However, since mistrust is reduced through interest

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<sup>91</sup> See Felbab-Brown (2010, 176–177) on the condition required for the emergence of illicit economies.

convergence in the business deal only, general suspicion is still prevalent. Therefore, at the “grassroots level”, VNSAs deter defection with violence. As I show in Chapter Seven, some long-term arrangements are characterised by a similar dependency of VNSAs on the local community yet the outcome is different due to the groups’ macro-motivations (personal bonds, values, power) that permit the reduction of inter-group distrust and their higher interdependence. Facing fewer risks of cheating by the other VNSA group, VNSAs provide governance functions in return for social recognition which allows them to continue their activities undisturbed, counting on locals as a labour force. In iterated material barter agreements and spot sales, VNSAs offer economic opportunities yet no other governance functions. Neither do they strive for social recognition through responsiveness because where inter-group mistrust prevails and locals are suspected of collaborating with the other group, violence is a more reliable enforcement method than social control.

#### *Arms Trafficking along the Colombia-Ecuador Border*

Comparing gasoline-for-drugs deals along the Colombia-Venezuela border with arms spot sales along the Colombia-Ecuador border corroborates the findings regarding the repercussions of material spot sales and barter agreements on the local population. Weapons and ammunition entering Colombia from Ecuador are sold to FARC, to other VNSAs or on the black market (\*civil society leader of Tumaco, Quito (EC)) 2012; Aguirre Tobón 2011). According to El Comercio (2012), Ramsey (2012) and interviews with military officials (2012c), most arms originate in Peru, diverted from the Peruvian military to the black market. FARC Front 48 in Putumayo supposedly has drugs-for-arms deals with Ecuadorian traffickers near the border crossing of San Miguel between Sucumbíos and Putumayo. The Ecuadorians transport the cocaine along the border to Ibarra and from there to Quito. On the other side of the border, the arms are transported via Mocoa to the departments of Caquetá and Meta where FARC still have their strongholds (\*intelligence official, Quito (EC) 2012b) (see Map 7 in Chapter Four).

Paramilitaries and post-demobilised groups are also involved. In Nariño, a woman (2011) who left FARC, fell in love with a paramilitary and then was forced to join the paramilitary Liberators of the South Bloc between 2002 and 2005, explained how they implemented the arms deals:

*Me:* *Did you go to Ecuador and there they gave you the arms?*

Ex-combatant: They gave us the arms and from there we brought them here.

*Me:* *[...] Who gave you the arms?*

Ex-combatant: [...] I don't know who they were because these were ordinary people who arrived and we only went so far. The commander was the only one who knew them. We did not have contact with them before to that. He simply told us "Here is what you need, take the money" and we carried it with us. [...] Only the commander [...] and the higher ranking members [knew them].

*Me:* *Were [the traffickers] Ecuadorians?*

Ex-combatant: Yes, Ecuadorians. There were no Colombians. [...]

*Me:* *Was this in Tulcán?*

Ex-combatant: No, we followed some trails which are like shortcuts that go through other parts. We had to cross dangerous places. If you fall down them, people don't even remember your story. We took these routes far away from [Tulcán] because the police were there. [...] We went by car to Tulcán and from there onwards I have no idea where we went to because we went in our car until the point from where they took us in their cars [...]. After that we had to walk maybe six hours to where we received the stuff. From there we had to walk until we reached Colombia. [...] Not on a trail of course, otherwise...Then we walked [...] until we reached Putumayo [...]. We were many. We didn't carry guns, nothing small, we carried things that were worth it.

*Me:* *Did you have any problems with the army?*

Ex-combatant: No. When we do a manoeuvre like this, generally there is always someone who does the logistics beforehand and investigates where to go, how to go, which route to leave by and whether the army is there. If the army is there obviously we don't do anything. We stay quiet until we can do what we need to do. [...] The commander always makes sure that there is no danger [...] so that we can do these things.

*Me:* *How was it with people in Ecuador and Colombia?*

Ex-combatant: In Ecuador we only [...] got what we had to receive and left. Here in Colombia – at least from what I perceived and obviously this is because in our case we don't represent something good, but something bad, something that people are scared of – people were scared of me. They don't have respect, but fear. When I told them to do something many people did it because of fear, not out of respect. This is the relationship we had with them.

*Me:* *Where was the mafia from [with whom you had arms deals]?*

Ex-combatant: In FARC I met people from other countries, from Saudi Arabia, from El Salvador [...]. With the paramilitaries we had deals with people from Medellín, Cali and the Atlantic coast [...].

*Me:* *Did you change arms for drugs or money?*

Ex-combatant: I didn't see drugs, only money. The exchange was always for a lot of money [...]. We went to certain places, exchanged, paid and off. Sometimes we paid for training, they trained us how to handle and clean the arms.

These arms-for-drugs deals are conducted between Colombian VNSAs and criminal groups in Ecuador, using (and paying) "ordinary people" from Ecuador, as she noted, as traffickers. Similar

to gasoline-for-drugs deals at the Colombia-Venezuela border, locals are to some degree involved in deals, even though avoidance is arguably more feasible because the business is not as localised as in La Paz.

Between Carchi and Nariño, arms spot sales impinge more directly on local residents, with the indigenous people from Otavalo in Ecuador's Imbabura province being singled out by the media (e.g. *El Comercio* 2009b; *Hoy* 2008). A resident of Carchi (2012) commented:

People have infiltrated here. There are those who help, people who provide them with food, with medicine, and we also have problems with arms trafficking. People traffic many arms [...]. They pass them from here over there [to Colombia]. I don't know where they come from. When I came back from San Juan [de Mayasquer] I saw a person selling blackberries [...]. It's just logical that blackberries don't grow here.<sup>92</sup> What a pity that you came here on a Thursday. The day to come here should have been tomorrow. Tomorrow is the key day. Tomorrow is market day in Chical. This is when you should start to observe. For example, you should go to the market and then you can see people who buy 12 kilogrammes of this, 10 kilogrammes of that, 6 kilogrammes of the other...per family! You can observe all this! [...] There they sell arms as well. It's the Otavaleños who bring the arms. They sell them, they are the arms traffickers, the indigenous people of Otavalo. There is a sector in Otavalo, Peguche, that's where they produce artisanal baskets. I told you I saw an indigenous person with a basket selling blackberries when I came up the hill. They are from various parts near Peguche. They were arrested with arms and gunpowder, but everything here is arms trafficking. It's normal, normal!

The (illegal) economic opportunities are more diverse than in La Paz. Ecuadorians sell arms, gunpowder, ammunition and uniforms to VNSAs, mostly FARC Front 29. However, the market dynamics in Chical demonstrate that FARC members also regularly cross the border as civilians to buy supplies, hence, the large volumes of goods bought by individuals. If people do not wish to engage in arms sales, they can have other economic activities, but still benefit from FARC as clients. The diversity of economic options reduces the threats of violence to the population because they can choose to engage in a less risky economic activity such as selling food. However, these dynamics also conceal illegal activities: those not involved in arms trafficking do not report it, nor FARC presence more generally because it might jeopardise their own livelihood – legally selling goods to guerrillas in plain clothes.

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<sup>92</sup> Arms or gunpowder are hidden underneath the berries.

Another repercussion is the stigmatisation of the indigenous Otavaleños, reinforcing the finding from the example of the Awá in Chapter Five of the distinctive impacts on citizen security of VNSA interactions upon marginalised groups. Locals perceive the Otavaleños to be the major traffickers and, as such, another VNSA group. This perception was reflected in several interviews and phrases in reports or articles that refer to relationships between FARC and communities (rather than individuals from the communities) or to the network that the indigenous people maintain (Coloma 2012, 53–57). Indigenous Otavaleños have been arrested for trafficking arms, camouflaged among other products as the example of the blackberries shows, or hidden elsewhere like in the case of two indigenous women who were paid 25,000 USD by FARC for smuggling 23 grenades attached to their bodies and 22 sticks of explosive hidden in a doll (El Comercio 2012). However, there is no evidence to substantiate the claim of Otavaleños being an arms trafficking group in terms of what percentage of all people arrested for arms trafficking in Ecuador are indigenous people. The stigmatisation is rooted in the stereotype of indigenous people in Ecuador: they are seen as poor, inferior, badly educated and hence prone to engage in illegal activities to sustain their livelihoods (UN 2012; CAOI 2012).

The Otavaleños' stigmatisation entails their alienation from other society members and the state. Their activities being illegal and conducted with FARC as counterpart muddies the line between society and VNSAs. While in cases like gasoline-for-drugs deals, VNSAs originate from other regions, "invade" a territory and change the rules through which community members become collaborators, here locals themselves become or are perceived to become VNSAs rather than collaborators. If part of the state's citizenry "exits" the state-society relationship through becoming a VNSA group, the state has failed to be responsive to this social group.<sup>93</sup> If this portion of the citizenry is *perceived* to be a VNSA group, there is a "tear" in the social fabric that holds society together. The entire group, rather than individuals, are excluded from society. In Robert

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<sup>93</sup> See Picciotto, Olonisakin, and Clarke's (2007, 12–13) conceptualisation of Hirschman's (1972) "Exit, Voice and Loyalty".

Putnam's (2001, 23) words, there is a lack of "bridging social capital" within society between those citizens perceived to be a VNSA group and the rest.

The arms sales at the Carchi-Nariño border produce specific citizen security dynamics: physical violence is comparatively less present than in other cases of spot sales and barter agreements,<sup>94</sup> and indigenous people are stigmatised as an arms trafficking group. This reveals important differences: in La Paz the stigmatisation of individuals involves their alienation from the state. General mistrust *erodes* the social fabric because people do not take collective action or isolate themselves to avoid being targeted as traitors. The group stigmatisation of the Otavaleños *fragments* the social fabric: the Otavaleños have strong intra-group ties, but there is no sense of community between other borderlands and the Otavaleños.

#### *Spot Sales of Human Beings in Machiques*

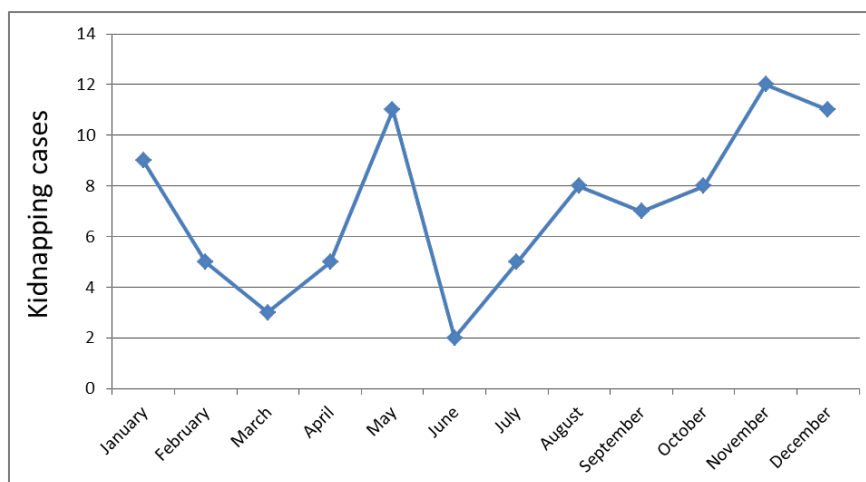
In some spot sales the traded goods are citizens, for example in Machiques in Zulia. The Colombian guerrillas kidnap ranchers and businessmen near the Machiques highway leading to El Tokuko, hide them in the Sierra de Perijá, and sell them to criminal groups which demand ransom from their families (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Machiques (VE) 2012b; \*civil society member, El Tokuko (VE) 2012; \*director of humanitarian organisation, Maracaibo (VE) 2012).<sup>95</sup> Only in 2009, 86 people were reportedly kidnapped in Zulia as opposed to 589 in Venezuela (Briceño-León, Ávila, and Camardiel 2012, 218):<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See homicide rates of Carchi and Cesar in Figure 7.

<sup>95</sup> This practice also occurs the other way: criminal bands kidnap people in Caracas and sell them to guerrillas in the Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands (\*journalist, Caracas (VE) 2012).

<sup>96</sup> It is unclear how many of them formed part of spot sales.



**Figure 27: Kidnapping cases in Zulia, Venezuela, 2009**

The victims are held in captivity until the guerrillas and the criminal groups reach an agreement or another bidder offers a better price. They kill the victim if it is not considered worthwhile to keep him or her. While the guerrillas are thought to respect their victims in certain ways, purely economically motivated criminal groups are apparently less “professional”. They are more likely to kill their victims if it is in their economic interest or if they are threatened with being reported to law enforcement agents. Thus, as opposed to kidnappings by a single guerrilla group, the involvement of criminal groups magnifies the risks for victims.

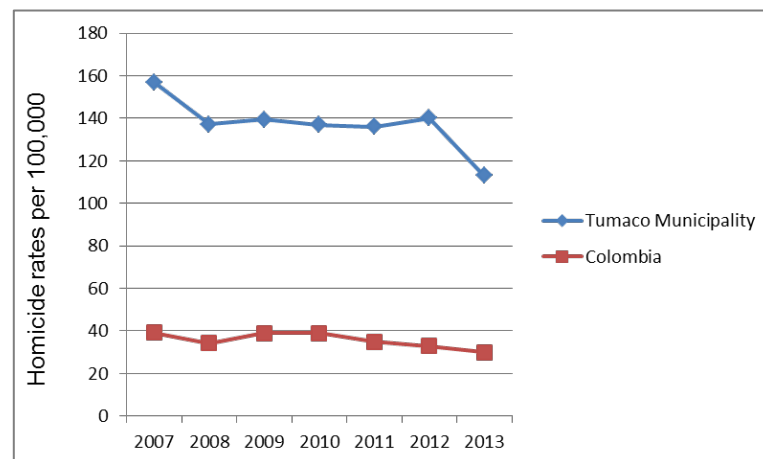
The practice affects the entire community’s subjective citizen security. Those who know that they are “kidnappable” because the VNSAs favour their profile live in constant fear of sequestration (cf. Villarreal 2013). Many have left the region and pay farmers to manage their ranches. Those who are not “kidnappable” are also afraid because people have been confused with ranchers and kidnapped by mistake.<sup>97</sup>

## 6.2 Tactical Alliances

In Tumaco and La Guajira state policies have favoured the persistence of tactical alliances among

<sup>97</sup> See Chapter Two for my own experience of being “kidnappable”.

VNSAs. Due to soaring violence in Tumaco municipality, Bogotá declared it as one of Colombia's nine "territorial consolidation zones", hence state military presence is high (UACT n.d.). However, the state's provision of goods and infrastructure as well as services including justice and security is poor. This situation is further complicated in La Guajira, where the state has historically been seen as parallel to traditional indigenous governance structures.



**Figure 28: Homicide rates per 100,000 inhabitants since Consolidation Plan was initiated**

Tumaco is paradigmatic for the proliferation of VNSA groups. After the paramilitary demobilisation in 2006, right-wing criminal groups including the Rastrojos, Águilas Negras and Paisas appeared in the municipality. Many of their members used to be paramilitaries. FARC, also present in Tumaco, are organised into units operating in the rural areas, and urban militias (\*civil society leader of Tumaco, Quito (EC) 2012). The groups in the region have tactical alliances to increase the profits from cocaine production (\*cleric, Tumaco (CO) 2011), and, as an international agency employee (2011) in Tumaco explained, to protect themselves against the state:

In one part of River Mira there [is] coca production belonging to various actors, not only FARC. Each has their own coca production and often they join forces to send the quantity of cocaine that is required. This ensures their security: the more united they are, the more likely it is that the Colombian state will not catch them or their products. They all have different informants and intelligence on the state's operations, this is what unites them.

As a civil society leader of Tumaco (2012) illustrated, another reason for engaging in tactical alliances is competition with a third VNSA group:

You and I, we are partners, I'm a guerrilla member and you are a member of a criminal group [...]. Between us, we have a pact, an agreement and we want to eliminate the competition. What do we do? We look for strategies to jointly eliminate this competition, we tidy up and we become much stronger. How do we tidy up? The first thing that they think in Colombia is: that's easy, contract someone to kill him and we solve the problem. What do we do with the other group members? The same, we kill them. You take the bull by the horns.

Tactical alliances occur between the guerrillas and post-demobilised groups, and among several post-demobilised groups. A government official in Pasto (2011a) stated that the Rastrojos for example had an alliance with the Águilas Negras in Tumaco to fight FARC and to defend themselves against the state forces, but that this alliance only lasted a few months.

As I will illustrate below, tactical alliances undermine citizen security with violence, the absence of rules to avoid such violence due to its unpredictability, erosion of the social fabric and the questioning of the referent object "citizen".

### 6.2.1 The Unpredictability of Violence

As in other borderlands I discussed previously, people's inhibition threshold for engaging in violence is low due to the environment of impunity. It is less costly to kill someone by mistake than not killing someone who can jeopardise one's business or life. As Gambetta (2009, 33) notes, "if one can ensure that the threat of punishment is credible, would-be offenders think twice". Due to the mistrust *omnium contra omnes* that arises from tactical alliances' low group interdependence the danger of treachery is omnipresent (cf. Gambetta 2009, 30–32), making this low inhibition threshold more relevant than in other VNSA arrangements. As the following anecdote about a rural area in the Tumaco municipality illustrates, VNSAs engage in pre-emptive killings (\*civil society leader of Tumaco, Quito (EC)) 2012):

A cocaine laboratory was dismantled after the military found it. This generated fear [for possible acts of retaliation against suspected informants] and some people started to flee. Their departure aroused the suspicion of the other [VNSA group] who thought those who fled had provided information to the military. They searched for

them – first, to see if it was true and second, to put down a marker. Even if it is not true, it is better to kill a displaced person and say: “Look, he was a *sapo* [informant], but we pursued him and we killed him!” [...] Even if he never had said anything [...]! This way the rest of the population is already sufficiently terrified to never say anything. Community members are almost forced to become informants of the illegal armed actor.

Due to rapid reconfigurations of tactical alliances, violence is also less predictable than in other arrangements. Since tactical alliances are based on interest convergence and personal bonds, their quick breakdown fuels the desire for revenge among VNSAs. If a member of one of two allied groups breaks the rules and for example runs away with the money destined to be shared among both groups he faces revenge at some point, as a civil society leader (2012) of Tumaco highlighted:

People say: “Okay, he was lucky, but sooner or later they will find him!” Therefore there are crimes where they say: “If the person was not involved in anything, we haven’t seen him/her!” But if a long time ago he “twisted himself” [became involved in criminal activities], they will come back at him. This is how far the respect goes: if he manages to get away with breaking the agreement, fine, but at some point they will get back at him.

People can be killed even years later. Likewise, family members or friends without knowledge of the individual’s illicit activities in the past can be threatened or killed in revenge against that individual. Revenge is not always targeted at the group that broke the alliance, but also at informants, broadening the circle of those who fear retaliation. This may explain high homicide rates in locations that feature tactical alliances, but no combat, and where relatively few community members belong to VNSA groups. Virtually everyone is a potential victim (cf. Rotker 2002b, 16) because murders are committed on the basis of suspicion and innocents are killed by stray bullets (\*civil society representative, Valledupar (CO) 2012b; \*international agency staff, Tumaco (CO) 2011). The continuation of the example on VNSAs who ally to transport products together illustrates the unpredictability of killings:

They don’t have a territorial dispute. When they kill each other it’s for retaliation because they lost a cocaine shipment or someone important has been killed or arrested by the state forces and they think this is to take someone out of the market [...]. Soon afterwards they come to terms again. They come back and talk to each other, do something to calm down and things continue as usual.

Rapid breakdowns produce disorientation as to whose rules to adhere to, making self-protection from violence harder than in combat where people can comply with the respective group's rules.

Initially, rules in Tumaco are clear, as a government official of Pasto (2011a) described:

It is not necessary that groups say: "The territory from here to here is mine and from there to there is yours!" People know [the rules] due to how they operate [...] and because communication networks led by these groups are developed among shopkeepers, shops and traders. All businesses have them. One of the first things that [VNSAs] provide is security [...]. Some gentlemen watch, they will make sure you can pursue your commercial activity with all guarantee, but you have to pay for this. But they are protecting you from their own group. This is only a form of collecting resources to sustain the group [...], to finance themselves rather than to control the population [...]. But as you also know social control is inherent in this approach because sustaining a group also requires a process of control, of maintaining the zone.

Sooner or later however, alliances break down and tacit rules become void. The residents' security is jeopardised: they do not know whom to pay the extortion money to or whether the extorting group still has the capacity to protect them (cf. Pécaut 1999, 152). Such breakdown being unpredictable, presentiment of danger is omnipresent.

Due to the rapidly changing dynamics, neither is intra-urban displacement after the breakdown of an alliance a reliable means of protection. As opposed to long-term arrangements where VNSAs control large parts of a territory or the absence of an arrangement where dispute occurs across entire municipalities, tactical alliances produce micro-level dynamics in which each neighbourhood can be controlled by a different group (Pécaut 1999, 152). It engages for example, in an alliance with another group to obtain intelligence on state operations.

Tumaco consists of three islands, with the biggest one, El Morro, connected by a bridge to the other ones. The Valley of Tumaco is divided into two parts, surrounded by water. In 2011, the neighbourhood of Viento Libre was a particularly badly affected neighbourhood. According to a local religious organisation (2011, 8), state institutions did not enter Viento Libre. Given its proximity to the airport, it is strategic as a trafficking route and controlled by VNSAs (\*local government official, Pasto (CO) 2011a):

There is a drug trafficking route which first passes [next to the airport] and then reaches an isolated zone over there, despite the military. [...] This all belongs to the business. This group, the Águilas Negras, has to send the drugs this way, but there is another neighbourhood, controlled by the Rastrojos [...]. There is an agreement of mutual respect between the groups, so that [the drug] flows. The same applies vice versa: if the Rastrojos require a drug trafficking route and they have to pass through the zone where the Águilas Negras are present, they make an agreement.

If threatened in one neighbourhood, people flee to one controlled by another group. A mother in Tumaco told me in 2011 that she went with her son to live with relatives in another neighbourhood to protect him from being recruited by VNSAs. In subsequent years, the situation became worse due to FARC growing stronger in Tumaco, which produced more intra-urban displacements.<sup>98</sup> According to CODHES (2014, 75) between May and August 2012 more than 300 people were displaced within Tumaco from the neighbourhood Brisas de los Ángeles. Since these people do not have the means to go further away, intra-urban displacement is often the only way to escape threats. Yet the VNSAs may follow them. Furthermore, with intra-urban displacement usually not figuring in security statistics, it is invisible; neither the state nor international agencies take action.

### 6.2.2 The Loss of Civility

The impacts on citizen security of tactical alliances distinguish themselves from those of other arrangements not only through the unpredictability of violence, but also by the way in which they affect the referent object of security, the “citizen”.

Blurred lines between community members and those with the VNSAs fuel uncertainty in targeted rivalry and material spot sales or barter agreements, where community members become collaborators or entire social groups are perceived to be VNSAs. They are more blurred in tactical alliances. Given the dynamics of revenge and suspicion even against members of one’s own group, civilians are involved in many different ways rather than being pulled to one side (as in the absence of an arrangement) or to enforce compliance and ensure illegal business activities (as in

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<sup>98</sup> In September 2013 FARC ousted the Rastrojos from Tumaco (CODHES 2014, 75), where they have been consolidating their presence (conversations with security experts in Bogotá, July 2014).

material spot sales and barter agreements). It is unclear who is armed legitimately, who is armed otherwise, and who is not armed, as Kaldor (2012, 6) notes (see Chapter Five), *and* who is fighting on whose side for how long.

Like in these other arrangements, this uncertainty fuels interpersonal mistrust which erodes the social fabric and impedes collective action, essential for citizen security. Yet additionally, it erodes norms such as respect for life, at the root of citizenship for if people do not have respect for other people's lives they are not "civil", as Collingwood (1999, 326) and Whitehead (2002, 166) note. Respect for life has been lost in many parts of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela. Under tactical alliances in Tumaco this phenomenon penetrates even close relationships to which must be added the indifference of bystanders. Many residents of Tumaco are complete strangers to Putnam's (1993, 88–89) "virtuous citizens" who "are helpful, respectful, and trustful towards one another, even when they differ on matters of substance".

Voluntarily or not, community members of any age or sex become involved in the VNSAs' activities. For example, VNSAs use community members as messengers to deliver messages to other group members or to an allied VNSA group (\*ex-guerrilla, Pasto (CO) 2011a). Since distrust is high even with allied groups, this is safer than direct interaction with them which could lure them in a trap. Children are often used as messengers and to transport illegal goods. In Tumaco VNSAs used children to transport arms in their school bags (MINGA and INDEPAZ 2011).

Others are used as informants to gather intelligence on who enters and leaves the neighbourhood, what meetings are held in which places and what extraordinary events are occurring. Old men reading the newspaper on a park bench, owners of the small booth selling mobile phone "minutes", or taxi drivers are the seemingly harmless informant profiles. During my fieldwork I often noticed how the same men on motorbikes were riding around public places where I met with interviewees. These informants are punished if their information falls into the wrong hands.

Also, only talking to them without knowing which group they are currently working for can make one vulnerable to the other group's accusations. One of my interviewees (2011) told me how he bought juice every morning from an old lady on the corner opposite the police station in Tumaco, and suddenly she was not there anymore. She was found with her throat slit in her house, apparently because she facilitated information on police officers' movements.

Civilians also become involved as contract killers. In relatively stable environments with clear rules killings are outsourced to another VNSA group. Yet in the uncertain circumstances of tactical alliances, VNSAs often contract individual killers, for example to execute pre-emptive and retaliatory killings. An international agency staff member (2011) in Tumaco explained youth are particularly popular "employees":

Staff member: For the Rastrojos it is easier [to carry out assassinations] by buying another actor's service, including youth. Adolescents are [...] cheaper and less suspicious. It is easier for them to get to the potential victim. [...] They use adolescents as contract killers [...].

*Me:* *How do they recruit them?*

Staff member: [...] For underage people it is always forced recruitment, independently of whether they pay or offer them something else. If the adolescent to whom they offer a job decides not to do it, he or she already falls into disgrace. The person is marked. He has to do it or he has to do it. He has to do it, if he received money for it and if he doesn't receive money he knows that he has to do it as well. You can't refuse to do it. If he is selected to kill someone he has to do it. There is no other way. If he doesn't do it he has to leave, disappear, flee, but if he does it he receives money for it and the money constitutes an income for him and he will have a group of friends who will always help him if he gets into trouble. This is part of the rewards for working for an armed group: they will never be short of anything, they won't be short of food, drinks, a place to sleep, clothes. They will always have money, can wallow in vice, be it prostitutes, drugs, alcoholism, it's the best job. They always have free time, they provide one or two services and the rest of the time things are calm.

Joining a violent group brings opportunities (Pécaut 1999, 148–149). Male teenagers are particularly prone to this behaviour since having a gun is considered to confirm their masculinity (Gilligan 2003, 1161). In Colombian society characterised by *machismo*, this is particularly true.

James Gilligan (2003, 1154) notes that violence is committed "to ward off or eliminate the feeling of shame and humiliation" and achieve respect, pride and dignity. Many have adopted their

behaviour to the Machiavellian logic of their bosses to enhance their achievements, which, in the absence of economic opportunities, compensates for the lack of acknowledgement in other areas (\*civil society leader of Tumaco, Quito (EC)) 2012):

These gang leaders, whom do they use [as contract killers]? Children! Children who are 11, 12, 13 years old. They attract them with guns, playing war. I have met children in cities like Quito where they meet at a corner, talking about their lives and drinking beer, but these ones don't. They talk about other things: "I will do more than my boss. When I have the opportunity I will achieve more than him, I will have more money, I will ship more drugs. I will show my boss that I can do this. Boss, do you want to see that I'm capable of killing these people who sit over there?" "Let's see, show it to me". Boom, boom, they kill them! "Okay, I can do it, now I want to have a share of this *gramaje* [illegal tax]". This is not normal! This is not normal in human behaviour!

What my interviewee considered abnormal behaviour can be explained by these children's lack of self-esteem. Most of them live in marginalised poor and violent neighbourhoods. They engage in such violence to overcome their shame for not having achieved much in life, according to their perceptions. In a way, Arendt's (1970, 54) remark that "impotence breeds violence" applies to these children whose gun-handling skills are their only means to be heard in society. Referring to war in Sierra Leone, David Keen (2005, 73) notes that "the gun itself commanded 'respect'". This has also been observed in other conflicts (Lary 1985; Zur 1998). The motivations are not solely economic, but also moral ones: "Our most immoral actions may stem precisely from our moral impulses, since without these we would have no sense of shame in the first place" (Keen 2005, 63).

The responses of Tumaco's residents to violence, fear and uncertainty arising from unclear lines between perpetrators and victims reinforce the loss of civility induced by the breakdown of these distinctions. As in the case of spot sales and targeted rivalry, people adapt to the situation (cf. Rotker 2002a; Koonings and Kruijt 1999). Changing their daily habits to minimise risks, they meet at friends' houses instead of in public spaces to avoid stray bullets, for example, and adhere to the rule of silence. As noted earlier, such self-protection alienates them from the state, but tightens social fabric at the micro-level. What is striking in Tumaco is that people deliberately do

not show an interest in their friends' situation, an extreme response to the blurred lines to protect themselves. A resident of Tumaco (2012) explained:

Between friends or neighbours one doesn't know what illicit activity they are involved in, but you notice it if someone arrives with a luxury car, for example. Nevertheless, I don't care if he bought it with money or with drugs or if he won it in the lottery. I don't care. And I better not ask.

Green (1994, 239) contends that terror-imposed silence fosters social consensus because the community is jointly silenced in the face of an external threat (see also Suárez-Orozco 1990). This can strengthen community-level social fabric because, in solidarity, community members are more likely to cope with the threat. In tactical alliances, terror emerges from within society: people's indifference in Tumaco impedes social consensus and caring even between friends, questioning any "civility".

Also, blaming the victim reinforces the loss of "civility" and hence nuances consequences for citizen security differently to other arrangements. "'Just world thinking' may become more tempting as the world [...] become[s] more arbitrary", notes Keen (2006, 131), due to "the allure of certainty in uncertain times" (Keen 2006, 130). Under dispute of preponderance people blame victims who do not stick to the rule of not getting involved and in spot sales those who do not avoid certain places. In Tumaco, I witnessed this behaviour when I took a *mototaxi* to drive from one interview to the next one. We passed by a completely destroyed shop with people watching the scene. I asked the *mototaxi* driver what had happened. He replied a grenade had been thrown into the shop some minutes before. He commented it was the shop owners' fault because he had not paid the protection money. He was punished for not having paid. He did not comply with the rules. However, most of the time, under quickly changing short-term alliances that are unpredictable because they rely on the group leaders' personal bonds, rules are not clear and not-getting-involved is hardly feasible. Victims arbitrarily get involved without knowing it. Clear-cut reasons for the victim to be blamed hardly exist. Nevertheless, as the following extract from an interview with a civil society leader from Tumaco (2012) illustrates, people blame them, arguably to be more certain about their own security:

- Me:* *How is the population affected [by the breakdown of tactical alliances]? [...]*
- Leader:* Indiscriminate assassinations do not exist. Only if someone ends up assassinated due to a stray bullet, other assassinations usually occur due to two specific actions: first, because people are human rights defenders and with their discourse [...], they affect [the VNSAs'] agenda because they put corruption on the agenda, or second, contractors who go into the drug trafficking business. They put crime and criminals on the public agenda. This civil society member becomes a target to be eliminated [...]. Second, the person who is mixed up with them [is "killable"]. Someone who [...] did something he/she shouldn't have done and therefore is assassinated. Many *mototaxistas* (motorbike taxi drivers) died here. Assassinated.
- Me:* *Why were they assassinated?*
- Leader:* [...] We know little about the assassinations of the ten dead *mototaxistas* in the last three or four months. Which one was a good person, an honest citizen, and which a criminal? However, the public perception is they had something to do with it. Either they did not get along well, or they got something wrong or they did not want to do a certain thing, which could be used in evidence against the armed actor. Therefore, the best thing for them to do always is to clean up.
- Me:* *Does this happen at night or only in certain neighbourhoods?*
- Leader:* Anywhere, at any time. It depends on the crime's seriousness, on the urgency of committing the murder, on the extent to which the citizen who is going to be assassinated is protected, on his life-style. It can be more difficult to kill him quickly, therefore either they have to take their time or they have to wait for a suitable moment. In the end, whether it's day or night doesn't matter here. Most murders in Tumaco occur during the day.

People commented that the dead *mototaxistas* were killed for a reason even though not getting involved is virtually impossible, especially for young men, since they are vulnerable to being selected by VNSAs to do jobs for them. This is also reflected in local media articles on killings which highlight whether the murdered person had a criminal record, suggesting that he or she must have been involved in something bad. This seems to justify these killings as these people deserve it more (cf. S. Cohen 2001, 71). Considering every victim a perpetrator corroborates the loss of civility.

Another coping strategy that thwarts civility is normalising violence (Besteman 2002). According to Philippe Bourgois (2010, 19), normalised violence renders violence invisible to those within and outside the community and generates social indifference. "A bit complicated", was a frequent answer I received when inquiring about the current situation. Asking the civil society leader in the continuation of the above interview how people perceived the frequent killings in Tumaco, he responded:

[...] There is often fear, but the next day the fear disappears. One could almost say fear disappears completely with the individual's funeral. They bury the person and anxiety ends. Only the close family and close friends continue to be scared because they don't know where this might lead. The dead person's close friends are most scared, more than the family because the family generally is not involved in the crime, only one family member. Yet this family member has friends. Therefore, friends are most scared because they are involved as well or their friend was, but due to their friendship the armed actors believe that they know something and assassinate them.

This normalisation has led to a situation in Tumaco in which, after a weekend, people chat in a way that perpetuates the “banality of violence”, as Pécaut (1999, 142) calls it, and obscures terror (\*civil society leader of Tumaco, Quito (EC)) 2012):

“Hey, how many deaths happened between Friday and Saturday?” “In the Ciudadela they snuffed out four, in the Morro two more, let me see, in total, 10, 15!”



**Figure 29: Funeral procession for a young killed man in Tumaco, Colombia**

Normalisation of violence also occurs under other arrangement types, but under tactical alliances it is particularly important as a mechanism to improve perceptions of security – at the expense of civility. Killings are not necessarily as “spectacular” as the example of the tongue used as a tie to deter people from interfering in spot sales (cf. Goldstein 2004), or as brutal as the example of paramilitaries in combat killing people with chainsaws. They simply happen. Respect for life disappears because losing it is nothing special.

Although adapting daily habits reduces physical insecurity, and victim blaming and normalising violence serve to reduce perceptions of insecurity, uncertainty persists. Quickly changing allegiances impede rule formation, making life a constant struggle of mistrust not only of the

unknown, but also the known. Das and Kleinman (2000, 8) describe such “loss of context” in the following way:

As faith in trusted categories disappears, there is a feeling of extreme contingency and vulnerability in carrying out everyday activities [...]. Everyday life is then something that has to be recovered in the face of a skepticism that surrounds it like a ditch. One is not safe simply because one never left home.

While in the absence of an arrangement everyday activities may help life continue, under tactical alliances, the absence of rules entails constant scepticism, or mistrust, even in everyday life, undermining civility.

### 6.2.3 The Grey Zone

The context of tactical alliances in La Guajira differs from Tumaco in three aspects: La Guajira is Wayúu territory, it has been historically used by drug-traffickers and contrabandists, and state forces are less present. As I will explain below, these aspects contribute to making it a grey zone.

Constant shifts in allegiances and frequent emergences of new groups are confusing: since the AUC's demobilisation in 2006, VNSAs in La Guajira have been constantly reconfiguring alliances (\*civil society representative, Valledupar (CO) 2012b). The Northern Bloc's Counterinsurgent Front Wayúu, later called Alta Guajira, did not demobilise and consolidated its presence in the region (SAT 2010d, 3). Other groups emerged to benefit from illegal economic activities. In 2008, Alta Guajira was supposedly constituted by 40 men wearing army uniforms with long-range weapons, mostly patrolling in Uribia municipality (Secretariado de Pastoral Social 2008, 9). Alias “Pablo” established alliances with other illegal structures and subcontracted and co-opted networks of criminal bands and killers in Maicao, Dibulla and Riohacha. He had a tactical alliance with the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC), which consolidated in La Guajira after the paramilitary demobilisation. This group, later named Urabeños (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Maicao (CO) 2012), declined after its leader was captured on 15 April 2009 (SAT 2010d, 3). Simultaneously, the Paisas, the military wing of the criminal group Oficina de Cobro de Envigado, came from the Magdalena region to La Guajira (Gamboa Martínez 2012, 22).

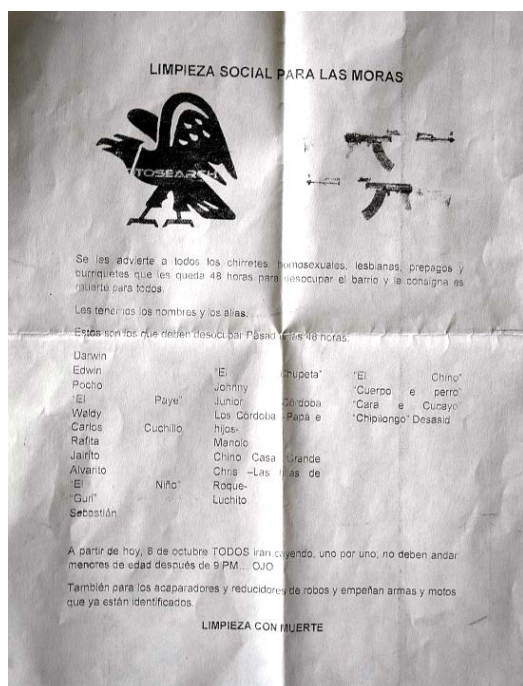
Alias “Pablo” quit the alliance with the Urabeños (Gaitanistas) in mid-2009 to establish another one with the Paisas (SAT 2010d, 3; \*civil society representative from Riohacha, Valledupar (CO) 2012), provoking a dispute between Alta Guajira in alliance with the Paisas, and the Urabeños (Gamboa Martínez 2012, 24).<sup>99</sup> Reportedly, in 2010 Alta Guajira also had disputes with the Águilas Negras, however, the Águilas Negras presumably are, or work for, the Urabeños (SAT 2010d, 19). In the same year, the Paisas, specialised in contract killings, and the militarily powerful Rastrojos had a tactical alliance in Cesar and in La Guajira to jointly fight the Urabeños (\*civil society representative from Riohacha, Valledupar (CO) 2012). Later the Rastrojos absorbed the Paisas. Alias “Pablo” was captured in 2010 and extradited to the US in 2012 (Verdadabierta 2012), after which Alta Guajira was dismantled. The Paisas had virtually disappeared in the region, the Urabeños were weakened and the Rastrojos were going into La Guajira (Gamboa Martínez 2012).

In 2012 I talked to a civil society representative of Riohacha (2012). Despite following the group closely, she was not sure who was allying with whom:

They started to distribute pamphlets [advising on social cleansings] about two years ago when the Gaitanistas started to appear. I remember that in May [the groups] were like mixed up and they always organised marches and whatever. Around this time of the year around two or three years ago [the Gaitanistas] even threatened the *personero* (municipal ombudsman) and the Ombudsman’s Office [...]. One year later they started to have these alliances, again many killings occurred amongst themselves. They also started to attack and co-opt the demobilised ones, including those who didn’t want to take up arms. Many dead bodies appeared [...]. I’m not sure who allied with whom, but nowadays we hear about Urabeños, Rastrojos and Águilas Negras. Recently a Wayúu family said the Águilas Negras would threaten them near the border, but in the city centre of Riohacha, in all the city centres of the municipality there are the Urabeños and the Rastrojos.

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<sup>99</sup> Group names change across locations. (cf. SAT 2009a).



**Figure 30: Social cleansing pamphlet, Colombia (anonymous interviewee)**

The situation is also complex because almost half of La Guajira's population are indigenous Wayúu (see Chapter Four). In 2009, when alias "Pablo" broke the agreement with the Urabeños, gradually more locals became involved in subsequent disputes because the Wayúu saw an opportunity to oust his group and return the territory to the natives. Some of them took revenge. According to one account, the Wayúu accused alias "Pablo"'s group of promoting the persecution of the Wayúu by the armed forces (SAT 2010d, 14). According to another account, a Wayúu group, calling

themselves Águilas Negras, which had worked with alias "Pablo", had lost a cocaine shipment and was excluded by him from further businesses (\*civil society representative from Riohacha, Valledupar (CO) 2012). The VNSAs used the historic intra-ethnic rivalries of the Wayúu clans to draw certain clans on their side and help them fight the others (SAT 2010d, 14). The following anecdote by a Wayúu leader (2012a) in Maicao demonstrates how personal considerations that prompt individuals to engage in tactical alliances provoked one Wayúu community's involvement in the violent activities and another one's victimisation and displacement:

The story with FARC's involvement [in alliances with other VNSAs in La Guajira] is very funny. This was due to a well-known leader sought by the DAS and the state forces [...]. He was from La Guajira. The man was rebellious, he had a similar story to the man they captured in Venezuela a while ago, alias "Loco Barrera" [...]. After belonging to the military he belonged to the paramilitaries and then he escaped [...], went back into the army [...], escaped again with arms and uniforms and joined FARC. When he was going to escape from FARC he ended up injured with an ugly scar in his face...He practically ended up being obliged to be with FARC. Supposedly, this is his destiny, but the man has an obsession of getting rid of the scar because it was known by the state forces. They looked for him everywhere, but he [...] made fun of them [...]. They tried to find his face, they were after him, close on his heels, but never caught him. Never. Until he tried to have surgery [...], but never did it [...]. A drug-trafficker found out that he was looking for money to get rid of the scar. Therefore, [the drug-trafficker], with a group of traffickers, contacted him and offered him 30 million pesos [to do a job for them]. This was how he entered our community and the other displaced community. This was how he meddled there. [...] He came with 40, 45 men [...]. His own men were 15, but all the others who

were the most affected ones [were Wayúu]. His brother who was the group's sub-commander died. [...] He ended up disabled [...] and some of his men were killed, but he forced these compatriots to get involved. The situation was going to be complicated for the drug-trafficker who had sent them because [the man with the scar] was going to tell who sent him to this *ranchería*. [...] In the end I think he died [...] with an almost rotten body [...], he never managed to have surgery on his face.

Through the context of short-lived tactical alliances involving indigenous Wayúu, local drug-traffickers and powerful post-demobilised groups, life in La Guajira has become a grey zone. Primo Levi (2004, 83) describes an extreme “gray zone”, the Third Reich's concentration camps in which victims themselves became victimisers:

The enemy was all around but also inside, the “we” lost its limits, the contenders were not two, one could not discern a single frontier but rather many confused, perhaps innumerable frontiers, which stretched between each of us.

Confusion of the boundaries between perpetrators and victims has made life in La Guajira indecipherable. Juan Carlos Gamboa Martínez (2012, 24–25) divides the VNSAs' *modus operandi* that contributes to the blurring into two broad streams. First, they maintain coercion networks through controlling micro-trafficking and illegal drugs distribution in the internal market, micro-extortion, selective killings, intimidation and social control. To sustain these networks, they hire individuals as informants, contract killers and messengers, as in Tumaco. Second, the VNSAs engage in more sophisticated operations of transporting, stocking, monitoring and shipping cocaine, money laundering and managing the logistics of these activities. To camouflage these operations, they have established civilian straw-men networks across the region. When a tactical alliance breaks down, those who have worked for one group or the other no longer know whom to obey, who will pay their salary and whom to trust. Some youth groups have started to work independently, using the name of a more powerful group, such as the Águilas Negras, a practice common in other conflict contexts as well (cf. Keen 2005, 50), which adds to confusion, uncertainty and insecurity.

While the Wayúu's exposure to violence is arguably similar to that of other communities under tactical alliances, their culture reduces the visibility of the impacts on citizen security. Many

displacements of Wayúu families within La Guajira, to urban centres such as Maicao and Riohacha, and across the border to Venezuela, have never been recorded. Wayúu families do not always denounce displacements to Colombian state authorities because they have their own Wayúu institutions for support (SAT 2010d, 19). Violent deaths of Wayúu often remain unnoticed because according to Wayúu traditions non-Wayúu are not allowed to touch the dead body; instead, the body is brought as quickly as possible to the family cemetery to be buried according to their customs (SAT 2010d, 5).

Following Gambetta (2009, 35–36), both in Tumaco and La Guajira one would expect that VNSAs try to reduce costly violence when engaging in alliances. Criminals use signals to communicate because “the tough guy will scare people who deal with him but may also scare them off” (Gambetta 2009, 35). VNSAs need each other for their business deals and to assert themselves against other parties, particularly the state. Yet contrary to the mafia context, in which a limited number of people are considered suitable to become business partners, in marginalised borderlands the supply of groups and recruits is high, making it easy to find another business partner if the first one shies away due to the VNSA’s cruel reputation. In La Guajira in particular, the presence of state forces is low, further reducing the need for a long-term ally and hence increasing the likelihood of violent breakdowns. Furthermore, the groups are less likely to be scared off: many interviewees said they did not fear death. Having lived in a war context for decades, violent death becomes part of everyday life (Pécaut 1999, 147). As noted earlier, committing violence can enhance feelings of pride. Yet being killed while defending one’s groups’ interests can also be a source of pride for the one who is killed one and their family members. Understanding why group members accept costly violence in quickly shifting alliances has to be considered in light of subjectivity, “the felt interior experience of the person that includes his or her positions in a field of relational power” with which each individual experiences violence differently (Das and Kleinman 2000, 1). A woman in one of Caracas’ marginalised neighbourhoods ridden by gang violence explained to me she would rather have her son die by the age of 25 as a famous gang leader than see him growing old unemployed and

without respect from the community. For those *forced* to engage in or suffer violence however, the interior experience seems not to count.

### 6.3 Subcontractual Relationships

Like spot sales and barter agreements, subcontractual relationships are based on shared interests. Yet while in the former, VNSAs strive for material or financial benefit, in subcontractual relationships the aim itself is often social control, making impacts on citizen security more direct.<sup>100</sup> The high group interdependence due to the staggered nature of subcontractual relationships matters for citizen security. Given the intermediary (subcontracted group) between the victim and the intellectual perpetrator (contractor), it is difficult to identify the latter. The uncertainty over who imposes rules and when they change increases citizens' vulnerability: the contractor can decide to subcontract another party or the subcontracted group can decide to work for another contractor. They may impose new rules and random actors may claim to be the new contractor or subcontracted party.

VNSAs subcontract local groups when they are not familiar with the local context. Both parties benefit from their comparative advantages. For example, not knowing Tumaco as well as Colombian VNSAs, in 2011 the Mexican Sinaloa Cartel supposedly subcontracted the Águilas Negras in Tumaco to get access to this strategic port. Working with the Sinaloa Cartel protected the Águilas Negras from enemies and increased profits.

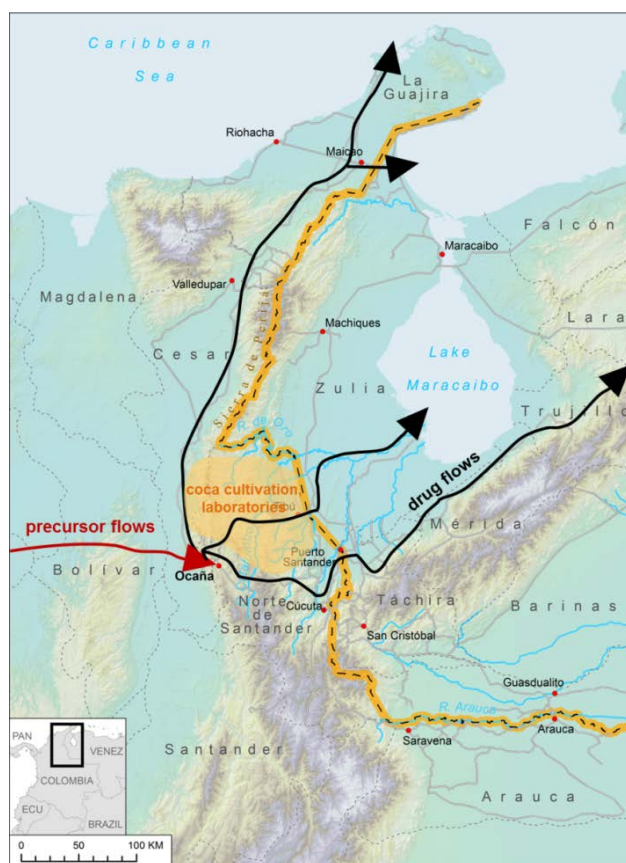
Subcontracting youth gangs (as opposed to individual teenagers as in tactical alliances) serves VNSAs because they are easy to subcontract. This is illustrated by the subcontractual relationships of Rastrojos and Urabeños with youth gangs in Maicao. A civil society representative from Valledupar (2012b) explained:

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<sup>100</sup> For cross-border subcontractual relationships, as in San Lorenzo, see Chapter Eight.

In Maicao it is obvious that they [Rastrojos and Urabeños] contract gangs. The typical case is the young boys who can't study. They give them motorbikes and say: work for us as a *mototaxista* (driver of a motorbike taxi), but you inform us via radio of movements in the city and when we need you for certain jobs you do them for us. This way they contracted the gang of youngsters. At a certain time *mototaxismo* was a strategy of these structures to do intelligence work. The *mototaxistas* collected the extortion money. They also contracted them in specific neighbourhoods of Maicao to provide security, but not security for the neighbourhood; security for the houses where they planned their operations [...].

The youth gangs receive material rewards and benefit from the post-demobilised groups' protection from law enforcement measures. The post-demobilised groups benefit from the intelligence provided by the youngsters. Also if arrested, underage persons receive less severe sentences, reducing the likelihood that they will cooperate with law enforcement agents against the post-demobilised groups (\*civil society representative, Valledupar (CO) 2012b).<sup>101</sup>



Post-demobilised groups also subcontract youth gangs in Ocaña in Norte de Santander. Although 200 kilometres away by road, Ocaña is influenced by the border. Many locals are involved in smuggling of gasoline and supplies, especially food. Ocaña is a strategic drug trafficking transit point that connects central Colombia, especially the South of Bolívar, with the Caribbean and the border to Venezuela, thus multiple VNSA groups are present. As Map 14 illustrates, also the precursors to process coca leaves

**Map 14: Ocaña's strategic location for drug trafficking routes**

<sup>101</sup> For adults, in Colombia the average penalty for homicide is 13 to 25 years in prison. For teenagers between 14 and 18 years the average is two to eight years in detention centres (Law 599 2000, Art. 103; Law 1098 2006, Art. 187).

Catatumbo pass through Ocaña.

In Ocaña, small-scale contraband is overshadowed by large-scale gasoline smuggling and the drug business controlled by FARC, ELN, EPL and post-demobilised groups. Gasoline is smuggled under the auspices of organised groups, supposedly controlled by narco-broker Megateo (cf. Chapter Seven). The business is facilitated by corrupt police and military officials who, despite multiple checkpoints between Cúcuta and Ocaña, do not stop the flows of smuggled goods and gasoline nor check trucks for illegal drugs.

As a human rights defender in Ocaña (2012) explained to me, subcontracting youth gangs serves VNSAs to maintain power and minimise attention:

*Me:* *How is the population affected by these groups?*

Human rights defender: Above all, the population is affected by uncertainty. These armed groups have dedicated themselves to a new misdeed here in Ocaña: youth gangs. They have started to give them money, drugs and arms to fuel anxiety in the communes to control the population of Ocaña and it is happening in the whole province, in all of Catatumbo.

*Me:* *What is the relation between the youth gangs and the BACRIM?*

Human rights defender: The paramilitaries have links with youth gangs. This is a way of destabilising the harmony that exists, and to disguise the selective deaths that they produce. They simply say they are produced by gangs operating in the zone. Put differently, the gangs are an “appendix” of the illegal groups [...] used to do the jobs of threats, pamphlets, assassinations and contract killing. The illegal groups finance them [...]. They are an extension created to disguise the deaths because we have many violent deaths and all of them are related to drug trafficking, most of them.

*Me:* *Were there any deaths recently?*

Human rights defender: Lately there were few deaths, but there were. Everything is related to the precursors, and the payment of *gramaje* [taxes on cocaine] or of *peaje* [road tolls] to pass the drugs. Most violent deaths in the region are related to drug trafficking.

*Me:* *People who are not involved in drug trafficking are not affected?*

Human rights defender: This is the most interesting part: the gangs don't argue amongst themselves. They created these gangs, but this is a farce. Yes, it is true that there was a conflict among youngsters, but they were students from one high school, fighting with those from another high school. Conversely, the gangs are armed. These are gangs from peripheral neighbourhoods, from settlements of victims of violence, forced displacement, disappearances, rapes. These neighbourhoods constitute breeding grounds for violent groups. [...] These gangs don't fight among each other; they exist in every neighbourhood to exert control over certain people [...].

*Me:* *Are there only deaths when someone doesn't pay?*  
Human rights defender: Exactly, because they don't fight with each other. [...] The gangs are divided in different zones of territorial control, but the *Autodefensas* have the overall control, therefore problems like in cities such as Cali when someone crosses a border do not exist. Here they coexist with the guerrillas. They all negotiate now with the drug-traffickers. Everything revolves around the drug business.

Subcontractual relationships obscure the fact of the violence originating from post-demobilised groups: insecurity in Ocaña is perceived to be a local problem. Trivialising insecurity by attributing it to youth gangs means that powerful VNSAs can operate without meeting countermeasures from the state. If the state acts against a youth gang, the VNSAs subcontract another one to exert control. Intimidated by these dynamics, to protect themselves community members confirm that youth gangs constitute the problem, even if they know that more powerful actors are behind it, or they adhere to the rule of silence. Add to this people's mistrust of state authorities due to their involvement in illegal cross-border activities and the police officials' links with VNSAs. These factors distance community members from the state and prevent them from participating in contributing to citizen security.

The human rights defender revealed another function of the youth gangs:

The climate of Ocaña is pleasant, people are nice. Therefore, what do the big leaders [of the post-demobilised groups] do? They bring their families [...] to live and study in Ocaña because we have good schools. This is another function of the youth gangs: protect the families of these gentlemen who live in Ocaña. [...] The worst thing about this is the acceptance of the community which doesn't have anything to do with drug trafficking. They accept that these persons do harm to this region yet welcome them as if they formed part of their family.

People fail to take collective action against post-demobilised groups and the impacts of the drug business because they consider insecurity to be related to youth gangs, or fear retaliation ordered by post-demobilised groups but executed by youth gangs, reinforcing the image of youth gangs being the problem. Subcontractual relationships between powerful VNSAs and youth gangs distort the population's perception of violence in their communities, obscure root causes and jeopardise those speaking out against it. While in these cases locals may guess the contractor's identity, in cases of remote subcontracting, for example, this is impossible. In Maracaibo and

other cities, *pranes*, criminal leaders who control prisons, remotely subcontract criminal groups from within the prisons to extort or kill for them (\*journalist, Maracaibo (VE) 2012). In the context of subcontracted groups it is difficult to identify a logic of appropriateness, fuelling uncertainty and hence perceptions of insecurity among citizens.

#### 6.4 Conclusion

In all short-term arrangements, citizens are somewhat uncertain of how to ensure their physical security, leading to interpersonal mistrust which erodes the social fabric. In *spot sales and barter agreements* citizens can partly adapt their behaviour to the VNSAs' economic interests. In financial spot sales, citizens can avoid the space where these take place, if limited as in Alejandría, to ensure their security. In material spot sales and barter agreements, VNSAs require citizens as a labour force and to access infrastructure, which generates violence if citizens do not comply with the VNSAs' demands. It is scarcely feasible for citizens to protect themselves through avoidance strategies. The constant reconfigurations of *tactical alliances* produce ambiguity as to whose rules to comply with to protect oneself. VNSA members and bystanders are intertwined, fuelling mistrust and provoking victim blaming and the normalisation of violence. Civility, a core element of citizen security, gets lost. In *subcontractual relationships* citizens can protect themselves by abiding by VNSA-imposed rules, since the VNSAs do not rely directly on them yet the rules can be unclear if the contractor is not known. If the subcontractual relationship is between a powerful group and a youth gang, insecurity is likely to be trivialised since despite imposing social control, the powerful contractor is not visible and hence not accountable, making citizens particularly vulnerable to physical violence.

In the long run, the impacts on citizen security of short-term arrangements, particularly of tactical alliances, call into question citizenship. Given the lack of opportunities, the ubiquity of violence and suspicion, illicit activities and violence have become common to earn money and solve problems. A betrayed man can talk to a VNSA leader about his wife's affair to contract a killer to

eliminate the woman's lover. As a civil society leader from Tumaco (2012) put it:

Here it is possible to contract people for any kind of services: "I want you to kill that guy because I owe him money. I'll give you some money, he dies and I don't have to pay him back!"

Life is worth between 20 and 50 USD, the cost for contract killers in San Lorenzo (González Carranza 2008, 221). Respect for the right to live has been in decline, reducing the possibilities for collective action. In Tumaco, there have been protest marches to attract the state's attention to the situation, but these activities have produced little change.

Unlike where there is an absence of an arrangement where the availability of rules to ensure security reduces mistrust, in short-term arrangements interpersonal mistrust and uncertainty erode the social fabric at the community level and across regions. This impedes the collective action necessary for citizens to participate in designing citizen security policies. Only at a micro-level such as the immediate family do people trust each other. High homicide rates and the involvement of youth lead to the stigmatisation of entire communities that become isolated from the rest of the citizenry and the state.

## 7. IMPACTS OF LONG-TERM ARRANGEMENTS AMONG VNSAS ON CITIZEN

### SECURITY

*When two neighbours have a dispute, they don't say: "I'll call the police!" They say: "I'll call the guerrillas!", or "I'll call the paramilitaries!" This is how people threaten each other.*

Civil society representative from Valledupar, Colombia (2012b)

*They even decide on couple problems. The woman doesn't go to the prefect [...]. Instead she goes to the guerrilla commander to tell him that her husband beat her. If a boy has problems with a teacher at school he goes to the commander so that he calls the teacher.*

Citizen of the Venezuelan border zone (2012)

Located in the fuzzy continuum's upper right corner, long-term arrangements produce comparatively few incidents of physical violence yet entail social control over communities who adapt their behaviour to VNSA-defined rules. They comprise transactional supply chain relationships, strategic alliances, pacific coexistence and preponderance relations. These arrangements differ in the level of group interdependence and the mechanisms to reduce inter-group mistrust – personal bonds with a third party, shared values or power – that are reflected in the impacts on citizen security. Rather than rebelling against the state as Gurr's (1970) work would suggest, citizens under long-term arrangements tend to turn to another authority when the state fails to provide these opportunities and lacks legitimacy. This can entail shadow citizenship and shadow citizen security. Governance provided by VNSAs fosters what I call a shadow community which orients its behaviour towards VNSA-imposed rules, as opposed to a state-oriented citizenry of regions where the state overrides or competes with another actor's authority. As the communities have a tendency to normalise the presence of these actors and their undemocratic practices, these repercussions are difficult to observe or quantify, perpetuating their invisibility to those outside the shadow community.

#### 7.1 Transactional Supply Chain Relationships

In transactional supply chain relationships the VNSAs' mistrust of the community makes shadow citizen security hard to attain. The VNSAs' unresponsiveness and the communities' fear of

punishment for non-compliance with the VNSAs' rules hamper the VNSAs' legitimacy, especially when punishment is perceived to be arbitrary. None of what Weber (1992) calls the three inner justifications, or legitimations of domination – traditional, charismatic or legal domination – applies when this domination is based on power alone rather than authority (see also R. Hall and Biersteker 2002). The VNSAs can counterbalance this trend by providing (illegal) economic opportunities that increase the communities' tolerance margin vis-à-vis undemocratic rules.

### 7. 1.1 Mistrust of the Population

Inter-group mistrust sets transactional supply chain relationships apart from other long-term arrangements and, as displayed by the fuzzy continuum, aligns them with short-term arrangements characterised by mistrust *omnium contra omnes*.<sup>102</sup> Pécaut (1999, 154) notes that “even in the absence of any disputes between armed protagonists [...], it is possible for banal, everyday violence to be transformed into terror”, which mostly affects civilian populations, and that, “having become used to the rule of silence, the population at large learns to trust no one”. The local population knows about agreements between groups but, since these are made through brokers, not necessarily their identities. In this context of non-confrontational yet persistent mistrust, threats or killings of relatives or of community members rather than of members of the other group are common.<sup>103</sup> A human rights defender (2012) from Norte de Santander explained:

Human rights defender: Nowadays the calamity is worse because there is a Machiavellian agreement between the guerrillas and the narco-terrorist groups as the government calls them [laughter]. The guerrillas produce and the groups that previously were the paras and are now the illicit groups market. There is a pact between them which is more diabolical for the civilian population than before, and in the long run the population in this zone of Catatumbo is severely affected. If they do not agree with the drug commercialisation they have to flee. As of January 2012, 12,500 people were displaced in the municipality [...]. It is worse [if there is a pact] because people don't know who they are dealing with. Previously, when the guerrillas or the paramilitaries were there they knew how to work with them. Now, anyone arrives in an area and identifies him or herself simply as the boss. The other groups who sell retaliate

<sup>102</sup> For the problem of mistrust see e.g. Putnam et al. (1993) and Boix and Posner (1996).

<sup>103</sup> Field notes from conversations in Puerto Asís and other parts of Bajo Putumayo, March 2012.

against people because they say those who arrived didn't have permission. This is worse for the population because they don't know who they are currently living with in the area.

*Me: Do the groups identify themselves? [...]*

Human rights defender: They say they are in charge and that's it. [...] They don't have a clearly defined political identity anymore as existed earlier when there was a rightist or extreme-rightist political identity. [...] Nowadays, the mid-level officials that stayed free of the self-defence groups' peace process of 2005 set up business themselves [...]. They make and break their deals, now that they live with the guerrillas.

*Me: How do they make these agreements? Do they negotiate?*

Human rights defender: Yes, the hardest part is that in addition to the guerrillas and the illicit groups, Catatumbo's law itself (state forces) plays a role. The law knows the routes, how to get the precursors, and they bribe with money and belong to the same game. Those who do not agree not only with any of the two, but of the three groups leave the region or die. This is what is most unfortunate about what is happening in Catatumbo.

*Me: Are there many threats?*

Human rights defender: Many threats, many, many threats. Human rights defender leaders, everyone, there is no-one who has not been threatened. We are all threatened. This has been serious and it is difficult because the Ministry does not give guarantees to exert civilian control over the armed actors in the region, which is what we do in defence of human rights.

*Me: What type of threats?*

Human rights defender: Text messages, calls, and in person, they approach you and talk tough to you.

*Me: Do they tell you who they are?*

Human rights defender: No, they show you their weapon and then you don't ask. The most difficult part is when you report it to the public prosecutor. If anyone, a leader or an ordinary person makes a complaint you first report to the public prosecutor or to the National Police. They ask you: "Against whom, tell me against whom?" Or they ask you what the person was wearing... You say the guy had a gun and that you don't know because in that moment you only see the weapon, nothing else, you don't see neither the face nor the name.

*Me: Are there other cases in which they want the people to know who they are?*

Human rights defender: No [...]. Here, they only care about the illicit drug business.

While in other long-term arrangements VNSAs are mostly concerned about state infiltration, in transactional supply chain relationships informants from other VNSAs constitute an additional threat. When I talked to an ex-FARC couple (2011b), I noted how this mistrust entailed suspicion.

In 2006, the man was supervisor in a cocaine laboratory for the first processing stages, in La Victoria, Nariño:

- Me:* *Who was in charge of [the laboratories]?*  
 Ex-guerrilla husband: The guerrillas, but inside there were civilians workers. I was with them for two years as a supervisor. [...] We were there to support them. Sometimes people came; therefore we protected them with arms...The laboratories are practically theirs (FARC's), because they use them to finance themselves [...]
- Me:* *What did they do with the cocaine after the laboratories?*  
 Ex-guerrilla wife: They pass it on to other countries. There are people in charge of this [...]. This was in 2006, our kid was two and a half years old.  
 Ex-guerrilla husband: We were working in a laboratory [...]. There were infiltrators [among the civilians who worked in the *cocina*]. Infiltrators always tried to join. We noticed that there were two guys...  
 Ex-guerrilla wife: [interrupts] They had only spent two months there, no more!  
 Ex-guerrilla husband: ...they belonged to the paramilitaries and later they (FARC) realised it and they killed them.
- Me:* *So they were...*  
 Ex-guerrilla husband: Civilian workers! Around one month later, they burnt the laboratories, they burnt everything.
- Me:* *The paramilitaries?*  
 Ex-guerrilla wife: The army.  
 Ex-guerrilla husband: Through them [the paramilitaries]. They arrived straight away. It was a hidden place that no-one could find, but they came straight there. After that I decided to leave. Through my brother, because the truth is [...] if you kill someone they kill you. [...] Therefore we left. In the *cocina* there were also civilians. There were around six civilians at the entrance and six of the organisation and three with radios inside. [...]

My conversation with the female ex-combatant (2011) mentioned in the previous chapter, who was first FARC, then a paramilitary member and also worked along the Colombia-Ecuador border, corroborates that FARC and paramilitaries generally mistrust each other. Yet they are linked in the cocaine supply chain via a narco-broker, or as she calls them, “mafia” or “drug-trafficker”. Contrary to Felbab-Brown’s (2010, 182) argument, referring to Peru in the 1990s, that the relationship between armed groups and these brokers “falls apart just as easily as it comes together”, it is a relatively stable business “agreement”:

- Me:* *How was the relationship between paras and FARC [...]?*  
 Ex-combatant: As far as I was concerned and according to how they treated us, the only relationship that existed was the one between my husband and me because he was *paraco* and I was *guerrillera*. I had already left [FARC] when I met him. [...] The rest did not have any relationships. As FARC operate on the basis that they are against the army and against the paramilitaries, the paramilitaries cannot meet with the *guerrilleros* or else they die.
- Me:* *How about the drug business?*  
 Ex-combatant: This is like parasitism. FARC protect, but the paramilitaries take over. There can be combats, but the paramilitaries take the profits. Because the paramilitaries have better access to the cities, they are less persecuted, less bothered whereas the *guerrilleros* are bothered a lot. There is a difference.

- The *guerrilleros* have to hide. The paramilitary doesn't. [...] The paramilitary simply doesn't reveal his identity.
- Me:* *Were there links, for example that they handed over paste or [...] cocaine [...]?*
- Ex-combatant: From what I understand: no. There was no relationship, neither links in the drug business nor arms. What we acquired here, we acquired it through us, through our commanders, but I never heard or noticed them saying "Okay, we have an agreement with this FARC Front so that they let us pass", no.
- Me:* *With the mafia?*
- Ex-combatant: Yes. [...] The paras have contact with the drug-traffickers, with whom they make [...] agreements in arms and drugs. Regarding sales they usually don't go lower than paste. FARC process the leaves, they always process them. But who generally makes profit is who gets hold of the rest, the paste. They do the marketing [...]. FARC always sow, process and pass on. Each one, each group has their contacts and has their ways and means, and generally a laboratory. The paramilitaries found the laboratory so FARC had to run away and they left it there fully operational [...]. The army or the paramilitaries take some of the drug and burn the rest to let everyone know that they burnt everything, but they take the paste. [...] It also depends on the commanders, not all of them are corrupt. Some maintain their ethics, their standards, a kind of transparency and others don't.
- Me:* *Were there cases in which FARC sold them to the mafiosi and then the paramilitaries bought them from the mafia?*
- Ex-combatant: Possibly [...]. I noticed that we dealt with people from the mafia or with people specialised in selling arms.

When I accompanied a diplomatic mission in the Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands, I witnessed how mistrust in regions with cocaine supply chain relationships produces tension in a seemingly harmless situation. I captured this situation in my field notes:

We travelled to [the farm near the international border] to talk to the community council's president. Upon arrival we first went to see the river and the beautiful landscape. At that moment several canoes hastily took off from the riverside near us and crossed the river to the other side. We then met the council president and other people outside his house next to the border river. When we were talking to the council president, some people started to move cattle across the path to the river. My colleague and I stood up to watch them. The president reacted harshly: "Don't take pictures!" We had not even taken out our cameras and all we could see was seemingly peaceful countryside. A woman complained to the president "But the other guy is taking pictures as well!", and another man who was taking pictures quickly put his camera away.

Presumably, they thought we were informants or someone else could cause harm with the pictures. I made two observations which support this hypothesis and suggest that these people were guerrillas or guerrilla collaborators involved in transactional supply chain relationships using canoes to traffic merchandise: first, there was a hierarchy. Given how the woman treated the president, it is likely that he was a high-ranking guerrilla. Second, the farm was located in a

strategic zone for illegal cross-border activities. The cattle were probably stolen on one side of the border and smuggled to the other but, given the rapid departure of the canoes, they were trying to hide something else such as cocaine trafficking.

On another occasion, two friends working for a humanitarian organisation accompanied me from Machiques, Zulia, to a village further towards the mountainous border area. On our way, we were stopped by uniformed armed men, which, according to my friends, was unusual on that route. When they saw the decal of the humanitarian organisation on our car and one of my friends showed his employee identity card, they let us pass. My friends were not sure which group they belonged to. The men did not identify themselves and did not seem to trust us civilians until they saw the decal on the car. Such mistrust *omnium contra omnes* produces what Taussig (2004), referring to Colombia in the 1980s, calls “situations of terror as usual”: contradictory and inexplicable factors that fuel fear of the unknown.

Another example demonstrates how the VNSAs mistrust even clerics who are generally respected in the Colombian conflict. In 2012 a cleric (2012) explained that FARC Front 29 which ran that region in the Colombian-Ecuadorian borderlands had gathered 80 photographs showing him in numerous locations during different activities over the last six months, the time he had been living there. They claimed to have 1,120 pictures of a colleague who had been living in the region for longer.

Cleric: They had pictures of me in City A when I was in the supermarket eating ice cream with two friends. They had pictures of me in City B and City C. I asked them: “Are you going to print a journal with this or what? Give me a copy because I don’t have these pictures!” They said “We can’t”. Pictures during a service in City D, during a service in City E.

Me: *Why did they show you the pictures?*

Cleric: To tell us that we are marked, that they gathered intelligence on us...and I was scared...this is a way of terrifying people, too, isn’t it?

Low levels of trust correlate with high levels of fear (Parks and Hulbert 1995; Walklate 1998; Tilly 2005). The population responds to this fear-generating mistrust with silence to avoid suspicion since one wrong word to the wrong person might be deadly: “Everything is handled in

silence” (\*cleric, Carchi (EC) 2012). As under short-term arrangements, it is a deliberately chosen means of self-protection (Koonings and Krujit 1999; Delumeau 2002).

Behavioural rules dictated by mistrust produce security: the rules create order, including the absence of theft, rape and other crimes because potential victimisers fear punishment by the VNSAs. As the cleric (2012) told me, after a rape he and a colleague tried to convince the local FARC leaders not to kill the rapist, but they argued such behaviour was unforgivable. According to rumours, some days later they killed the rapist by firing a rifle in his anus. In a study on Putumayo of the early twentieth century, Taussig (2002, 223) states: “*Narratives are in themselves evidence of the process whereby a culture of terror was created and sustained* (italics in the original)”. These rumours fuelled such a culture of terror in these borderlands. A community member pointed to their effectiveness: “There, you don’t see any problems, either of rape or of something getting lost. You can leave a bag of money on the street, it wouldn’t get lost” (\*citizen, Tufiño (EC) 2012). While at times, citizens approve of the VNSAs’ substitution of state functions, on other occasions they do not have any choice other than to accept it, which highlights the undemocratic nature of the VNSAs’ governance.

The rule of silence tends to be particularly strict on the non-conflict side of the borders. The limited recognition of VNSA presence by Ecuador and Venezuela obscures its impacts on citizen security. Borderlanders can hardly call upon state institutions, such as Colombia’s Early Warning System, to alert the state to act.<sup>104</sup> As the example of the cleric who had been photographed 80 times demonstrates, the result is “absolute silence”. He lived on the Ecuadorian side and only occasionally crossed over to Colombia, but the VNSAs’ intimidation did not stop at the border. The cleric (2012) continued: “Tranquillity is a bad sign in this zone. This is like a person, a friend, who never talks, who always keeps quiet. This is not good!” A citizen of Lago Agrio (2012) gave a similar account:

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<sup>104</sup> Colombia’s Early Warning System monitors risks to civilians caused by the conflict (Defensoría del Pueblo 2012).

If I open my mouth and tell you that someone is here, they kill me because “A closed mouth catches no flies”. This is an adage that we have here. They tell you that if you don’t say anything nothing happens to you, but if you speak out they kill you right away. This is our fear, and due to this fear many things that occur are not reported. There were rapes, kidnappings, deaths, threats, but we never reported them because of the fear. Due to this fear we can’t make any progress.

With the VNSAs controlling behaviour and discourse, citizens are virtually unable to state their preferences and attract public attention. Solidarity from outsiders is scarce. As these communities are isolated from those outside, the mistrust and the VNSAs’ rule remain unnoticed. Mistrust places constant pressure on people’s lives and induces paranoia. The fear surfaces in aggressive mind sets, dreams and chronic illness (Koonings and Krujit 1999, 19, 2; Torres-Rivas 1999, 288).<sup>105</sup> Although harder to quantify than physical violence (see e.g. M. Cohen and Bowles 2010), the costs of constant fear and uncertainty for society are high, if translated for example into costs for the public (mental) health budget or citizen participation (Pearce 2007; Médicos sin Fronteras 2011). These communities tend to be stigmatised as VNSA collaborators, and so do not get the state protection necessary to ensure citizen security.

The literature commonly points to the interrelation between violent conflict and the erosion of social cohesion (Colletta and Cullen 2000). However, non-violent social control by VNSAs also has profound consequences for a society’s social fabric because it leads to a fragmentation through which society as such loses its meaning. It is no longer based on a joint sense of belonging. Even if shadow community members mingle “in space” with “the others” there seems to be an estrangement: in Zulia, many inhabitants of Machiques claim that the guerrillas come down from the Sierra de Perijá to their village from time to time. However, these are Colombian refugees (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Machiques (VE) 2012b), alienated from the state and from other citizens. In the Sierra de Perijá these Colombians live under VNSA control, but since they adhere to the rule of silence and many residents of Machiques are prejudiced against them, the Colombians and the population of Machiques do not bond with each other.

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<sup>105</sup> For discussions of economics and culture as reasons for a violent Colombian society see Waldmann (2007) and Thoumi (1995).

VNSAs employ a strategy of charming people to make their social control invisible and reduce distrust. Since violent methods hamper social recognition, they camouflage coercive power to make the VNSA-society relationship more “amicable”. Using accommodating language is a form of charm: in Machiques the guerrillas ask the population to “collaborate” financially with them, while extorting money from them (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Machiques (VE) 2012a). A Colombian ex-guerrilla (2011b) who used to work in Sucumbíos described his relationship with the local population as follows:

Ex-guerrilla: They are all friends. Most of [the locals] are friends. If someone is an enemy and doesn’t want to deal with me he pulls himself together, or he leaves, or he gets lost (killed). That’s the way it is. They gave us shops, warehouses, houses or food, they belong to the organisation.

*Me: Were there people who didn’t want to be friends with the guerrillas?*

Ex-guerrilla: [...] They get lost because the measures over there are: or they pull themselves together or death penalty, we kill these people. [...] I dealt with people who resisted collaborating with the group, so I told them: “I give you half an hour. Either you leave or...” This is a thing of fury, of anger. I lived in regions with such people. [...] We killed them. We peeled them [he laughed]. To peel means to kill.

*Me: You had to do this?*

Ex-guerrilla: Well, sometimes we had to...

### 7.1.2 Sporadic Violence and Uncertainty

Depending on the supply chain stage, the broker entails sporadic waves of violence or general uncertainty among citizens. In regions with later transactional supply chain relationship phases, narco-brokers stabilise VNSA arrangements. As of 2014 narco-broker Megateo, a former leading EPL member based in Catatumbo, engaged in business deals with FARC and ELN, and was connected with regional politicians and the economic elite.<sup>106</sup> With a sphere of influence that reached over the Venezuelan border, he was the puppet-master of many cocaine and related deals in the region and contributed to maintaining the division of labour within the illicit drug business over many years (Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris 2012, 268–272). In 2014 Megateo had still not been captured. A modern form of Eric Hobsbawm’s (1972) social bandit, he was also widely supported and admired by the local community, as a community leader from Cúcuta (2011) explained:

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<sup>106</sup> For Megateo’s profile see InSight Crime (2014a).

Leader: Megateo is a man from San Calixto, a farmer, who talks and understands the rural issue ideologically. He became the region's leader. People appreciate him, including FARC and ELN, but this appreciation is because they know the region. I would dare to say...people say he controls transit [of drugs] and brokering. He is the boss of brokering, he has an intermediary role.

*Me: How do they keep the limits?*

Leader: The one who creates respect is Megateo, he imposes order.

*Me: How can he have so much power?*

Leader: I personally attribute it to his leadership. He is a man who used to be an ordinary citizen. The farmers from Teorama say he is a man who understands the people and talks to them in their own language. He is a brother. He has become a role model.

His influence on state actors increased his credibility as a trustworthy mediator for VNSA arrangements as these contacts help avoid state interference which could undermine the deals.

The boundaries between politicians, businessmen and shadowy figures involved in the illegal drug trade are not always clear. Marcos "Marquito" Figueroa García was accused of being a broker. Closely linked to La Guajira's regional government, he was well-known to the local population, yet supposedly coordinated much of the regional drug and gasoline trafficking in La Guajira and Cesar (\*civil society representative from Riohacha, Valledupar (CO) 2012; Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 517).

Occasionally, a narco-broker is captured or killed, triggering revenge or power struggles over succession or revenge (cf. Andreas and Duran-Martinez 2015, 383), and sporadic waves of violence. In April 2012 in Cúcuta, El Pulpo was shot dead in a popular restaurant. Maintaining the façade of a successful businessman, he was respected by diverse sectors of society while supposedly a narco-broker. When I visited Cúcuta the week after he was shot, many locals were talking about the good deeds he did for the poor in a "Pablo Escobar-like" fashion and I saw people lighting candles in front of his house. Cúcuta also suffered two bomb blasts in central areas within the week I was there. Locals assumed that they were connected to the death of El Pulpo and speculated about an escalation of violence.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Conversations with Cúcuta residents, Cúcuta, April 2012.

Similar problems arose after Loco Barrera's capture in San Cristóbal, Táchira, on 18 September 2012 (El País 2012). He controlled around 40 per cent of the cocaine sent to market from Colombia (Alarcón Gil 2012).<sup>108</sup> Allegedly having had his base in the Colombian Eastern Plains, but having operated throughout Colombia and beyond, he was an appreciated mediator between various VNSA groups: he negotiated the purchase of the coca paste from areas under FARC control and had deals with ERPAC, the Rastrojos and international trafficking groups to coordinate cocaine sales to Western Europe (Insight Crime 2012). He supposedly had links with the Mexican Sinaloa and Zeta cartels (El Tiempo 2012b), and controlled some of the clandestine airstrips in Apure, used for cocaine flights to the Caribbean and Central America – arguably with the connivance or assistance of Venezuelan state forces. Loco Barrera's capture triggered disputes over who would inherit his cocaine reign (\*journalist, Caracas (VE) 2012).

In 2011, the Venezuelan broker Walid Makled's capture provoked struggles between VNSAs and state officials. Makled's links with high-ranking military officials allowed him to use Puerto Cabello as a starting point for international trafficking routes (Tribunal Supremo de Justicia 2010; Insight Crime 2014b). They helped him to be trusted by those who wanted their illegal goods to be shipped abroad and by buyers abroad. Given the wide-ranging network of actors involved, those with voluntary or involuntary knowledge of this network feared retaliation (\*human rights defender, San Cristóbal (VE) 2012).

Jefferson Ostaiza, captured in Ecuador in 2009, was an influential broker who moved between the underworld and public world. He had links to FARC Fronts 29, 30, 32 and 48, as well as Ecuadorian, Colombian, Mexican and Nicaraguan traffickers, the Ecuadorian then-Under-Secretary of Government José Ignacio Chauvin and other politicians. His capture left a power vacuum that triggered conflicts over who would take over his position (El Universo 2009a; El Comercio 2009a; Hoy 2009a).

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<sup>108</sup> For Loco Barrera's life trajectory see Alarcón Gil (2012).

As long as the narco-broker fulfils his function,<sup>109</sup> the interdependence established among VNSAs inhibits violence, even though general inter-group mistrust persists. Those who live in areas influenced by brokers can follow rules that help ensure citizen security. When a broker is eliminated through capture or death, the inhibition of violence through broker-mediated interdependence disappears: power struggles among VNSAs erupt. They rarely target the general public, yet as the Cúcuta bombs demonstrate, the population's objective security can still be affected. The unpredictability of such incidents engenders fear. Rules are unavailable because it is not clear who will fill the void.

At the first stages of the supply chain, small brokers, so-called *financieros*, foment uncertainty. *Financieros* are brokers who buy the farmers' coca leaves and coca paste, and sell it to VNSAs who further process or traffic the product. Coca farmers cannot choose their clients, they have to sell their product to certain *financieros* (\*civil society representative, Tibú (CO) 2012b; \*civil society representative from Cumbal, Pasto (CO) 2012). A farmer from Putumayo (\*displaced woman, Mocoa (CO) 2011) confirmed: "They only sell to them. To no-one else. If you sell to another person, they will punish you, punish you, punish you!" Whether they cultivate coca at all is arguably the farmers' choice: "The communities are not forced [to cultivate], but they are told: 'Okay, if you cultivate you have to sell to me, I'm your only client and whoever wants to, can sell to this client'" (\*international agency staff, Mocoa (CO) 2011). Given the profits and the absence of comparatively lucrative alternatives, many see it as the only viable option to sustain their families. Yet VNSA presence itself impedes licit economic opportunities because it deters companies from investing in such regions. In Putumayo, the oil industry attracts investors, but few employees are locals. Branded as collaborators of the guerrillas who attack mining infrastructure, community members have difficulty in securing the sought-after jobs (\*community leader, General Farfán (EC) 2012; \*human rights defender, Lago Agrio (EC) 2012).

The *financieros* pay the farmers, but do not protect them. On the way from their plots to the

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<sup>109</sup> I am not aware of any female brokers in the Andes.

village where the *financieros* buy the coca paste, the farmers sometimes have to pass numerous police or military checkpoints with the illicit goods. A displaced woman (\*displaced woman, Mocoa (CO) 2011) who used to cultivate coca in Bajo Putumayo explains the temptation of the money despite the risks:

You sell [the coca paste], you go to the village and the buyers come to the village. [...]. Every weekend, they come. For example during one week everyone harvested....On Sunday, everyone went to the village and there were the people, and the money from Cali arrived [...] big burlap bags...they found the ways to get the money to the village...Every Sunday we took [coca paste] to the village. The women, not the men, took out coca paste from the farms because the police were there. When they showed up, they searched the men, but not the women, and we stuck the paste here onto our body and kept it here until the village. Then we took it out and sold it in the village. One gram of merchandise costs 1,000 pesos... it was a thousand grams, one kilo is a thousand grams, right? This is a lot of money [...]. Of course [...], we helped, but the men did the work, it was very hard work. The women, we sowed the coca, and we took the coca paste off from the farm, because there were always checkpoints with soldiers and policemen, and they always searched the men.

Less powerful than “big” narco-brokers who operate at the later stages of the cocaine supply chain, *financieros* change more frequently as they are killed or caught, with consequences, including persecution and death, for the communities. First, when *financieros* are caught, the farmers who sold coca to them are accused of being collaborators. Second, new *financieros* tend to implement new rules, sometimes not telling the coca farmers what rules apply, the product’s price and when and where they can sell it. Third, confusion about the *financieros*’ identity causes harm. In some cases people came to a village pretending to be *financieros* sent by a *bona fide* group.<sup>110</sup> Farmers sold them the paste and once the “real” *financiero* arrived, they were punished for selling it to the others (\*civil society representative, Mocoa (CO) 2011). The existence of *financieros* increases the communities’ uncertainty as to how to behave, and their exposure to abuse, undermining both subjective and objective citizen security.

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<sup>110</sup> This was confirmed in meetings with Colombian governmental agencies responsible for security issues, July 2014.

#### 7.1.4 The Illicit Economy

Transactional cocaine supply chain relationships entail economic opportunities for citizens, which can compensate for shortcomings in other areas of governance and which widen the margin for tolerating undemocratic measures. According to Pécaut (1999, 148), over one million Colombians benefit financially from the drug industry and even more have enhanced their social status through it. The VNSAs' mistrust of the population, sporadic waves of violence and the role of the *financieros* suggest that it is difficult for VNSAs to achieve social support and that therefore shadow citizen security is difficult to sustain. Yet the constellation of the provided goods matters.

In Bajo Putumayo the guerrillas promote a coca economy. Civil state institutions have never been widely present and the road infrastructure is poor. Many villages lack connections to nearby towns. Rather than growing cacao or bananas which have to be transported to markets, farmers prefer to grow coca and do the basic processing into paste or base which the *financieros* pick up and pay for in nearby villages (\*displaced man, Mocoa (CO) 2011). According to a UNODC (UNODC 2013b, 45) study in 2012, in Putumayo 64 per cent of the coca growers sell coca leaf, and 36 per cent process the leaf themselves into the basic paste, the second highest percentage region in Colombia after the Meta-Guaviare. A farmer (2011) described:

We all work in it, we don't work at anything else. I plant coca with my husband, also with laboratories. We had a small house where we always processed the coca leaf we harvested into paste. After that we took it to the laboratory where they turn it into powder. To make the paste, we cut it up, then we added cement, salt, soda, gasoline and all of that, stomped on it, and then stirred it with a stick. The treatment took up to two hours. After two hours we got oil that looks like coffee. Then we refined it and what remained was the paste. We all lived on that.

Another farmer stated at a community meeting in Bajo Putumayo in March 2012 that this increased their income, allowing them to look after their families. An international organisation employee (2011) explained the farmers' perception as follows: "There are cases of multiple executions [...]. This only happens if you don't comply with the rules. I live under pressure, but I can live here [...]!" In January 2012 a Colombian woman farmer (2012) in Ecuadorian

Sucumbíos explained to me that farmers cultivate coca despite the modest profits, security problems and health issues because they lack alternative options:

No-one will tell you what I'm telling you now. [...] The guerrillas go to the farms and pick up the fixed merchandise (coca paste). They don't let it be brought here [to Ecuador] anymore; therefore it is scarce on this side. [...] The guerrillas oblige people to sell [...] and people have to pay *vacuna* (extortion money) to them. Those who go there to sell [...] have to pay the guerrillas [...]. For these villages it has always been like this. Sometimes they postpone for a while, maybe because they don't receive the money [...]. They come to pick up the merchandise during the harvest, but our village has been calm. One time they attacked the police and killed lots of them. My husband said many of these guys had passed by and that they were going to do something. [...]. We have the hardest time and we earn little. Because to cultivate we have to fumigate the plants and the soil, then we have to scrape, then chop, then in the laboratory they make the first coca paste. It smells a lot of the chemicals. That's why I say my husband is skinny, because he always had to deal with the chemicals. Then we go and sell it to those who take it and crystallise [the coca paste]. But people from here also do the crystallising. If you want to get some crystallised [coca paste], you can get it from them. But it is a lot more expensive. The paste costs at least 1,200,000 pesos [636 USD]. The base costs 2,500,000 [1,236 USD], and the cocaine that they sell further down is 4 million [2,121 USD] because it's been crystallised [...]. They already have all the contacts. They sell it abroad, to Quito, to anywhere you can think of.

Her numbers resemble those of UNODC (2013b, 55–57), according to which, in 2011, for Putumayo the average price of coca paste was 1,659,000 Colombian pesos per kilo (880 USD), for cocaine base it was 2,500,000 (1,326 USD) and for cocaine hydrochloride 4,500,000 (2,386 USD). It is common in many contexts of shadow economies where state capacities are deficient that the state that does not provide alternative livelihoods (Felbab-Brown 2010, 178), diminishing the prospects for a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship. She then explained the borderlanders' frustration:

To be honest, the government can say what it likes, but what brings money is coca. [...] Look, the cacao is currently very cheap [...]. One pound is worth 40 cents. This will never happen to coca [...]. Here, there isn't much coca, but further down there is a lot and people harvest 1,000 or 2,000 *arrobas*.<sup>111</sup> The thing is that it is not convenient for the government to eliminate the coca. They live off it. Their work depends on it, they come to eradicate it. But they never eradicate everything, why should they? They leave some seeds so that in four or five years it grows again. They don't want to finish it off because [it]'s their own business [...]. Even soldiers, the military: if there wasn't so much coca in Colombia, what would they need such large armed forces for? [...] It wouldn't be convenient for them because they would lose their jobs. If there was no problem anymore, they would need neither the army nor the police force [...]. It's also the government's fault because [...] they gave us some poor seeds of corn and some fish [...]. They thought we would live on this and that's

<sup>111</sup> One *arroba* equals 11.3 kilogrammes.

it. But the seeds didn't even grow [...]. If they give you something, even if it is cacao, if they gave us a credit at low interest rates, so that people would stop growing coca, but if they don't do this there is nothing we can do. [...] Imagine, this is not a town, this is all countryside. You don't have money, you don't have anything. They come and give you some poor corn seeds which won't grow. This is going to help us? It will never help anyone, it doesn't help!

People taking risks for jobs offered by VNSAs is also a reflection of the importance of economic opportunities for the VNSAs' legitimacy. In Nariño and Esmeraldas young men are lured by high salaries to work in cocaine laboratories, but are often not allowed to go back to their community later because of their knowledge of the process and the people involved (\*citizen, San Lorenzo (EC) 2012; \*local government representative, Tumaco (CO) 2011).<sup>112</sup> Another example is citizens who are paid as drug mules to traffic cocaine produced by one VNSA across the border to be sold to another VNSA which will ship it internationally, exposing them to punishment or harassment by law enforcement officials. At the Colombia-Venezuela border shared by Norte de Santander and southern Zulia, cocaine has been smuggled hidden in tyres, children's toys, dogs' stomachs, women's breast implants and inside the bodies of dead babies passed off as being asleep (\*high-ranking police commander, Maracaibo (VE) 2012). Given people's gratitude for the "job opportunity" however, they often view violence or death as the mules' mistake.

Economic opportunities provided by VNSAs in the supply chain narrow the legitimisation gap arising from mistrust, sporadic violence, and uncertainty provoked by the existence of *financieros*. Whether economic opportunities weigh enough to bring about shadow citizen security depends on the context: borderlanders who have experienced violence in the past may find the required behaviour "normal" and accept VNSAs as legitimate "rulers". Others for whom violence is new often reject VNSAs because their perceptions of insecurity outweigh the legitimising effect of the economic opportunities.

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<sup>112</sup> Many are ignorant of these consequences when accepting the work.

## 7.2 Strategic Alliances

Being symmetrically interdependent, strategic alliances usually comprise active support and shared intelligence. Considering the strategic alliance between FARC and ELN, Núñez (2012, 62) argues that the guerrillas combine FARC's military capacity with ELN's social influence. Joint commissions comprising members of both organisations would discuss how to best make use of these comparative advantages. In 2011, a Pasto government official (2011a) described the mutually supportive strategic alliance between FARC and ELN in Nariño:

They fight together against the army, against the Rastrojos, nowadays. Two years ago this would have been impossible. They have joint guerrilla plans, for example ELN looks after FARC's rear and in this entire sector, FARC looks after ELN.

An ex-FARC member (2011a) confirmed:

Ex-combatant: They make an agreement. They talk, or rather, the two commanders sit together to negotiate: "Ok, let's negotiate. I want you to collaborate with me!" For example, [the territory] from here to there is ELN, from there to over there is FARC. If the army meddles here, ELN comes and helps me. Now they are united like this, therefore they support each other.

*Me:* *Was there a similar support between FARC and the Rastrojos?*

Ex-combatant: I don't know. While I was there I never saw that. Who knows, because I demobilised four years ago already [...]. Everyone has their way of negotiating. They have their routes to move their drugs. I can pass freely. If the *elenos* pass through my area, they can transit freely.<sup>113</sup> For example, if an *eleno* comes through I don't have to say: "You're passing through my zone. You have to pay me this amount as a tax!" No. Neither ELN nor FARC. Previously yes, previously when you passed through ELN areas they would tie you up and take everything you had.

FARC and ELN share values on which they base their joint strategy on how to confront state forces (Semana 2012a). This reduces distrust between the groups, and towards community members who are then not suspected of being collaborators of the other group. It is possible thus to establish a consensual VNSA-society relationship in which community members do not fear accusations of collaborating with the other group. Nonetheless, the VNSAs' social recognition faces an obstacle absent in other long-term arrangements: the provider of rules being composed of two allied groups, each group's individual identity is obscured. People are unable to identify with either of them, and hence are less likely to socially recognise them: under the authority of a single

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<sup>113</sup> *Elenos* are ELN members.

VNSA, citizens can be loyal and develop a sense of belonging to this “shadow community”, if the VNSA is perceived to be legitimate. In strategic alliances it is not clear who exactly citizens should be loyal to, making it difficult for the two (or more) VNSAs to establish a mutually reinforcing VNSA-society relationship.

A case in point is the strategic alliance between FARC’s Front 41 Cacique Upar and Front 33 Mariscal Antonio José de Sucre with ELN’s Front Camilo Torres Restrepo in Catatumbo.<sup>114</sup> Also, in 2011 FARC’s Front 59 and ELN had a strategic alliance in the region where Cesar and La Guajira adjoin Zulia. This alliance emerged from the two groups’ strategy “Unity Action in Border Zones” that envisaged joint activities in border areas. It was rooted in FARC’s “Re-Born Plan”, published in 2008, in which FARC laid out their new emphasis on a “guerrilla war” rather than a war between two large armies (Semana 2012a). Locals commented they had seen FARC soldiers near the road passing through the El Molino and Villanueva municipalities in southern La Guajira. However, as a source close to FARC countered, these were ELN members, supposedly of the Fronts Luciano Ariza and Gustavo Palmesano Ojeda (Gamboa Martínez 2012, 12; \*civil society representative from Riohacha, Valledupar (CO) 2012). Such confusions demonstrate the difficulties in establishing ties with one particular VNSA, even if they respect the communities.

Without knowing which group the uniformed people who impose order belong to, citizens have difficulties in showing loyalty, which deprives the groups of their social base and, in the long run, legitimacy. The VNSAs assume governance functions by providing justice and security. Yet without legitimacy they cannot establish shadow citizenship and shadow citizen security, which would allow them to substitute citizenship oriented towards the state. The communities are in limbo: the state has failed to legitimately monopolise violence and to provide services and therefore is not perceived to be a legitimate authority in the territory. The VNSAs, despite exercising governance functions, have failed to make their individual identities clear. This prevents the community from being loyal to them.

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<sup>114</sup> Email correspondence with a civil society member in Valledupar, February 2013.

In some cases VNSAs have strategic alliances with social groups which themselves become VNSAs. Then the lines between VNSAs and the community rather than those between two VNSAs become blurred. In the Guajira Peninsula in the early 1990s drug-traffickers took advantage of existing disputes among Wayúu clans by co-opting or engaging in strategic alliances with one of the clans (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 415). With the Wayúu being used to resorting to violence, the drug-traffickers easily involved them to expand their control, producing a shift from the Wayúu's traditional parallel violent dispute management to a violent strategy to pursue their interests or to support their allies' interests. A Wayúu leader (2012a)'s anecdote about a drug trafficking group illustrates this. After having appropriated part of her clans' territory in the 1990s, the group, supported by another clan hostile to her own, aimed to control more of it as it was strategically placed on the trafficking route from Valledupar to Maicao:

The person who invaded our territory was [...] not only a drug-trafficker, but also had huge economic influence. [...] Basically we left him a large part of our territory. [...] He had a group of drug-traffickers with their own armed and uniformed group. They were heavily armed, handled their own people [including from another Wayúu clan], financed their own people. [...] They wanted to appropriate the land, but [...] we didn't let them. [...] But this friction always remained, this appetite for more, for a conflict with our family. Although we were attacked, our family stayed calm [...]. Unfortunately, in 1994 something unexpected occurred. My uncle killed a man in self-defence, a drug-trafficker. This is how this war started, [...] but it was always a conflict in which one party was affected more than the other one. They were two completely different families: our clan, despite everything, we knew what we had and what we wanted. But the opposing party obviously used their power. We would always be inferior to them. [...] We tried to settle the dispute and sent a messenger, [...] a cousin of the opposing party, of the affected people. This was when the drug-traffickers demanded the perpetrator's surrender. My family was opposed to this because, initially, he said the perpetrator had to surrender himself so that they could hand him over to the army. However, since we knew his influence on the army [...] we could hardly do what he said. It would have been a sign of cowardice to hand over our blood to this clan instead of dealing with this issue in another way, for example, through reparation. But he never talked about reparation. He always talked about two options. One was that the perpetrator surrendered and the other one that we would [...] go to war. We decided to go to war. We insisted we could pay him for his missing nephew, for the death of his nephew, but he never wanted that. In 1995 [...] they opted for exterminating a specific family. They picked on an uncle, whom they considered economically strong. He was the son of a well known person of Guajira. They suddenly were scared that if they started to kill us, he would [take revenge]. Therefore, he first had this uncle killed. They sent a group of some 30 to 50 people. But the clan resisted, they found him alone and injured him. A bullet hit him in his head. He escaped and was wanted in the whole of Guajira [...]. They were after him [...], until we found a strategy to conceal the fact that he had survived. We said he had died. This was an internal strategy so that these people wouldn't wipe us out.

At the end of the 1990s, the paramilitaries and, after their demobilisation in 2006, the post-demobilised groups (Peralta et al. 2011, 9), allied with Wayúu clans to access trafficking routes, given the Wayúu's control over arms trafficking and private armies in the region (Ávila and Guerra Ariza 2012, 351). Referring to the late 2000s, the Wayúu leader (2012a) stated that “the army accompanied groups such as the paramilitaries which never demobilised, drug-traffickers and indigenous groups, which also dedicated themselves to wrong-doing”. Even according to some Wayúu's perceptions some clans act like an armed group. A Wayúu (2012) in Venezuelan Zulia confirmed this:

I have to admit that we Wayúu are somewhat peculiar, I say we Wayúu, because I'm Wayúu. Sometimes our compatriots are driven by interests. Money, they like money, expensive whisky, clothes, cars. People entrust themselves to these organisations, put themselves in their hands. That's why what happened in Bahía Portete, there was an alliance between paramilitaries and families from the harbour.<sup>115</sup>

As a special case of strategic alliances, post-demobilised group members marry Wayúu women to get access to the Wayúu clan's knowledge about the natural harbours (\*civil society representative from Riohacha, Valledupar (CO) 2012), and lucrative illicit economic activities in the region (SAT 2009a).

The consequences for citizen security of muddied group identities are twofold. First, civic consent is not as important for VNSAs to maintain control as in pacific coexistence (see below): the risk that community members will side with one group to the disadvantage of the other is reduced by the fact that both groups share information (which they do not in pacific coexistence). The absence of mistrust also reduces violence. Second, without knowing the identity of their “shadow governors”, the community is less likely to feel represented by them and remain loyal if another actor – including the state – enters the scene. Without a fully mutually reinforcing VNSA-society relationship, shadow citizenship and shadow citizen security exist only to a limited extent.

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<sup>115</sup> Between 18 and 20 April 2004, the paramilitary Counterinsurgency Front Wayúu massacred six Wayúu in Bahía Portete and displaced 600 people (Peralta et al. 2011, 10; CNRR 2010, 29).

Cultural context is crucial. Due to their traditional way of life the Wayúu experience VNSAs differently than for example farmers who benefit from economic opportunities, but also suffer restrictions due to behavioural rules. Less rooted in the territory than the Wayúu and possessing less local knowledge, they do not engage in strategic alliances with VNSAs. Violence being deeply embedded in the Wayúu's culture arguably lowers their inhibitions to engage in such activities.

### **7.3 Pacific Coexistence**

Situations of pacific coexistence among several VNSAs are more likely to approximate shadow citizen security than those of transactional supply chain relationships and strategic alliances. As with strategic alliances, mutual trust among coexisting groups lowers the VNSAs' suspicion vis-à-vis the local population. However, coexisting groups do usually not share information, they are less interdependent. Pacific coexistence requires VNSAs to be responsive to citizens to balance interests and the legitimacy of all groups involved. Kalyvas' (1999, 260) argues that "typically, insurgent rule is based on a variable mix of consent and coercion". In pacific coexistence, consent can outweigh coercion. The community's consent matters more for each VNSA than in strategic alliances because the lack of social recognition can be exploited by another VNSA to drive deeper roots and gain a comparative advantage.

When VNSAs operate in pacific coexistence, their relationship with the community is characterised by three aspects. First, compared to other long-term arrangements in which VNSAs achieve civic consent mostly through efficiency in security and job provision, for VNSAs operating in pacific coexistence it is particularly important to also deal with matters of everyday life. Second, the VNSAs' capacity and responsiveness increase their perceived legitimacy. Third, the VNSAs' identities are typically clear: having to secure social recognition, VNSAs have an interest in citizens being able to identify them. This alienates the community from the state and fosters the VNSA-society relationship. Community members can adapt their behaviour to certain

rules to ensure security. The VNSA-society relationship is (partly) based on mutual respect. In the absence of state services, VNSAs are perceived to be legitimate governance providers.

In Alto Apure, FBL, FARC and ELN have been operating in pacific coexistence since 2010. The quest for social recognition explains ELN's provision of justice to communities for issues ranging from conflict between neighbours to thefts and property damage. In a study on the Colombian Justice System, Elvira Restrepo (2009, 197) highlights how systems of justice have a legitimising effect: "The legitimacy of state authority rests on the ability to support and uphold just institutions". The same applies to VNSAs. As a local cleric (2012c) noted, the population of El Nula resorted to the VNSA in all kinds of conflict situations: "If a cow gets lost, people run to the guerrillas. They always run to the guerrillas!" He further commented on the guerrillas: "They intervene to provide even Solomonian solutions".

VNSAs respect (some of) the citizens' decisions and the VNSA-imposed rules are mostly met with approval, including by this female farmer from Alto Apure (El Nula (VE) 2012):

Farmer: The other day they called a meeting and asked people to come. Many people went. I didn't go, because I never go to these meetings.

*Me: They don't say anything if you don't go?*

Farmer: No, no. Everyone can decide whether to go. No, I never go, I went to one meeting, but this was because we were invited by the communal council and we thought the communal council was holding the meeting. But it was them. The entire community went to the meeting, but this was because of them. When we arrived, it was one of them who held the meeting.

*Me: Do you know who they are?*

Farmer: Of course.

*Me: Is the council linked to them?*

Farmer: No, they wanted to call this meeting to set some limits, some rules of coexistence ("*leyes de convivencia*") and some other issues. [...] Rules of coexistence are for example the usage of marked ways; or if you leave animals outside, you have to pay. If there is an animal on the farm track, you have to pay a fee to them, and another one to the owner of the corral where they keep it; to keep the farm tracks clean, [...] these are the rules of coexistence.

*Me: And if someone does not comply with these rules?*

Farmer: They make you pay a fine...for example, if you leave an animal outside on the farm track you have to pay 30 bolivares: 10 to the corral's owner and 20 to the organisation. Better you don't leave your animal outside!

*Me: Do you think these rules are good or bad [...]?*

Farmer: I think good, because, look, sometimes one has to struggle a lot because [...] these farm tracks get overgrown. I think the rules are good because people have already got used to the idea that this is what they are obliged to do. No-one would do it on one's

own behalf. They have to say: “Look, you have to clean. If you don’t clean...” People have already got used to it. They have already adapted to it.

*Me:* *Don’t you think that people should be more aware about doing this themselves?*

Farmer: They should be aware, but they aren’t. They aren’t because where I live, where I have my plot, the farm track is full of undergrowth from side to side...the farm owner should clean it, but he doesn’t [...].

The VNSAs’ regulatory functions in this example differ from those in other VNSA arrangements.

Rules of coexistence help achieve civic consent rather than sheer territorial dominion, as attained by imposing order through social cleansing, for instance. They help farmers to handle everyday concerns without restricting their freedom. Fines, rather than violence or humiliation, as punishment command respect instead of fear. The farmer later told me, before 2010 when the groups were still in conflict, rather than aiming for social recognition, they induced the population’s compliance by coercion:

*Me:* *Do they tell you what time to be home?*

Farmer: Before, one couldn’t go out at night. During some months, one had to be home by nine. Today it is different.

The continuation suggests that VNSAs were indeed considered a legitimate authority:

*Me:* *Have there also been rules which you didn’t like?*

Farmer: [...] The issue of cutting wood...we are not allowed to cut green wood. I don’t think that this is good because where are we then going to sow seeds? If we live in the countryside and we cannot sow seeds...what are we going to eat [...].

*Me:* *Did they explain to you why they imposed this rule?*

Farmer: Yes, they said we could fell three hectares of trees. More than that would be bad.

The woman criticised the type of rule, but she did not question that it was established by the guerrillas and imposed by anti-democratic means. Furthermore, the interviewee referred to the VNSA by the neutral term “organisation”, also used by VNSA members themselves. This attitude arguably relates to the VNSAs’ penetration of local governance bodies, for example the communal councils and apparently the mayor’s office of Guasdualito (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Guasdualito (VE) 2012c). VNSA presence is omnipresent and normalised.

Another account of this farmer confirms the VNSAs’ incentives for ensuring social recognition and consent to maintain the pacific coexistence. As her community is affected by recruitment of

minors, she asked ELN not to recruit at her 14-year-old son's school. They accepted her request and, as of September 2012, had not attempted recruitment in that school. Having to equilibrate their position vis-à-vis another independent group in the same territory, they would have risked losing legitimacy by comparison had they rejected the request. Such accommodating gestures are unusual under other long-term arrangements, especially transactional supply chain relationships, characterised by a tension between people's beliefs in the VNSAs' efficiency and varying cruel punishments for non-compliance.

The type of long-term arrangement is one of many factors influencing the VNSAs' responsiveness and legitimacy. It also depends on the issue at stake: clerics in Nariño in a region of transactional supply chain relationships told the guerrillas that they did not agree with graffiti of guerrilla leaders on the church walls. They re-painted the walls in white (\*cleric, Carchi (EC) 2012). In this case the VNSAs decided to comply with their request while in many others, for example in the case of the punishment of the rapist, they do not. In pacific coexistence VNSAs have less leeway to refuse to respond if they are to maintain the balance with the coexisting group(s).

The community members' ability to identify who controls their territory reinforces the VNSAs' legitimacy in pacific coexistence, which allows for a stronger VNSA-society relationship. The farmer was clear about who imposed rules in her community:

*Me:*            *Who imposed this rule [of the curfew]?*  
*Farmer:*      *The boliches, these were the boliches.*<sup>116</sup>  
*Me:*            *And the rules on cutting wood and on the farm tracks?*  
*Farmer:*      *These were the elenos, although the boliches do similar things.*

Identities are not obscured as in strategic alliances and not concealed as in transactional supply chain relationships where VNSAs may fear retaliation from other groups. In areas of transactional

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<sup>116</sup> *Boliches* are FBL members.

supply chain relationships in Norte de Santander, for instance, people only refer to “guerrillas”. When asked which insurgent group they mean, they are rarely able to give a precise answer.<sup>117</sup>

If pacific coexistence overlaps with another arrangement, the rules are less clear. In the Venezuelan village of El Cruce in southern Zulia, pacific coexistence and sporadic tactical alliances between insurgents and paramilitaries seem to co-occur. Although in other situations of pacific coexistence citizens know the rules relatively well and negotiate them, in El Cruce, uncertainty abounds. A humanitarian organisation employee (2012a) explained: “Tranquillity prevails in El Cruce as long as you don’t bother them, then there is no problem”.

The low group interdependence of pacific coexistence undermines subjective citizen security. Changes in external circumstances increase the risk of the arrangement’s breakdown: without sharing information or without a mediating broker, it is difficult for coexisting VNSAs to adapt their strategies in a concerted manner to a changing context.<sup>118</sup> Up to March 2008 when Colombia bombed the FARC camp in Angostura, Colombian VNSAs coexisted in Ecuador’s border zone. Afterwards, Ecuador militarised its northern border, increasing the number of military operations from 22 in 2007 to 248 in 2009 (Alston 2011, 6). This reduced the space for Colombian VNSAs to stay undisturbed (Mejia 2009). Several VNSAs started to violently subordinate less powerful groups (González Carranza 2011). Pacific coexistence did not hold. As pacific coexistence can breakdown unexpectedly, citizens are uncertain as to when, how and whether it may occur, fuelling perceptions of citizen insecurity, especially if there has been a precedent like in the post-Angostura situation.

The types of group and local contexts matter for the extent to which social recognition, compliance and shadow citizen security are achieved in pacific coexistence. According to the

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<sup>117</sup> Conversations with farmers from Tibú, La Gabarra and El Tarra in Norte de Santander, April and May 2012.

<sup>118</sup> In strategic alliances external factors typically strengthen the arrangement.

farmer from Alto Apure, ELN and FBL imposed similar rules, yet FBL were less respected than ELN, despite ELN being a foreign VNSA in Venezuela:

*Me: Do the boliches learn from or imitate ELN?*

Farmer: They imitate, they imitate. And moreover, they have many children. They have many young people [...] they have many children; their rifles on their backs reach the floor. They have so many young, inexperienced boys...

ELN had a competitive advantage over FBL which can unbalance their relationship. However, the latter was “at home” while the former was in violation of Venezuelan national sovereignty. Both knew that, even if more powerful, ELN relied on FBL’s connivance for both groups to operate in the territory. These overlapping interests contributed to a balance in the pacific coexistence although ELN may be more legitimised than FBL.

Alto Apure’s history of coercion and violence also reinforces the implicitness of VNSA authority and relative absence of violent punishment. Given people’s memories of the VNSAs’ violent measures in the past, the VNSAs did not have to resort to violence to gain the population’s acquiescence; fines sufficed.

#### **7.4 Preponderance Relations**

Of all arrangements of convenience, preponderance relations in which one VNSA group prevails over all others are most conducive to shadow citizen security yet this is typically least visible outside the VNSA-controlled community. The dominant VNSA’s authority and identity are clear. The asymmetric power relationship between the preponderant group and others reduces mistrust. If circumstances external to the arrangement change, a preponderance relation is likely to remain stable because others follow the preponderant group’s decisions. Transactional supply chain relationships and preponderance relations often overlap: when a VNSA has transactional relationships at the margins of the territory in which it is present, regulation by the broker prevents other VNSAs from disputing them. This favours the VNSA’s preponderance at the heart of the territory in which it is present.

People socially recognise and actively support VNSAs, if, due to grievances towards the state, they are emotionally and morally committed to do so (Wood 2003). Such grievances are reflected in the statement of a teacher in Putumayo at a community meeting in 2012, when FARC had lost influence but were still preponderant in important areas: “We are in a war against the state...the state has abandoned us”. This feeling of abandonment was echoed by others, who complained about the lack of road infrastructure, schools, electricity and drinking water while the only state actor present was the military (see Figure 31). They had more trust in the guerrillas than in the state (\*farmer, La Y (CO) 2012). “At least we had our land, our farm and they helped us feed our families”, commented another farmer (2012) in Bajo Putumayo on FARC’s sole authority during the 1990s. According to a displaced farmer (Mocoa (CO) 2011), “the guerrillas reigned: they were the kings there”. FARC consolidated their power in Putumayo constituting a “state” (González Carranza 2011), openly patrolling the villages and demonstrating authority without fearing resistance. Filling the void in state governance, FARC won the communities’ respect (Pécaut 1999, 149–150). They helped build health centres and supposedly arranged the construction of roads.<sup>119</sup> Many locals believed that FARC, viewed as effective at getting things done, take care of those who assisted them, which helps secure support for their authority (Idler and Forest 2012). The relationship was mutual and, since FARC were patrolling in the streets, included providing security. The result was shadow citizen security, security provision based on a VNSA-society (rather than state-society) relationship.



**Figure 31: Poor road infrastructure in Bajo Putumayo, Colombia**

<sup>119</sup> Comment in community gathering, Putumayo, March 2012.

While in Colombia state absence fosters the VNSA's preponderance, in countries where VNSAs do not have an anti-state discourse the state's connivance or collaboration helps VNSAs consolidate their preponderance. A human rights defender from Paraguaipoa (2012) explained how the Venezuelan government's supposed involvement in northern Zulia makes it difficult for locals to take action against FARC control in these territories:

Human rights defender: They even recruit young Venezuelans to enter FARC's ranks. They seduce them. The guerrillas always have their area. Each has their function and of course there is an ideologist who brainwashes them. [...] Examples abound. What is happening with the boys, and I have heard of youngsters who have recruited among themselves. I have a nephew who carries a weapon, but for me he isn't a guerrilla fighter, he is my nephew. He told me that they don't let him go out, they monitor him. They gave him a phone. I'm sure that the phone has GPS so they can locate him. They have technology. They finance him. If he wants a motorbike, they buy him one... He is a boy, he is 19 years old, he doesn't consider the consequences.

*Me:* *Do people talk about [the consequences] in their families or at school [...]?*

Human rights defender: No, because this is delicate. It is delicate because they have ears everywhere. Furthermore, they have the army's, the government's support. As long as the state does not make a statement here saying that they are here, they are not here. The government is not stupid. They manage this diplomatic discourse between states, but they know it [...]. Everyone knows what the other one is doing.

Social control not only silences people in their homes and at school; it is so pervasive that the human rights defender did not dare to say "FARC" out loud:

Human rights defender: There is a discourse of order, they come here with motorbikes. They are militias. They come here [...].

*Me:* *Aren't there any BACRIM?*

Human rights defender: No, here is only their dominion, they have control.

*Me:* *Elenos?*

Human rights defender: No, no, only them [...].

*Me:* *Are people afraid of them?*

Human rights defender: [...] This is simple: no-one says anything, no-one sees anything and therefore people live peacefully. [...] Do people look for help? From them. They ask for their help. People believe that if you want [to establish] a shop, ask the guerrillas. If you want to set up something, ask the guerrillas. They will give you money. They acquire the money through the *vacuna*. One shop has to pay 5,000 bolivares, or 5 million. [...]. This protects them. No-one would steal their cattle, but anyway, they have already established order in this zone. No-one steals. There was a man who stole animals

and they eliminated him. They arrive at a house early in the morning and ask how things are [...].

Preponderant VNSAs are interested in being perceived as legitimate to maintain their power in the long run without having to invest too many resources in violent action. Against intuitive thinking that they do not have to care about civic consent since they are sufficiently powerful to impose their will, they often strive to be considered responsive. For example, community meetings organised by VNSAs in Arauca, Putumayo and Nariño demonstrate responsiveness (\*Afro-Colombian leader, Tumaco (CO) 2011a).<sup>120</sup> Indeed, in some of these gatherings locals are encouraged to raise concerns. Yet this responsiveness can be a charade. The VNSAs decide what is negotiable, so that such meetings can serve to advise the community to stick to the rules. Another way to ensure legitimacy is refraining from violence. In functioning democracies citizens can constrain the enforcers of law and order. Also, the dominant VNSA's activities can be curtailed. Yet in preponderance relations, there are no clear ways for the powerless to prevent abuses by the powerful, hence only self-imposed constraints on its use of force maintain the VNSA's legitimacy (Idler and Forest 2012).



**Figure 32: Community meeting in Arauca, Colombia**

<sup>120</sup> Conversations with community members in Bajo Putumayo, March 2012, and Arauca, September 2012.

Preponderance and the community's compliance without violence are achieved through the preponderant group's ability to penetrate and control public life and local state institutions. For example, in 2012, when the paramilitaries supposedly controlled the Venezuelan village of Guayabo, a strategic point in the trafficking route from Norte de Santander towards the Lake of Maracaibo, rates of violence had diminished noticeably in comparison to previous years.<sup>121</sup> In early 2012 a colonel stationed in Guayabo told the paramilitaries to leave the village. Within one week he was promoted and moved to a post elsewhere. According to a humanitarian organisation employee from Machiques (2012a), most people believed the paramilitaries were responsible for this promotion. They did not have to resort to violence to remain undisturbed; they used their power position to make others obey. People buying into this and hence attributing overwhelming power to the paramilitary group shows that the paramilitaries were accepted as ruling the territory. This suggests that the paramilitaries established shadow citizen security, i.e. the reduction of physical violence by their own means. However, this acceptance can be based on previous experiences of fear. The paramilitaries started to seize control of Guayabo in 2005 (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Machiques (VE) 2012a). They disseminated a "death list" and killed selectively – at first, one or two killings per week – which hit anyone: one week a baker, another week a mechanic, another week a businessman. The lack of a pattern of who was the victim spread panic among the population who had not experienced such violence before. This experience can explain the obedience in 2012.

It is not always clear to what extent citizens in a territory with a preponderant VNSA socially recognise the group or comply with their rules to protect themselves. Yet, and contrary to short-term arrangements, they know the rules and their enforcers, making insecurity more predictable. In Cumbal municipality in Nariño, for example, as of 2007, FARC asked businessmen and traders to pay taxes and farmers to sow, collect, and process coca and latex for heroin (SAT 2007b, 2). In other areas, they told farmers not to lend their animals as pack mules to the army and distributed

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<sup>121</sup> According to Ávila and Guerra Ariza (2012) in 2011 the paramilitaries also controlled parts of the Zulian Jesús María Semprún municipality up to the southern parts of Machiques.

pamphlets to warn communities of lethal repercussions should they be in contact with state forces. Further behavioural rules include curfews or restrictions on the population's access to goods and their mobility, for instance by laying anti-personnel mines. Education is regulated as well: a teacher in a border village in Ecuador told me that the syllabus had to contain certain elements and should not mention VNSA presence (\*teacher, General Farfán (EC) 2012). Non-compliance is dangerous. Community leaders, medical staff and teachers have been killed due to alleged collaboration with the Colombian army and three young men were killed and dismembered by the Rastrojos in 2010 (SAT 2010c). In the village of Las Mercedes in the Sardinata municipality in Norte de Santander, two community leaders were killed in 2007 after they had started the initiative "Friends of Peace", which aimed to declare the village neutral without VNSA-imposed rules (Garrido, Idler, and Mouly 2014, 3). As in other arrangements, obeying the VNSAs' rules helps increase one's security. Yet under preponderance, the rules are much clearer than under short-term arrangements, and there are fewer risks of experiencing violence despite compliance, as in the absence of an arrangement. This makes compliance and hence security more feasible.

Since violence and distrust are virtually absent, situations like Bajo Putumayo in the 1990s and Guayabo in 2012 (see this Chapter), as well as Ipiales in the 2000s and Carchi in the early 2010s (see Chapter Eight), may appear peaceful. Yet this is because the VNSAs exert social control and replace the state in the provision of goods and services.

Before concluding, one caveat on preponderance relations is in order. They typically feature low rates of violence; however there are variations over time: at the beginning they can involve violence since the "newcomers" implement threats to achieve credibility, particularly in regions with a history of violence caused by other VNSAs.<sup>122</sup> According to Gutiérrez Sanín (2008), paramilitaries, when entering a new zone in a first phase, conduct indiscriminate massacres. In a

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<sup>122</sup> This does not necessarily apply when VNSAs enter a governance vacuum where no actor has exercised authority before.

second phase, violence tends to be more selective and power based on extortion networks and social control. Consider Puerto Asís in Bajo Putumayo. Traditionally a guerrilla stronghold, it became a strategic control point for post-demobilised groups in the late 2000s. Besides leaflets, graffiti and threatening phone-calls, post-demobilised groups use social networks to intimidate Puerto Asís's population. In August 2010 a group – allegedly Rastrojos – posted a list of names of youngsters in Puerto Asís on Facebook, spread further by email, in which they told them to leave the area within three days or face being killed. On 15 August two were shot; another one some days later. They expanded the list to 69 names (Ávila 2010). Counting friends and families of those listed, such measures affect virtually everyone, spreading fear and terror. When I visited Puerto Asís in 2012, things had calmed down somewhat. The group had achieved preponderance. In a way, these variations over time can turn the fuzzy continuum into a cycle: a group's preponderance can be disputed by another one, entailing the absence of an arrangement which in turn can lead to the other group's preponderance if it defeats the first one.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

In all long-term arrangements objective citizen security is little affected, but each of them has still distinct impacts on citizen security arising from different levels of group interdependence and how the VNSAs overcome distrust.

Exploring transactional supply chain relationships has demonstrated how the narco-broker is relevant for the security dynamics of communities in which cocaine supply chain relationships are embedded. Communities living along these supply chains face the VNSAs' mistrust of the local population due to the persistence of inter-group mistrust, exposure to sporadic waves of violence and constant uncertainty over the prevalent rules in VNSA-controlled territory. The communities' acceptance of the VNSAs' illicit authority tends to be based on fear rather than respect, undermining subjective citizen security. The provision of illegal, yet legitimate economic opportunities can countervail these impacts and contribute to shadow citizen security by

increasing the local population's loyalty to the VNSAs and hence their legitimacy. Addressing the mechanisms that make the cocaine supply chain work serves to detect "invisible" impacts on citizen security such as mistrust, fear and uncertain behaviour which contribute to the erosion of the social fabric and of citizenship. In strategic alliances and pacific coexistence shared values reduce mistrust between VNSA groups, allowing for a more responsive relationship with local communities. While in strategic alliances the VNSAs's blurred identities hamper social recognition, in pacific coexistence VNSAs have an interest in being perceived as the legitimate authority. In preponderance relations mutual clarity on the ability of one party to enforce compliance by the other party compensates for distrust. This asymmetric power constellation with one group dominating all others is most conducive to shadow citizenship and shadow citizen security (Idler 2014). The VNSA is legitimised and the state de-legitimised due to the opportunities, goods and services provided by the VNSA. Therefore, preponderance relations have probably the least visible, but most systemic repercussions on citizen security.

In borderlands that appear to be calmest, citizen security can be most affected. Long-term arrangements feature few observable facts of insecurity. They hardly attract government, media or public attention. This differs from situations of absence of VNSA arrangements in which rates of violence are high and therefore sensational. It also differs from contexts of short-term arrangements where selective violence produces the deaths of innocents. Calmness under long-term arrangements is deceptive because it distracts from structural impacts concerning the state-society relationship and the communities' social fabric. Borderlanders may not necessarily express their perceptions of insecurity outside their community due to the social control exerted by VNSAs. Or they do not feel insecure because of a consensual VNSA-society relationship that provides protection.

Such a relationship increases the communities' alienation from the state: due to the very mechanisms that undermine the communities' citizen security – a consensual VNSA-society relationship – citizen insecurity is ignored externally. The illusory tranquillity emanates from

shadow citizen security, sometimes blended with subjective citizen insecurity when the VNSA's authority is based on a mix of fear and respect. In places with long-term arrangements like Puerto Asís, or Guasdualito, delinquency is virtually absent, but this is because delinquents would be killed by the VNSAs.<sup>123</sup> Hence, although a VNSA-society relationship may indeed be more conducive to security than a dysfunctional state-society relationship, such security is – or at least has been – shadow citizen security, security based on undemocratic means. Shadow citizen security questions democratic governance at the most basic level: the state's legitimacy.

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<sup>123</sup> In Puerto Asís, I was told to leave my laptop in the hotel room because thefts do not occur. In Guasdualito, I was advised to leave my valuables in the parked car since no-one would dare to steal them.

## **8. THE BORDER EFFECT: INFLUENCING THE IMPACTS OF VNSA ARRANGEMENTS ON CITIZEN SECURITY**

*Since we are in a border zone, they ignore us more. We are invisible to the rest of society and the rest of the world. Just because we live near the border.*  
Citizen of San Lorenzo, Ecuador (2012a)

In the previous three chapters I have discussed how distinct mistrust-reducing mechanisms and different levels of interdependence among VNSAs are relevant for citizen security impacts of VNSA arrangements. Addressing the confluence of weak state governance systems, a low-risk/high-opportunity environment and the proneness to impunity in Colombia's borderlands, I now analyse how the border effect arising from these characteristics influences citizen security. Like a magnifying glass, it intensifies the distinct impact of each arrangement on citizen security. The border's transnationality and the distance to the state centre influence these dynamics in four ways that I will discuss in this chapter: as a facilitator, a deterrent, a magnet, and a stigmatised space, reinforcing the invisibility of citizen security dynamics.

### **8.1 The Border as a Facilitator**

Borderlands in the Global South tend to be "sites where the state's presence has somehow been limited and its monopoly of violence and political authority is finite, unravelling, or subjected to severe contestation" (Korf and Raeymaekers 2013, 7; see also Donnan and Wilson 1999). These spaces are excluded from national decision-making processes, and from the national economy due to the lack of infrastructure and communication channels to connect the periphery with the centres (Clement 2004, 54). Borderlands are regulated by several regimes because two different jurisdictions and security systems meet there (Zeller 2013, 194). In regions with low state capacity, as in most parts of Colombia's borderlands, multiple forms of regulation increase impunity because crimes are difficult to prosecute: national approaches to border control lack coordination, miscommunication characterises intelligence exchange, and mistrust undermines

bilateral police cooperation. The ex-guerrilla couple (2011b) cited earlier told me how this played out to FARC's advantage:

Ex-guerrilla husband: If you behave well, if you are nice to the Ecuadorian army everything is fine. They hardly cooperate with the Colombian army.

*Me:* *Where did you live better?*

Ex-guerrilla wife: We lived better on the Ecuadorian side because we did not fear the Ecuadorian army. [...]

Ex-guerrilla husband: When I was there we conversed, we talked, they caught many guys, but normally this doesn't happen [...].

*Me:* *Is it better to be in the organisation (FARC) near the border?*

Ex-guerrilla wife: Of course! In any other region there could be a bombardment. Near the border it is safer...because in Colombia, if there is a bombardment, you don't know what happens if it is the army. [Our friend] was killed two years ago [...]. Who killed him? We don't know, he only turned up dead. These things happen...

“Landscapes, history and daily life generally ‘spill over’ state boundaries” (Nugent and Asiwaju 1996, 1; cited by Zeller 2013, 194), and so do law evaders, while state agents do not. Drawing on Ratzel's (1897) organismic analogy, Morehouse et al. (2004, 24) consider the border a filter, or a membrane: it permits some flows across the border and others not. VNSAs cross the border and commit crimes on the other side, but state forces and prosecutors whose job is to be “fully in control right up to, but also not across, that red dotted line” (Zeller 2013, 194) cannot cross it.

### 8.1.1 Invisibilising Victimisation

Victimisation “across the border” is often not reported nor prosecuted and hence facilitated by the lack of accountability.<sup>124</sup> Without figuring in statistics, these crimes are not subjected to government action and the public's attention. I have identified three main forms of victimisation made less visible by the border effect: cross-border killings, cross-border disappearances, and cross-border displacements within borderlands. They are most common in the absence of an arrangement among VNSAs, in spot sales or barter agreements, tactical alliances and subcontractual relationships.

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<sup>124</sup> This is not limited to the Global South. Henry Patterson (2013) documented cases at the Irish-British border where terrorists crossed the border to commit murders and crossed back to safety.

*Cross-border Killings*

The border region of Putumayo and Sucumbíos exemplifies how intra-state and cross-border impunity mask victimisation during combat between VNSAs. The Ecuadorian Ombudsman's Office in Lago Agrio documented cases in which civilians in Sucumbíos were killed on Ecuadorian territory by Colombian paramilitary and by post-demobilised groups (\*human rights defender, Lago Agrio (EC) 2012). These groups followed the guerrillas across the border into Ecuador, asked the population whether they had seen them and threatened or killed people whom they suspected of being guerrilla collaborators, especially if these people had been in Colombia before (González Carranza 2011, 133–134). On 28 September 2009, post-demobilised groups assassinated two Ecuadorians and four Colombians, including a human rights defender, in the Ecuadorian border village of Barranca Bermeja and afterwards escaped to Colombia (Fundación Amazónica Leonidas Proano 2009). Portrayed as settling scores, such homicides are seldom followed-up by Quito or Bogotá due to a lack of political will or the downplaying of cross-border movements of armed groups (Alston 2011, 6–7). When victimisation of Ecuadorians occurred on Colombian territory, more efforts were made to address cross-border impunity. In 2007 the bodies of eight Ecuadorians were found in Putumayo in a mass grave dug by paramilitaries. The Ecuadorian Foreign Minister demanded Ecuador's participation in the judicial proceedings and the identification of bodies in other mass graves along the border in Putumayo which could include Ecuadorians (El Universo 2007). Yet most commonly, the victims' or the perpetrators' tracks fade once they have crossed the border, making them unidentifiable.<sup>125</sup>

At the Colombia-Venezuela border, cross-border killings have also facilitated victimisation. In Norte de Santander and Táchira the border's filter mechanism enhanced incentives for the Rastrojos and the Urabeños to resort to violence while fighting each other, exposing citizens to

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<sup>125</sup> So-called false positives across the border by state forces also remain unpunished: in May 2008 the Colombian military were accused of crossing the border to Sucumbíos as paramilitaries, taking Ecuadorians to Colombia, shooting them and dressing them up as guerrillas to increase the body count, and get additional reward money (González Carranza 2011, 93–95; \*human rights defender, Lago Agrio (EC) 2012; Jaramillo Viteri 2011; Rivadeneira Muñoz and Gonzaga 2008). See ICG (2009, 8) and Alston (2010) for discussions of false positives.

insecurity. Although both groups originate in Colombia, the leaders operate in Venezuela to evade Colombian law enforcement measures,<sup>126</sup> and are assassinated in Venezuela to attract less attention from the Colombian state which has imposed stricter law enforcement measures than Venezuela (\*international agency staff, San Cristóbal (VE) 2012; Bargent 2014). A humanitarian organisation employee (2012) in Cúcuta explained that the Urabeños lured Rastrojos leaders into traps in Ureña, a border town on the other side of Cúcuta:

[The Rastrojos] established a group at the border which is like a small combo of paramilitaries. [The] guy who heads them [...] is called “Carevieja” [...]. The Urabeños are after him because the guy escaped them. This was in Ureña, around November. They called him to a meeting. He sent a trusted man [...]. They entered Ureña with a car and murdered him. In the end, [Carevieja] saved himself, but they had already assassinated Pecueca in Ureña, another finance boss of the Rastrojos.

Since the Venezuelan authorities’ response to such crimes is deficient, the killings spread fear and terror among the local population, silenced through social control and *vacunas* (\*humanitarian organisation staff, San Cristóbal (VE) 2012b).

Committing murders “across the border” to render victimisation invisible has become common also from the non-conflict to the Colombian territory, as an employee of a humanitarian organisation in Cúcuta (2012) explained:

We have seen practices in which they kill in Venezuela and throw the bodies to Colombia. As [VNSAs] operate in Venezuela, they are not interested in meddling with the national justice system. Instead, the problem should go to Colombia. This is what the paramilitaries did here, they copied them.

VNSAs in tactical alliances also take advantage of cross-border impunity to commit murders. P. Williams (2013, 30) notes that transnationality in their economic activities enhances profits yet, ironically, national sovereignty is their protection. As an interviewee from Tumaco confirmed, VNSAs in the Colombian border zone had been using Ecuador as a safe haven (\*international agency staff, Tumaco (CO) 2011):

[The border] is no longer a protection. The perception is that in Ecuador’s northern border zone there are the same illegal groups. They don’t have as much presence [as

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<sup>126</sup> This was also the case with narco-broker Loco Barrera and FARC leaders Raúl Reyes and alias “Timochenko” in Ecuador and Venezuela respectively.

in Colombia], but people believe that there are small groups [...]. Hence, [crossing the border] is safer for the illegal armed actors; it becomes a protective environment for them. Why? Because the armed actor assassinates without any problems. [...] The military forces cannot assassinate anyone they want to. [...] They assassinate, but sometimes they find the perpetrator, or they find out that it was a false positive [...]. But in the case of the illegal armed actor the victim simply is assassinated and they can say it was the Rastrojos or whatever, but impunity is relatively high. Therefore, the citizens of this zone where these activities exist are persecuted by the illegal actor [...]. Previously, the border was a protective factor. The armed actor did not cross. Nowadays, he crosses the border.

The guerrillas benefitted from cross-border impunity to consolidate their preponderance against the state. In February 2012, FARC killed three police officers in Puerto Colón in Bajo Putumayo and escaped into Ecuador immediately after the attack (\*police official, Puerto Asís (CO) 2012). In September 2010 they launched grenades from Ecuadorian territory, on Puerto Colón (El Colombiano 2010), and in 2012 on Teteyé (\*police official, Puerto Asís (CO) 2012).<sup>127</sup> Also in 2012 attacks initiated from the Venezuelan side of the river hit the police station of the city of Arauca. These acts not only render victimisation less visible as in the previously presented cases and thus facilitate violence, but additionally increase mistrust towards anyone not known to the community, contributing to its isolation. In Zulia, outsiders like me were suspected of providing intelligence to the Colombian army, given FARC's strategy of attacking the Colombian army from across the Venezuelan border and escaping back into Venezuela afterwards. A human rights defender from Zulia (2012) warned me:

A while ago there was a confrontation near Guana (Venezuelan village near the border with Colombia) between the guerrillas and the Colombian army [...]. The guerrillas massacred ten Colombian soldiers.<sup>128</sup> They fled to Venezuela. The government, in an attempt to save face, said: "Send me more than 2000 soldiers to position them in the region". Of course they know what is happening, but they say no-one is here and [therefore] you can't do anything about it [...]. If you go to Guana, if they see a little face like yours, they don't know if you are someone from the CIA [...]. Therefore [the human rights defender] María<sup>129</sup> asked me who you are, where you come from and why. Because they did surveillance on María. [...] Both groups attempted to assassinate her, both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries. They operate in this zone.

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<sup>127</sup> Some interviewees stated that the Colombian military launched grenades from Colombia against FARC on the Ecuadorian side.

<sup>128</sup> According to the local media 12 Colombian soldiers were killed and four injured during this incident on 21 May 2012 (Faría 2012; La Nación 2012).

<sup>129</sup> I changed her name.

This suspicion enables the guerrillas to foster shadow citizenship under their preponderance on Venezuelan territory while increasing stigmatisation of these communities as guerrilla collaborators, especially from the Colombian point of view.

### *Cross-border Disappearances*

Torres-Rivas (1999, 291) notes that disappearances generate

insecurity and pain in the greatest degree [...]. The fear and insecurity produced by this phenomenon lead to lasting reactions, perhaps passive or neurotic adaptations, in response to the permanent presence of death.

If disappearances are cross-border, such pain is arguably even greater because violence is less visible and excluded from any national statistics, especially at maritime borders. According to interviewees in Tumaco (\*cleric, Tumaco (CO) 2011; \*indigenous leader, Tumaco (CO) 2011), VNSAs have been throwing bodies into rivers that flow into the Pacific. Floating into the open sea, these bodies were never identified. 216 people were reported to have been killed in Tumaco in 2013, another three to have been disappeared, and even more have probably not been reported (De-la -Hoz-Bohórquez 2011, 106; OCHA 2014).

Along the Colombia-Venezuela border, cross-border disappearances have occurred at least since the AUC's incursion. Over the last decade 16,000 persons have been killed and 1,800 disappeared in the borderlands of Norte de Santander and Táchira (J. D. Restrepo 2011).<sup>130</sup> Between 1999 and 2001 the AUC buried bodies in mass graves, cemeteries or threw them into the river to eliminate traces. Since 2001, the paramilitary leaders Salvatore Mancuso and Carlos Castaño ordered the incineration of bodies in various locations in Norte de Santander including Cúcuta, Villa del Rosario and Puerto de Santander to lower homicide rates and avoid the attention of human rights organisations (Fundación Progresar 2010, 60; CINEP 2012). In 2003 the Catatumbo Bloc's Border Front started to employ cross-border disappearances: the victims were killed in Colombia and buried in Venezuela, or both killed and dumped in Venezuela (El Espectador 2009;

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<sup>130</sup> According to Colombia's national register of disappeared people, 947 people were registered as disappeared in Norte Santander between 2000 and 2009 (Fundación Progresar 2010, 48).

\*humanitarian organisation staff, Cúcuta (CO) 2012; \*community leader, Cúcuta (CO) 2012). Between March and April 2003 the bodies of more than fifty Colombians were dumped in Venezuela near Juan Frío. Leaving the bodies in unpopulated areas near the border, the perpetrators were hardly accountable (Fundación Progresar 2010, 86–106). Since the AUC's demobilisation post-demobilised groups have been conducting cross-border disappearances.

Cross-border disappearances blur the differences between two types of violence in borderlands: Colombian civil war violence and Venezuelan common crime. To camouflage the crimes, the perpetrators generally no longer kill their victims as brutally as they used to in Colombia, for example by dismembering them (Fundación Progresar 2010, 92). They make the deaths look like victims of street crime which has been rising in Venezuela in recent years (PROVEA 2012; PROVEA 2013; OVV 2012; OVV 2013; ICG 2011b). The unclear origin of lethal violence reduces accountability. Over the last nine years, an estimated 300 bodies – supposedly, murdered Colombians – were buried as “unknown” in the cemetery of San Cristóbal (Fundación Progresar 2010, 90; J. D. Restrepo 2011). In the end of 2009 alone, 23 unidentified bodies were thrown into a mass grave (OCHA Nororiente 2010, 7). Such cross-border disappearances remain invisible to the public. Only large scale cross-border crimes appear in the media, for example the “massacre of the football players” in Fernández Feo municipality in Táchira on 11 October 2009, in which nine Colombians were kidnapped and disappeared, as the Ecuadorian newspaper Hoy (2009b) reported.<sup>131</sup>

It is harder for the victims' relatives to obtain information on the victim's whereabouts across the border than within the national territory. Identified dead Colombians in Venezuela are issued a Venezuelan death certificate, invalid in Colombia. Officially alive, the persons neither figure in homicide statistics nor can relatives claim benefits as victims of the conflict (J. D. Restrepo 2011). Repatriating the corpse is complicated and expensive (Fundación Progresar 2010, 87). The

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<sup>131</sup> According to a resident (2012), one of them survived and claimed that ELN were the perpetrators.

cross-border nature of these disappearances reinforces the fear that Rivas-Torres (1999, 292)

notes for “ordinary” disappearances:

The modality of the ‘disappeared’ is even more cruel than public assassination, since it raises the perception of danger by placing it in an imaginary world, unsure but probable, created by the possibility that the disappeared person is alive. While one suspects that the disappeared person may be dead, nobody knows the truth. Doubt, prolonged over time, is a highly productive way of sowing fear. Fear has come to stay.

According to Fundación Progresar (2010, 87), Venezuela’s failure to systematically investigate crimes is due to the lack of a coherent strategy, infrastructure and culture. It also relates to the time lag in facing these crimes on such a large scale: in Venezuela this started in the 2000s whereas Colombia had been suffering disappearances much earlier.

The degree of impunity varies across time and space. It depends on the interests of governments in particular border areas and on changes in their bilateral relations (van Schendel 2005a, 52–53). As outlined in Chapter Four, the ups and downs in Colombia’s diplomatic relations with its neighbours condition border cooperation. For example, the communication channels between the Forensic Institute of Táchira (part of the Venezuelan Ministry of People’s Power for Internal Relations and Justice), and the Colombian authorities had been obstructed through diplomatic tensions in the first half of the 2000s (Fundación Progresar 2010, 89).

#### *Cross-border Displacements within Borderlands*

Cross-border displacements within borderlands (as opposed to displacements to the recipient country’s interior) shape citizen security dynamics by obscuring victimisation, particularly in the absence of an arrangement and in tactical alliances among VNSAs. During the guerrillas’ war in Arauca between 2006 and 2010 Colombian borderlanders sought refuge in Apure, within the border zone, their cross-border community (Núñez 2012, 61–62).<sup>132</sup> Starting a new life in a familiar environment is easier than in another region without support systems, and being near

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<sup>132</sup> As of 2010, an estimated 120,000 to 200,000 Colombians in need of international protection were in Venezuela and 135,000 in Ecuador (UNHCR 2010b, 3–4).

relatives who stay behind is comforting (\*Colombian refugee, El Amparo (VE) 2012). 4,230 Colombians sought refugee status in Apure between 2002 and June 2010 (UNHCR 2010a),<sup>133</sup> yet many do not, because staying with relatives or friends they do not consider themselves refugees.<sup>134</sup> These people have neither registered as internally displaced people in Colombia, nor as refugees in Venezuela, rendering their displacement invisible.

Cross-border intra-borderland displacements of bi-national indigenous people are particularly invisible outside the community due to the borderlands' transnationality combined with their lifestyle's binationality. The Wayúu are displaced in the context of tactical alliances in La Guajira and Zulia within the border zone. Since geographical mobility is part of their lifestyle (Peralta et al. 2011, 6), and since they hardly report displacements to state institutions because they have their own legal system, it is difficult to distinguish their movements across the border from forced displacements (Gamboa Martínez 2012, 3). In Nariño, during FARC's combat against paramilitaries in the early 2000s and post-demobilised groups including the Rastrojos in the 2010s, many indigenous Awá in Nariño and Carchi fled massacres. An Awá leader (2011) explained the invisibility of the displacements:

The Awá family lives in another country because [the borderline] is an imaginary line that does not exist. [Our country] is a territory like the Colombian and the Ecuadorian one [...]. Many of the armed actors have used this side of the border corridor like a strategic zone, a site for refuge and trafficking of drugs and arms. This drug trafficking conflict has affected us here in the border corridor. [...] Some of our families were obliged to migrate to Ecuador or to other places. The families know that this is one territory, yet another country, but they continue to live as if they were in Colombia. We have had a problem with this because the families are displaced from here, they cross the border and one never realises that so many people were displaced to another country. The same way as they belong to the same family, they leave and take refuge, successively, at their uncle's place, their cousin's, their grandparents'... This problem is invisible because one hardly realises that it happens. Only when you start to investigate you will know that they left due to [...] the armed conflict [...]. For the international community and for the Colombian or Ecuadorian government it is invisible [...] Many families who lived in Colombia and cross over to Ecuador [...] are Colombians [...]. Sometimes they haven't been granted the rights included in the [Ecuadorian] Constitution, because for [the Ecuadorian authorities] they are foreigners, but according to our vision they are not. Many families are sometimes threatened in the Colombian Awá territory and the only

<sup>133</sup> 15,490 Colombians sought refugee status in Venezuela, of whom 2,700 were granted refugee status.

<sup>134</sup> Further reasons are that they do not know how to register as a refugee or prefer anonymity to avoid prosecution.

option they have to protect themselves is cross over to the other country because their family lives there. [...] Some of them stay there and others return after a while. This type of displacement is not visible to the national and international community [...]. [They think that] maybe they just went on holiday or to visit their family, but in reality they had to flee threats or something related to the Colombian armed conflict.

While Colombian refugees in Ecuador and Venezuela receive official assistance, Ecuadorians and Venezuelans who face “intra-border zone displacement” or who are displaced from the border zone to the interior of their country tend to be overlooked (Idler 2009, 42).<sup>135</sup> Colombia has adapted its policies to the long history of violence. Even though imperfectly, since 2011 it has been assisting victims of the armed conflict with the Victims Law (Ministerio del Interior y de Justicia 2011). Also, Colombian legislation concerning the protection of indigenous people and Afro-Colombians is more advanced than its Venezuelan or Ecuadorian counterparts, because in Colombia these ethnic groups have been historically disproportionately affected by the armed conflict.<sup>136</sup>

The border’s filter mechanism makes victimisation less obvious, fuels violence among VNSAs and perhaps increases citizens’ exposure to it, especially in the absence of VNSA arrangements and in the context of spot sales, barter agreements and of tactical alliances, where the citizens’ physical security is at risk. Proximity to the border has been intentionally (ab-)used to camouflage homicides. Because of deficient official border cooperation, exacerbated by diplomatic tensions, the VNSAs are rarely held accountable so that the *de facto* citizen security situation is often more precarious than reflected in media coverage or homicide statistics. The borderlanders’ fear of victimisation is intensified because the cross-border impunity facilitates the VNSAs’ engagement in violence.

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<sup>135</sup> This situation has been improving over recent years, especially in Ecuador.

<sup>136</sup> In the first seven months of 2013 23 per cent of the confined population and 73 per cent of the displaced were indigenous people and Afro-Colombians although they constitute only 3 per cent and 9 per cent of Colombia’s population respectively (OCHA 2013).

### 8.1.2 Promoting an Illicit Economy

The proximity to an international border allows evasion of law enforcement measures aimed at destroying drug business infrastructure: laboratories to crystallise coca paste into cocaine are moved across the border; storage areas for the cocaine ready for international shipment are changed from mangroves or harbours on one side of the border to the other; and airstrips to ship cocaine abroad are easily rebuilt across the border. This increases the income stability for communities who work along the cocaine supply chain for the VNSAs: provided they are reasonably mobile, people working in laboratories do not lose their work and suppliers of products such as coca paste can continue to sell their product. It helps foster the VNSAs' legitimacy among these citizens and increases the tolerance margin for abuse and violence committed by the VNSAs; it enhances shadow citizen security.

In the Colombian-Ecuadorian borderlands, as of 2011 mobile laboratories existed in Sucumbíos and Putumayo. To avoid military pressure, the guerrillas moved laboratories to the Ecuadorian border zone (Tickner, García, and Arzeza 2011, 427). According to the Ecuadorian Ministry of the Interior (2011, 45) in 2010 five cocaine laboratories were detected and destroyed and 3,870 coca plants eradicated in the Ecuadorian border zone.

In Norte de Santander and Zulia mobile laboratories have been located near the road that links Cúcuta with Puerto Santander, for example near the areas of Camilo Torres and Patillales (\*community leader, Cúcuta (Co) 2011). Around 75 per cent of the gasoline smuggled from Venezuela to Norte de Santander used for cocaine processing enters the country in this region with little state presence and is transported to the laboratories (\*community leader, Cúcuta (Co) 2011). According to a community leader from Cúcuta, as of 2011 the Rastrojos managed the laboratories and moved them across the border when the army entered the zone.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> They also used mobile laboratories in the outskirts of Cúcuta to shift them outside the Metropolitan police forces' range of operation while benefitting from the availability of labour force.

The borderline is not always a distinct feature, such as a river. Ambiguity regarding the side on which VNSAs operate may exist, for example north of the River Oro where the border runs through an inaccessible mountainous area, the northern part of Sierra de Perijá shared by Cesar and Zulia. A humanitarian organisation employee (2012a) from Zulia explained:

Employee: People say there are laboratories in this zone [of Machiques]. [...] Three years ago the National Guard detained [an indigenous Bari], accusing him of transporting drugs down the mountains from a laboratory, but the Bari say he did not transport drugs, that he was not involved [...]. The place that the National Guard mentions is not Venezuela, it is Colombia. They went into Colombia without permission from the Colombians. In the end, the Bari was sentenced to 15 years. [...] According to the government they have dismantled laboratories [in Venezuela], too.

Other person:<sup>138</sup> They also found a laboratory in Jesús María Semprún municipality [...].  
 Employee: In the mountainous zone that can be reached by going up from Toromo, there are places where they process the drug. This is done on the Venezuelan side. The drug business is thriving in this zone! We visited people in the zone who have pictures of the drug presses, but we don't know who they are and how they bring the drug down [to the village] [...]. The guerrillas are in charge of it. Since the place is near the Colombian side, people say they go to the Colombian Sierra de Codazzi, where the coca is. They harvest the coca and bring it here to process it. [...] This is a zone of difficult access; normally there are only the indigenous.

Distributing the drug business's different stages to both sides of a poorly defined border, the guerrillas rely on the locals' support to carry the drug down to the road to be transported onwards while locals rely on this income. The Bari's involvement in transporting drugs is plausible, given the difficult access to legal economic opportunities due to stigmatisation as guerrilla collaborators (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Machiques (VE) 2012a).

In Nariño and Esmeraldas on the Pacific coast, cocaine destined for international trafficking by sea is stocked in harbours and mangroves (see Figure 33). VNSAs move cocaine stocks across the border to evade law enforcement measures, enhancing income stability for the community members involved. An estimated 216.3 tons of cocaine is shipped every year from the Pacific coast via the Galapagos Islands, Central America or Mexico to the US (UNODC 2010, 74–75).<sup>139</sup>

Borderlanders work as boatmen, informants, messengers, or providers of motors and gasoline.

<sup>138</sup> The person accompanied me during the interview.

<sup>139</sup> 242 tons are shipped to the US and Europe from the Caribbean.

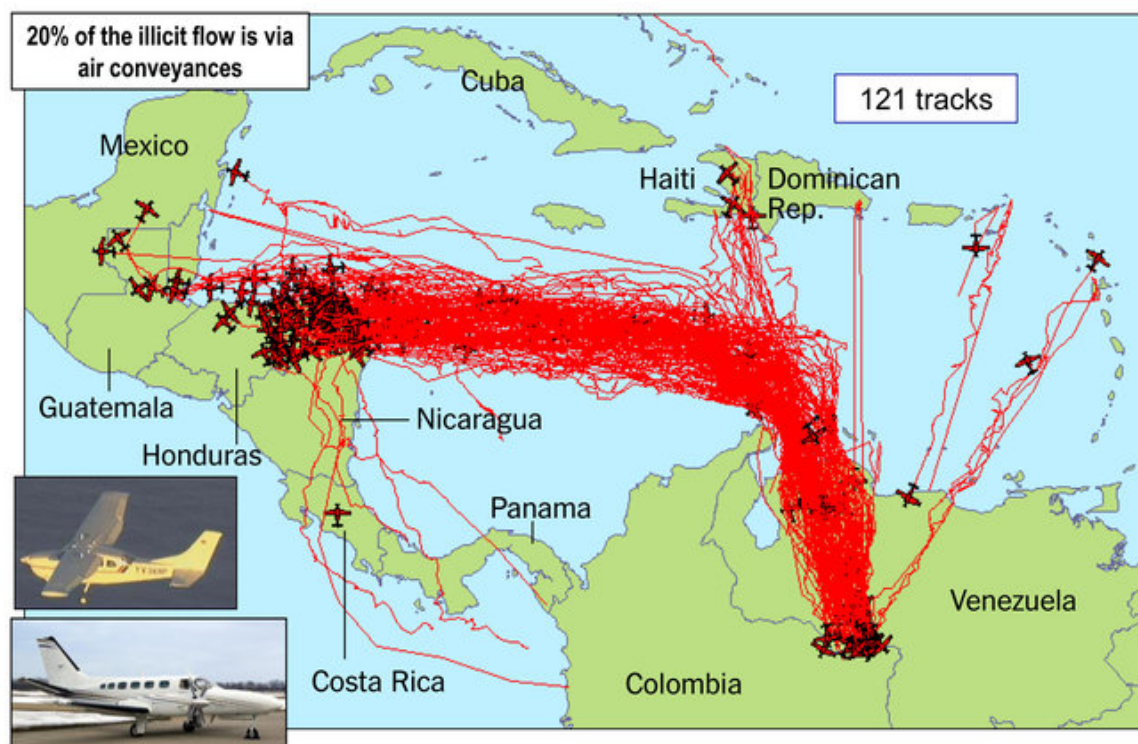


**Figure 33: Cocaine hide-out: mangroves on the Pacific Coast**

The Colombian government intensified interdiction measures in Tumaco to stop boats ranging from fastlane boats to semi-submarines, but the traffickers diversified their routes to also use starting points in Ecuador. Guayaquil and Esmeraldas have been popular starting points for decades (UNODC 2006), but

recently large-scale cases near the border have become known. Cases of seizures provide insights into these operations. On 15 September 2008, the Operation *Huracán de la Frontera* led to the confiscation of 4.7 tons of cocaine in 4,415 packages, hidden in La Campanita, an area in Esmeraldas province only 20 metres away from the border River Mataje. Each package was marked with Nike, Apache or Águila, signs used by FARC Fronts 29 and 32 (El Universo 2009b), and to be shipped in submarines to Acapulco (El Universo 2009a).

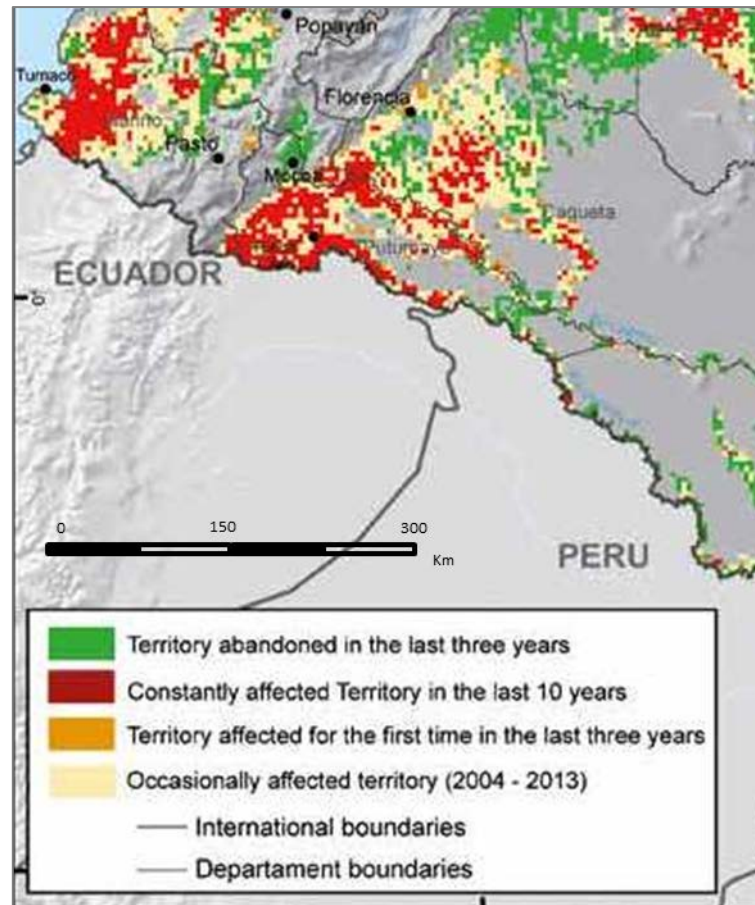
VNSAs also benefit from movement across the border at the starting points of air routes. Arauca used to be an important starting point of cocaine flights towards the Caribbean and the US. However, in 2005 the Colombians (with US assistance) imposed stricter control of their airspace and Chávez stopped cooperation with the US Drug Enforcement Administration (Neuman 2012). The clandestine airstrips were relocated to Apure. According to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, 24 per cent of the cocaine shipped out of South America in 2010 passed through Venezuela, accounting for more than 200 tons (Neuman 2012). More than 100 tons were shipped from Apure. Map 15 with the radar picture of 121 illicit flights leaving Apure in 2010 illustrates the business's "prosperity":



**Map 15: Illicit flights from Apure (Neuman 2012)**

Income stability in regions that lack state-provided economic opportunities enhances the VNSAs' legitimacy as job providers, making it difficult for the state to (re-)gain legitimacy. Shadow citizen security and shadow citizenship become more worthwhile than citizenship oriented towards the state. By diminishing the risk of interdiction measures, transnationality also reduces the population's risk of insecurity because, when cocaine shipments are confiscated or laboratories destroyed, VNSAs tend to compensate for the loss with an increase in extortion or kidnappings.

VNSAs also benefit from the prohibition of fumigations to eradicate coca cultivations within ten kilometres of the Colombia-Ecuador border (see Chapter Four). As Map 16 shows, these are the areas where coca cultivation persists.



**Map 16: Persistence of coca cultivation along the border, 2004-2013 (UNODC 2014)<sup>140</sup>**

### 8.1.3 Invisibilising Illicit Cross-border Authority

“What happens at borders exerts a powerful, but too rarely recognized, influence on processes of state and nation formation” (van Schendel 2005b, 385). In pacific coexistence, strategic alliances or the preponderance of VNSAs, the transnationality of borderlands renders social control less visible, including across the border. Mats Berdal (2002), Rohan Gunaratna (2003) and organisations such as UNODC (2010) highlight the transnationality of the activities of VNSAs (e.g. transnational organised crime) or of their organisational structure (e.g. transnational terrorist networks), yet not of their authority. As Wolfgang Zeller (2013, 211) notes,

borderlands are always zones of regulatory ambiguity, and during open conflict the opportunity to make up and enforce different (formal and nonformal) regimes of regulation is particularly prevalent.

<sup>140</sup> This is a section of the original map.

VNSAs enhance their cross-border authority while state authorities are limited to one side. Not feeling fully part of a national citizenry, borderlanders may find the VNSA-induced shadow citizenship more in line with their trans-border sense of belonging. VNSAs involved in long-term arrangements provide governance functions including security, while the state fails to comply with the social contract with the borderland part of the citizenry. Borderland communities may “exit” the deficient state-society relationship and enter a mutually reinforcing relationship with a VNSA. The resulting institutional pluralism (Zeller 2013, 211) contradicts conceiving borderlands as ungoverned or ungovernable spaces (Zeller 2013, 193–218; Goodhand 2013, 247–249); they are transformed into illicitly governed spaces (cf. Clunan and Trinkunas 2010).

Carchi is usually cited as the least violent and most secure northern Ecuadorian border province (Espín 2009; González Carranza 2008; Celi, Camilo, and Gabriela 2009). Many interviewees in Quito interpreted the low homicide rates as the absence of VNSAs. However, interviews in remote border zones including Chical, Maldonado and Tufiño pointed to dynamics indiscernible from outside the region: that FARC had transactional supply chain relationships with the Rastrojos on the Colombian border side and that FARC Front 29’s preponderance in Colombia was sustained and extended to Ecuador through cross-border social control, exerted through psychological pressure and strict rules without a visible presence. Whispering, a cleric told me that they cross over to Carchi (2012):

The guerrillas convene a lot of meetings, last week they called four or five meetings. The problem is that when they arrive, no-one can enter or leave anymore, they control everything because there could be informants.

The threat of violence is usually sufficient. Knowing about the violent punishments imposed on their Colombian neighbours, Ecuadorians adhere to FARC’s rules and FARC continue their activities undisturbed. The dynamics in rural Carchi are rendered invisible by the VNSA’s control over public discourse. They hardly receive attention from the state or media. This stops community members speaking out since they do not expect support, and it conceals cases where silence results from the Ecuadorians’ social recognition of the Front 29’s authority, rather than

from fear. Local people argued that coca leaves are cultivated and processed in Colombia only (\*citizen, Chical (EC) 2012). When I enquired further, I found that Ecuadorians crossed over to Colombia to work in coca plantations. Ergo, silence is also predicated on the known involvement of Ecuadorians. They perceive FARC to be a legitimate authority because while violence and combat between insurgents and state forces are limited to Colombia, job opportunities arising from the cocaine business are open to Colombians and Ecuadorians alike. Ecuadorians can work, but go back after work to the comparative safety of home in Ecuador.<sup>141</sup> The silence towards outsiders yet solidarity among community members to keep quiet about others' involvement suggests a similar phenomenon that I presented in Chapter Six on the indigenous Otavaleños: the "bonding social capital" among those from the same borderland community is high and hence social fabric dense, whereas the "bridging social capital" with those outside the group is low (cf. Putnam 2001, 23). Yet being a *cross-border* shadow community rather than a marginalised group within a single state arguably produces an even deeper "tear" in the social fabric between the community and the rest of the citizenry that is more difficult to repair: as these cross-border communities do not belong with either of the two bordering states, the fabric comes away at the edges rather than being damaged within, without the state even noticing.

A politician from Tulcán (2012) commented on the northern border zone as follows: "From the perspective of other regions one could think that the issue of security is delicate, but if you visit the border you don't find problems. They are not visible to the naked eye!" The public discourse in Ecuador conveys a generalised image of the border zone. Visiting the region gives an impression of calmness, usually confirmed by locals. Yet this illusory calmness results from FARC's remote cross-border social control. The Ecuadorian authorities do not have evidence against FARC since they are not physically present, or if they are, as civilian militias, often with an Ecuadorian passport (\*cleric, Carchi (EC) 2012):

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<sup>141</sup> According to an interviewee from Tufiño (Tulcán (EC) 2012) people used to visit the neighbouring Colombian village, but stopped doing so during fighting between state forces and the guerrillas.

There isn't warlike violence on this side, but there is another form of violence. This region isn't declared a zone of extension, but it is a zone of extension. The problem is that many from [Colombia], including *guerrilleros*, have dual citizenship.

In Sucumbíos, near the border crossing between San Miguel and General Farfán, FARC Front 48 exerts illicit transnational authority (Fundación Paz y Reconciliación 2014, 58), inducing shadow citizenship. As of 2012, they regularly called Ecuadorian farmers to attend meetings in Colombia to inform them about the *vacuna* rate to be paid in Ecuador and about what to cultivate at their farms in Colombia (\*citizen, General Farfán (EC) 2012). The state forces' bad image, often perceived as yet another dangerous group, facilitates illicit cross-border authority: a resident of Lago Agrio (2012) stated that "along the entire border there is danger because there are FARC, paramilitaries and Colombian militaries". Yet as a resident of General Farfán (2012) described, while the state is considered ineffective, the guerrillas are respected and feared:

Resident: Regarding security at the border, the police can do almost nothing because they always fear reprisals by the Colombians, the guerrillas. Those who run [General] Farfán are the guerrillas because if something bad happens, people prefer to go to the other side. If a car gets stolen or if something happens, people go there because they are more efficient than the Ecuadorians [the police].

*Me:* How do you know that the guerrillas control it?

Resident: Because there is always certain fear [...]. Ecuadorians are scared because of people coming from Colombia [...]. No-one talks about it, because they fear reprisals [...]. Don't talk so that they don't kill you.

Residents of the Venezuelan border zone also feel abandoned by the state, as a 2009 citizen security survey of the Venezuelan National Statistics Institute (2010) confirms 85 per cent believe state presence is weak or very weak. This sentiment is also high among non-borderlanders (79 per cent) (INE 2010, 183). However, what borderlanders perceive to be strong state presence tends to be weak presence for non-borderlanders because their baseline is lower. Limited state presence constitutes an improvement over previous levels, and thus is more appreciated. The actual difference of state presence between borderlands and non-borderlands is likely to be higher than the 6 per cent indicated in the survey. Furthermore, corrupt authorities in borderlands reduce the borderlander's trust in the state. 7.6 per cent of the respondents in the border states of Amazonas, Apure, Táchira and Zulia identified the police as the major source of crime as opposed to 4.6 per

cent of non-borderland respondents (INE 2010, 160). This mistrust makes it easy for VNSAs to lure borderlanders from state-led security-provision to shadow citizen security.

Analysing how the borderlands' transnationality renders social control invisible has served to do what Korf and Raeymaekers (2013, 5) suggest when asking where the state ends geographically:

to visualize the often fragmented geographies of sovereignty that characterize state-society encounters at the physical margins of the state, and which often involve important processes of bordering and boundary-drawing between what is categorically termed as distinctions between state and society, formal and informal or public and private systems of rule.

## **8.2. The Border as a Deterrent**

The border can deter VNSAs from reducing mistrust among themselves and vis-à-vis the local population. This fuels interpersonal mistrust in borderland communities and erodes the communities' social fabric, a necessary component of citizen security. Yet at the same time, the border can deter VNSAs from victimising community members. This is the case when these reside on the non-conflict side where, notwithstanding the violence discussed above, Colombian VNSAs are less likely to engage in large-scale violence such as massacres.

### 8.2.1 Eroding the Social Fabric

Security analysts highlight that VNSAs are *not* bound by state borders and therefore benefit from (illegal) cross-border activities, such as transnational organised crime (see e.g. Serrano and Toro 2002; van Schendel and Abraham 2005), or from cross-border impunity, as discussed above.

Michael Miklaucic and Jacqueline Brewer (2013, xvii) note

criminal and terrorist entities are mobile and increasingly migratory actors capable of shifting both their locations and their vocations in order to exploit geographic, political, enforcement, and regulatory vulnerabilities. They do not view state borders as impenetrable “castle walls”.

Although not as “castle walls”, VNSAs do recognise borders as obstacles, particularly in the context of reducing inter-group mistrust. When VNSAs engage in transnational spot sales and

barter agreements, members of one of the groups must cross the border to meet members of another group. Since the latter is more familiar with the environment, the first group has at least three disadvantages. Firstly, if normally not operating in that territory (e.g. because the local group is preponderant), it is more difficult for group members to bribe or infiltrate the state forces of that country to acquire information on their operations. Secondly, as foreigners they have weaker ties with the local population. Finally, they are more vulnerable to cheating by the local group which can more easily avoid retaliation. Across a border, the convergence of economic interests as distrust-reducing mechanism is less effective than within the boundaries of one state. Group interdependence is diminished so that the arrangement shifts towards the fuzzy continuum's lower left. Both parties mistrust each other and the local population, which each party suspects of collaborating with the other.

The local population is affected by such inter-group mistrust if involved in the business deals, and, indirectly, by general mistrust. VNSAs use borderlanders to reduce risks of cheating. Locals who work as drug mules, gasoline smugglers, or messengers constitute "cannon fodder". They are exposed to violence used by one group to cheat on the other one, to deter cheating or to retaliate for cheating. A Colombian ex-guerrilla fighter (2011a) in Pasto who used to work in the finance section of FARC's Mariscal Sucre Front reveals the increased mistrust arising from cross-border spot sales.

Ex-guerrilla: In Tulcán I was part of [...] finances. We entered Ecuador to negotiate with people from there. Our business was supplies, for example military equipment. We met with Ecuadorians who sell stuff or we arrived at the border and arranged a meeting with these people and then they came to see us [...]. They sold everything: armaments, ammunition, military clothes, medicine, provisions [...].

*Me:* *Were you in plain clothes?*

Ex-guerrilla: Of course [...].

*Me:* *In Ipiales as well?*

Ex-guerrilla: In plain clothes. [...]

*Me:* *How did you cross the border [...]?*

Ex-guerrilla: [...] They got me a fake ID [...]. We stayed in Tulcán around four, five or eight days. This is quick because once we made the deal we left again.

*Me:* *Did the deal involve armament or medicine or...?*

Ex-guerrilla: It was a bit of everything. You strike a deal and afterwards in another area they hand over what you have ordered and you pay them. Camouflage clothes cost that much, a sweatshirt costs that much, this drug costs that much, a rifle costs that much, ammunition cost that much...they set the price and then you start negotiate. Let's say it is a rifle and it costs 10 million, then I say: "I will give you that much and it's a deal [...]". Then FARC themselves pick up the merchandise. They transport it via Tallambí, from here to there to hand it over to the boss [...].

*Me:* *How did they bring the merchandise to Colombia, via Rumichaca?*

Ex-guerrilla: No, they have their own trails. [...] I don't know these routes, but when one finds out they're already there with the stuff. They call us and say: "Here is your stuff, come". [...] For example, they tell you: "The commander requests this and that!" Then I make him a list. You have to memorise everything, you can't take a paper with you because of the checkpoints [...]. You arrive and you go to a house or to a hotel and you shut yourself up and ready. Let's negotiate [...]. "How many days will it take?" "We need it quicker!" It takes that long because there are many checkpoints on the way, it takes at least a month, up to one and a half months.

*Me:* *[...] Did you already know how to negotiate?*

Ex-guerrilla: No, they give us instructions [...]. Let's say I bring the material I want to sell, the commander does not let himself be seen, instead he tells someone to go and negotiate: "For a grenade pay that much!" If he says "Pay up to that amount", then don't go higher, don't go lower than that [...]. He doesn't let himself be seen by those who come because you never know, something might happen... Therefore he tells you if you can [pay the price] or not, or to tell them to lower [it] a bit more. This is a long process [...]. It's very complicated! These arms traffickers are very greedy. Once, when we bought 200 grenades from them, 15 had no primers. A month later we found out, a guy in charge of maintenance found out. He took off the grenade's lid and, of course, there wasn't any primer. They filled it with dirt. This was really bad for me. The person who was told off was me because I negotiated and was supposed to check everything really well.

*Me:* *Aren't these traffickers trusted persons?*

Ex-guerrilla: No [...], some of them are trusted people, but others are not. Since we want to have things cheaper, I have to buy from them and they realise that they can cheat on us...and we have to go to Ecuador to meet them and this is where they lure us into a trap.

Negotiating the deal in a closed space reduces mistrust vis-à-vis community members who may be collaborators of the other group or the state forces. For the population to stay safe the rule is not to know anything about these deals. Knowledge bears the risk of being killed because there is only a limited option for VNSAs to deter whistle-blowers with social control. When asking a local international organisation employee (2012) whether locals are aware of Colombians crossing over to Ecuador to engage in such deals, he replied: "Most people don't say anything or you decide not to ask because it is difficult". The borderlanders reduce their vulnerability by keeping quiet. Suspicion against Colombians in Ecuador's border zone persists: Ecuadorians

suspect them of being dealers that come to Ecuador *incognito* to do business (\*international agency staff, Esmeraldas (EC) 2012). This has contributed to increasing xenophobia among the local population (Laverde and Tapia 2009, 65; Programa de Estudios de la Ciudad 2011, 7).

Some borderland community members are themselves involved in cross-border deals with VNSAs. An international organisation employee in Esmeraldas (2012) describes the silence of these borderlanders, which disguises their involvement:

One day I was talking to a man in [a village] at a gasoline station [...]. We were promoting agriculture so that people would stop being involved in something illicit and dedicate themselves to legal activities. One of the men sitting with us stood up and left. [...] They told me that he smuggles fuel all the time. They told me that they made 1,000 USD every day by smuggling fuel and that they knew that this fuel would go to Colombia to process cocaine. There is this link between drug trafficking, the guerrillas and people from this side who participate in the business.

Another example of the involvement of community members is cross-border money laundering, particularly lucrative along the Colombia-Ecuador border because Ecuador is dollarised. In Esmeraldas province an interviewee (2012) commented:

Those from the [Colombian] border side come with 50 or one 100-dollar notes. Since no-one in the country receives a note of such a high value, they demand: "Change this 100-dollar note!" People say: "I don't have so many 10-dollar notes", "Don't worry, I'll give you 100 and you give me 50 in return!" Then you go to San Lorenzo and deposit it at the bank. These are dollars, no counterfeit money, these are real dollars. People began to get involved in this practice as a business. They told me the guerrillas camp at night in this zone. They come to rest and in some cases, people make friends with them. Due to this money relationship, they make more and more friends. I give you 100 and you give me 50 in return. That's a deal! I don't work, but gain 50 dollars from time to time.

Both in the case of gasoline smuggling and money laundering, the borderlanders involved prefer silence about the presence of Colombian VNSAs in Ecuador for their own benefit. Those who are not involved keep quiet to avoid being suspected of whistle-blowing. Mistrust arising from the possibility of cheating makes the involvement of "ordinary" citizens invisible. The previous chapters have shown that the rule of silence is applied in many different situations of VNSA presence, for example in Cúcuta, where people involved in gasoline smuggling keep quiet about the extortion. Yet in Cúcuta, the presence of VNSAs is widely known, partly due to the high rates

of violence associated with them. In the case of cross-border arrangements with Colombian VNSAs on non-Colombian territory, VNSA presence is less visible. VNSAs have to keep a low profile to use Ecuadorian territory for supplies and money laundering. They have more reason to mistrust Ecuadorian borderlanders who may report their presence to the authorities, which could provoke higher state military presence. Due to the low profile, Colombian VNSAs enforce the Ecuadorian borderlanders' silence through psychological pressure rather than violence. This can lead to mental health problems in the long run and it has repercussions on the state-society relationship: the rule of silence distances citizens from the state, meaning they are less likely to contribute with their agency to citizen security themselves by demanding accountability and denouncing crimes, contributing to impunity.

The border's characteristic of deterring trust among VNSAs also influences citizen security in the context of subcontractual relationships. Around 2008, a youth group called the Sons of San Lorenzo conducted social cleansing in Ecuadorian San Lorenzo at the Pacific (González Carranza 2008, 216–218). Apparently, Colombian post-demobilised groups from Tumaco had contracted them across the border. This way, they presumably exerted control over the population of San Lorenzo while maintaining a low profile.

Contracted across the border the groups are, though being in a “staggered” relationship, more independent than one would expect: if counting on the community's support, and if the Colombian group is reluctant to have a high profile for example by killing youth gang members, the youth group can decide to operate independently. Indeed, according to some residents, the Sons of San Lorenzo started to ask for money from the local population to act independently from, if not against, the Colombian group (González Carranza 2008, 216–218). Residents of San Lorenzo insisted that locals should protect San Lorenzo from being overtaken by violent entrepreneurs. Some blame Colombia for citizen insecurity. They suggested keeping out

Colombians, which has fuelled mistrust.<sup>142</sup> At the same time, suspicion that some of their youth had become complicit with the Colombian groups increased the Ecuadorians' perception of insecurity. The citizen security dynamics became characterised by uncertainty, fear and physical violence due to the lack of clarity on what would constitute appropriate behaviour to ensure security.

Both the Colombian VNSAs' strategy and the attitude of the residents of San Lorenzo have changed since 2008. As of February 2012, the police of San Lorenzo were still not able to ensure security, arguably due to deficient human and material resources (\*police officer, San Lorenzo (EC) 2012). Apparently no longer concerned about a low profile, a Colombian post-demobilised group reportedly was present in San Lorenzo to establish "order". Feeling safer, many residents of San Lorenzo approved (\*citizen, San Lorenzo (EC) 2012b; \*citizen, San Lorenzo (EC) 2012c; \*cleric, San Lorenzo (EC) 2012), demonstrating how VNSA presence has become normalised in Ecuador, too, and how Pécaut's (1987) argument that order and violence are considered intertwined in Colombia, has expanded to Ecuador.<sup>143</sup>

Engaging in cross-border spot sales, barter agreements or subcontractual relationships may increase mistrust among VNSAs because it reduces constraints on the local group cheating on the foreign one. This contributes to mistrust and the rule of silence among the local population which isolates people from each other and erodes the social fabric. However xenophobia thwarts the emergence of a cross-border community, making the formation of a shadow community with shadow citizen security across the border unlikely.

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<sup>142</sup> One resident (2012) argued that, thanks to the Colombian conflict's spillover, Quito and the international development agencies had started to pay attention to impoverished San Lorenzo which led to asphaltting of roads and more presence of the state and international agencies.

<sup>143</sup> Despite their feelings of safety, in 2013 homicide rates in the Canton of San Lorenzo were 96.2 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (Fiscalía de Ecuador 2014).

### 8.2.2 Reducing Victimization

In the absence of arrangements and in short-term arrangements, borderland geography can increase uncertainty and the risk of victimisation. In transactional supply chain relationships borderlanders can use the unique geography to their advantage to reduce these risk factors while increasing their income, which often fosters the VNSAs' perceived legitimacy. As coca cultivation exists on the Ecuadorian side only to a limited extent, Ecuadorian farmers from Sucumbíos cross the border to Putumayo to work during the week on coca plantations and in rudimentary laboratories where coca leaves are processed into paste. This is more profitable than working within the border zone where they reside and where they are unable to earn enough to sustain their families (\*ex-guerrilla, Pasto (CO) 2011a; \*citizen, General Farfán (EC) 2012). A Colombian woman (2012) who lived in Sucumbíos, but worked on a coca farm in Putumayo, described the benefits of working in the cocaine business:

The guerrillas don't sell [cocaine], it's those from the other side, but people from here are obviously Ecuadorians. Those who buy [cocaine] transport it to sell it in Quito [...] for consumption. I know people who carry only a little bit. They take 100 or 200 grams and sell it in a village; this is how they make a living. They sell retail. Others take two or three kilos and transport [the cocaine] abroad. There they add stuff to it [...] to increase the quantity and make profit from it [...]. Here, those who work in this are Colombians, Ecuadorians, everyone. Even for the labour force, the *raspachines* (coca leave pickers), they use Ecuadorians. The *raspa* is good because [...] on a normal working day in the field the *raspachines* earn at least 15,000 pesos (7.8 USD). If they harvest seven to eight *arobas* they make 40, 50 or even 60,000 pesos (21 to 31 USD). So how should they not like this? [...] In this work they pay you piece rates, not per day. Therefore of course everyone does it!

She felt safer on the Ecuadorian side:

On the Colombian side there are always many armed groups and the police. I live on a farm on the other side (in Putumayo) and they always bother you: "Where do you come from?" They always harass you [...]: "Have you seen the army?" This is uncomfortable for the population. Why? Because you can't be there, they grasp your wrist and ask questions. [...] In my opinion there is much terrorism [...] because terrorism is when they frighten you, right? When they do things to scare the population. At any time, they put bombs, pipe-bombs. They shoot at the police. [...] They frighten the residents. This is terrorism for me [...]. Here [in Ecuador], this is not the case. I personally feel supported. I feel safe on this side because [...] you never hear shootings here, or people asking "Who could that be?" [...].

In coastal areas, such as Esmeraldas and Tumaco, the financial benefits of growing coca also surpass those of licit activities and are considered legitimate by many locals. As of 2009, a



**Figure 34: Unofficial border bridge between Carchi and Nariño to cross over and work on coca farms**

fisherman in San Lorenzo earned 50 USD per week. If he opted to work in Colombia as a *raspachín* he earned between 600 and 800 USD per week (\*Ecuadorian academic, Quito (EC) 2012). His family can live in the comparative safety of San Lorenzo. As several locals told me, also in Carchi, farmers live in Ecuador and cross over to Colombia, for example at the bridge in Figure 34, to work on guerrilla-controlled coca farms.<sup>144</sup>

The same phenomenon occurs in the South of the Sierra de Perijá which stretches down to Catatumbo, where the Río de Oro forms the border between Colombia and Venezuela. Despite being displaced to Venezuela, many Colombians decide to live next to the river to work in coca cultivations in Colombia during the day (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Machiques (VE) 2012a). These dynamics have led to an increased distance between the Venezuelan state and the borderlanders, while promoting a consensual relationship between them and the guerrillas.

### 8.3 The Border as a Magnet

The low-risk/high-opportunity environment of borderlands increases profits of tactical alliances, yet it also impinges on the VNSAs' distrust-reducing mechanisms: shared interests and personal bonds. It increases inter-group mistrust and fuels uncertainty among the local population. This erodes the community's social fabric.

<sup>144</sup> I stepped on the bridge on the Ecuadorian side and started to walk. When I approached the centre, my Ecuadorian friends told me to return because otherwise I would enter FARC territory.

The pay-off for VNSAs to engage in cocaine deals in borderlands is likely to be higher than in non-borderland regions. Near borders, especially maritime borders from where illegal drugs are shipped abroad, the cocaine's value is higher than elsewhere because it has already passed various stages of the supply chain. Since each time illegal products cross the border their value increases (Stewart 2010; Gootenberg 2008; Clawson and Lee 1996), engaging in drug deals across the border, especially at the starting points of trafficking routes, attracts many actors. Thanks to the large number of groups there, business partners are easily replaced, reducing the constraints on defection. Furthermore, given the lack of legal economic opportunities in Colombia's borderlands, many group members are prepared to take risks and switch allegiances to enhance profits. Local gangs are available as "junior business partners". In addition to the unpredictability of personal bonds of group leaders, the large number of groups and the profits one can make by defecting increase the fragility of alliances in borderlands. Rules for community members to reduce insecurity are elusive.

Nariño's attractiveness for groups to engage in drug deals has intensified the fragility of tactical alliances between the Rastrojos and smaller groups. In Nariño, after 2006 and as of 2012 the Rastrojos controlled cocaine transport to Tumaco, the starting point of the route to the US. They achieved nearly hegemonic control over the route, including in areas such as Leyva, Policarpa and Cumbitara after defeating the Nueva Generación. Originating in the military wing of the Norte del Valle Cartel, the Rastrojos are a consolidated group with a well-organised, unified command structure and high military capabilities. In Tumaco, the Águilas Negras, functioning as small groups of drug-traffickers with a cellular structure, were operating (in addition to FARC militias). According to an interviewee from Pasto (2011a), they consisted of a loose coalition of autonomous local organised criminal groups, but were financially accountable to the Águilas Negras' leadership. Other analysts claim that there is no single leadership and the term Águilas Negras refers to various local groups (\*civil society representative, Pasto (CO) 2011). Both interpretations explain why when the Rastrojos tried to impose themselves in Tumaco in 2009, they faced many small groups rather than a unified one. Some submitted to and worked with the

Rastrojos, others fought against them (\*local government official, Pasto (CO) 2011a; \*civil society representative, Pasto (CO) 2011).

The large availability of multiple “junior partners” in borderlands increases the likelihood of the alliance’s breakdown, influencing citizen security dynamics by increasing uncertainty and mistrust. The Águilas Negras, though less militarily powerful, possessed more local knowledge about Tumaco, and probably had more direct access to information on state interdiction operations than the external traffickers, the Rastrojos.<sup>145</sup> Game theory’s “Prisoner’s dilemma” shows that the drug deal is most likely to succeed if they cooperate and draw on their comparative advantages (cf. Gibbons 1992, 224-232; Dixit 2009, 409-414). If the Rastrojos defect, they lose profits. If the junior partners defect, they lose profits and fear retaliation from the Rastrojos. This explains why the Rastrojos engaged in tactical alliances with some of the Águilas Negras as their junior partners to ship cocaine abroad. A government official from Pasto (2011a) explained:

Since 2006 the Rastrojos had been controlling the Tumaco-Junín-Barbacoas axis and Ricaurte. The Águilas Negras controlled some rural parts and the city of Tumaco. What did the Rastrojos decide in 2009? To penetrate the urban centre of Tumaco! The Águilas Negras resisted, therefore in 2009 there were massacres on the road because the Rastrojos took the Águilas Negras’ men to the road to assassinate them. In 2010 the Rastrojos won the fight and entered the city of Tumaco, but the Águilas Negras were still there. [There were] a number of drug trafficking groups, all armed, and they submitted to the Rastrojos. Yet some of them which [the Rastrojos] did not manage to suppress stayed in Tumaco, therefore they made an agreement: “Okay, you can be in Tumaco, take some sectors and we will have the others!” This is what happens nowadays [...]. A situation of direct armed confrontation is not sustainable for a long time [...]. They use messengers for this and agreements of mutual territorial respect. Armed confrontation only occurs if these agreements are violated because the territories are protected by armed people.

As the border attracts many different groups, the Rastrojos do not rely on a particular group to repeat the deal. In other contexts defection can be averted by the shadow of the future (cf. Axelrod and Keohane 1985; Oye 1986); in borderlands at the starting points of trafficking routes each deal is a one-shot rather than an iterated game due to the large supply of groups willing to make a deal. If engaged in an alliance with one Águilas Negras group and another one offers

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<sup>145</sup> These advantages are similar to those of cross-border subcontractual relationships yet on the same side of the border groups are more interdependent.

better intelligence or a better place to stock cocaine, they can switch business partners. More powerful than local groups, the Rastrojos do not fear retaliation for defection. The junior partner has an interest in maintaining the alliance in the future and avoiding retaliation. But another powerful trafficker such as the Urabeños can emerge and threaten to take the Rastrojos' place by inciting the Águilas Negras to break the alliance with the Rastrojos and make one with them instead. Prospects of protection provided by the Urabeños reduce fear of retaliation.

Similarly, strategies to “lengthen the shadow of the future” that make cooperation more likely are hardly available in this borderland scenario (cf. Oye 1986, 17). Tactics of decomposition over time (exchanging the first portion of drugs for weapons at one time and the second portion later) (see e.g. Schelling 1980, 43–46; Axelrod 2006, 126–132) help reduce mistrust in spot sales or barter agreements. However, in tactical alliances, both groups have to employ their capabilities simultaneously (for example military capabilities to avoid interference by other VNSAs and local knowledge to avoid interference by state forces) to ensure a successful deal. Likewise, strategies of issue linkages (see Axelrod and Keohane in Oye 1986) are hardly conceivable. The quick turnover of alliances due to constantly newly emerging actors impedes cooperation on several fronts. Two groups allying to increase profits and fight state forces could be regarded as issue linkage: if one group breaks the economic alliance, the other one will stop collaborating against the state forces. Yet as this would constitute a negative pay-off for both rather than one of them, such issue linkage does not necessarily deter defection.

The attractiveness of starting points of international trafficking routes for multiple VNSAs to engage in *ad hoc* cooperation, together with the high costs of defection, enhance the fragility of tactical alliances in Tumaco's maritime border region. The groups are less interdependent. However, given the many available groups and the rapid changes, this does not translate into clearer behavioural rules, as in the absence of an arrangement where citizens can align with one of the groups. Instead, the rapid changes produce violence and increase uncertainty among the local population as to how to reduce insecurity. Citizen security is most severely affected through

the social fabric's erosion because, as I have shown in Chapter Six, uncertainty fuels interpersonal mistrust.

#### **8.4 The Border as a Stigmatised Space**

State centres tend to stigmatise border areas as violent spaces, a cliché reinforced by the very borderlanders. While highlighting the absence of arrangements among VNSAs in these spaces, this attitude neglects less violent short- and long-term arrangements and thus impedes measures to countervail the undermining effects on citizen security of these arrangements.

##### 8.4.1 The Perspective from the Centres

“Borderlands are viewed as potentially dangerous and disconnected” (Goodhand 2013, 247).<sup>146</sup> Due to their distance from the state centres and weak state governance, “[f]rom the perspective of the state, both frontiers and borderlands are unruly spaces” (Korf and Raeymaekers 2013, 13). Ignorant about the micro-dynamics of borderlands, in the centre's imagination a constant threat emanates from the margins. As set out in Chapter Three, especially in non-conflict countries the threat of spreading violence and conflict contagion is considered to “radiate” from the borderlands into the heartlands, contributing to the stigmatisation of borderlands (cf. Korf and Raeymaekers 2013, 7). In the case of Ecuador and Venezuela, not only guerrillas, but also criminal groups are seen as exporting violence from Colombia to its neighbours, contributing to a “spiral of violence” (\*government official, Quito (EC)) 2012).

State policies have often ignored the fact that a substantial part of their citizenry in borderlands live under another authority. In Bogotá, the fact that there is more institutional presence and communication as well as road infrastructure on the Ecuadorian than on the Colombian side of the border, is typically ignored (\*think-tank staff, Bogotá (CO) 2011). This sense of belonging to a cross-border community rather than to the national citizenry that has been fostered by this

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<sup>146</sup> “Disconnected” territories also exist for instance in poor neighbourhoods in Bogotá, Caracas and Quito.

among Colombian borderlanders has however consolidated illicit cross-border authority. Furthermore, citizens in the heartlands do not feel connected with those in the peripheries due to a lack of (interest or) information on the regions, which are perceived as “other spaces” that do not fit the picture they have of their country. In Bogotá, most people know the war in the borderlands only from television and call it “a different Colombia”, others deny its existence;<sup>147</sup> in Quito, the northern border zone is dismissed as a dangerous place, infected by the Colombian problem (Herrera 2007, 17); and in Caracas, the border with Colombia is considered the “Wild West”, as distant as any Wild West movie scene people watch in their living rooms. If direct data are available, they are often based on statistics of homicides or displacements. Even victimisation surveys do not reflect perceptions of security, because they are conducted without understanding people’s fear in answering them (\*government official, Caracas (VE) 2012).

Due to the centres’ focus on violence in borderlands, confinement through social control is invisible. Homicide and displacement rates dominate the databases of governments, international organisations and human rights defenders. According to the map of displacements in Nariño in 2010 at the Pacific coast in eight municipalities, 18 displacements comprising 991 families took place (UNHCR Colombia 2011).<sup>148</sup> Map 17 suggests things to be calm in the municipalities that border Carchi. However, this is where FARC’s mobile column Daniel Aldana regularly crosses over to Ecuador to acquire supplies and effectively exerts cross-border control (\*local government official, Pasto (CO) 2011a). As Map 18 illustrates, in 2011, communities were confined in Alto Mira (Tumaco), Barbacoas (Barbacoas), Nulpes (Ricaurte), Mayasquer and Miraflores (Cumbal), and La Victoria and Jardines de Sucumbíos (Ipiiales) right on the border as well as in five other municipalities (UNHCR Colombia 2011).<sup>149</sup> In several, humanitarian access to the communities was restricted (\*international agency staff, Pasto (CO) 2011d; \*human rights defender, Pasto (CO) 2011; \*international agency staff, Tumaco (CO) 2011; \*international

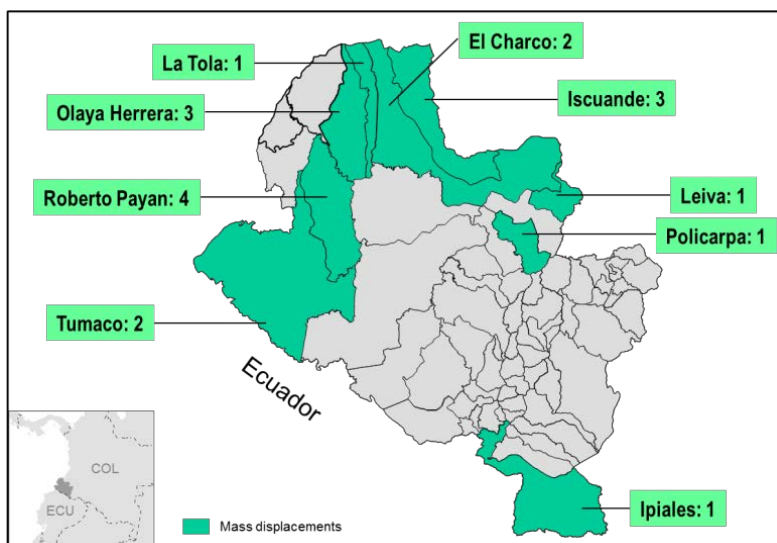
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<sup>147</sup> When referring to war in borderlands I was corrected that it is a conflict, not a war.

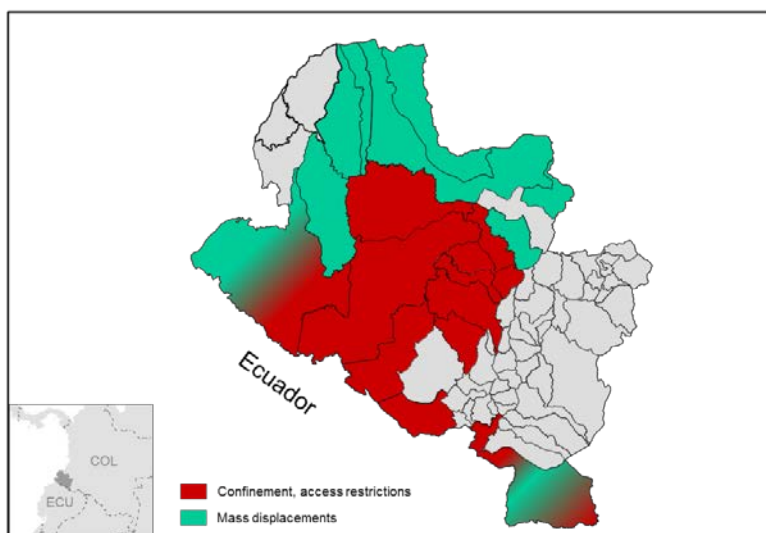
<sup>148</sup> These municipalities are strategic for international trafficking routes.

<sup>149</sup> UNHCR recently started to monitor confinements.

agency staff, Tumaco (CO) 2012).<sup>150</sup> In 2007 in Ipiales government researchers, whose work was to report on the population’s security situation, to ensure their own security only surveyed 50 per cent of the population (SAT 2007a, 2). The reluctance of “outsiders” to engage with these communities increases the invisibility of local security dynamics and the alienation between these communities and the state. This makes it easy for other actors to step in and be granted the legitimacy that the state has failed to sustain or achieve.



**Map 17: Displacements in Nariño in 2010 (UNHCR Colombia 2011)<sup>151</sup>**



**Map 18: Confinement in Nariño in 2010 and 2011 (UNHCR Colombia 2011)<sup>152</sup>**

<sup>150</sup> The displacement in La Estrella, Ipiales resulted from a bombardment of the Colombian state forces against FARC, supposedly motivated by oil-fields in the area.

<sup>151</sup> I slightly modified this map.

<sup>152</sup> I modified this map and added areas of confinement.

In the non-conflict border zones the relative absence of humanitarian organisations renders citizen security dynamics less visible. Many communities in Ecuador's and Venezuela's border zones are confined, however the resources to respond to such crises are limited because International Humanitarian Law does not apply: defined as a war crime, unlawful confinement is considered to only take place in war situations as in Colombia (OCHA 2003, 27). International organisations such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are therefore not present in Venezuela and Ecuador although their border zones also experience humanitarian crises.

When combat occurs between FARC and post-demobilised groups and inflicts violence on civilians those outside the communities remain unaware, unless it occurs on a large scale. When the state forces, symbolic of the centre's power, are affected by violence, it attracts attention from the heartlands: taking pride in the killing of guerrilla members by state forces and/or mourning the deaths of soldiers and police forms part of the media's and the government's discourse. In 2012 in Nariño 12 policemen died, in Putumayo 7 (National Police 2014). However, in the same year homicide rates in Putumayo were 80 per cent higher than in Nariño. Bombardments, patrolling of armed groups, mined zones and several guerrilla-imposed "armed strikes" also characterised life in Putumayo in recent years (\*international agency staff, Mocoa (CO) 2011; \*civil society representative, Mocoa (CO) 2011).<sup>153</sup> Still, when considering Putumayo's population at all, Colombia's government has focused on memories of atrocities of the 1990s (CNRR 2011) rather than the current situation. This "memory boom" promotes the "post-war" discourse that emphasises victimisation in the past, although locals perceive the situation as tense as during the mid-2000s (Tate 2013).

Also in urban areas, the involvement of state forces renders victimisation more visible. In October and November 2009, post-demobilised groups ordered all shop-owners of San Antonio de Táchira to close their shops for several days (\*humanitarian organisation staff, Cúcuta (CO) 2012).

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<sup>153</sup> In 2005 and 2006 FARC ceased armed strikes after communities protested against them (M. C. Ramírez 2009, 323). Such resistance has not been possible in recent years.

Despite threats and the population's fear the authorities did not react. When two Venezuelan National Guard members (part of the armed forces) were killed by these groups, the international border bridge Simón Bolívar was shut (Niño Ascanio, Camargo León, and Cañizares Arévalo 2012, 298–299), getting international media coverage.<sup>154</sup>

The state centres tend to regard borderlands as violent spaces and highlight incidents where state forces, symbolic of the power centre, are affected by this violence. Therefore, VNSA arrangements that affect the borderlanders' citizen security on a more structural level, for example by eroding the borderland communities' social fabric or by fuelling shadow citizen security, remain invisible to the centres.

#### 8.4.2 The Perspective from the Borderlands

The disconnection between borderlanders and the centre is not unilateral. The stigmatisation of borderlands is reinforced within borderlands due to the low information outflow from these spaces because of restrictions as well as the generalisation and trivialisation of violence.

VNSAs control the community's discourse and influence the outside world's perception of the community, allowing them to maintain their authority without intervention. In rural parts of Ipiales municipality bordering Ecuador, as of 2012, FARC conducted obligatory regular meetings with all community members and advised them not to mention human rights when talking to international agencies, otherwise they would be punished (\*displaced woman from Policarpa, Pasto (CO) 2011). Similarly, VNSAs told community leaders to only let "outsiders" enter the territory if they did not address human rights otherwise to completely deny them access (\*international agency staff, Pasto (CO) 2011a). In Bajo Putumayo, when I accompanied a diplomatic mission in 2012, we were going to visit the village of Puerto Colón. One day before the visit the local contact person did not answer his phone or reply to text messages. Without

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<sup>154</sup> Supposedly, the National Guard told the paramilitaries to kill their leader after which the border was opened.

further explanation, the morning of the planned visit we received a call advising us that no-one would have time to meet us. According to the diplomatic mission's staff, FARC did not allow outsiders to enter their territory.<sup>155</sup>

Similar to the regions in Nariño mentioned above, a community leader from Puerto Caicedo (2012) explained that, as of 2012, most villages from San Miguel to La Cabaña – all located along the borderline, close to the formal border bridge – were confined.<sup>156</sup> Neither the Ombudsman's Office, nor UNHCR were allowed to enter these villages (\*international agency staff, Bajo Putumayo (CO) 2012). Without these institutions accessing the communities, little information is available. Not only is confinement invisible from the centres as explained above, but the invisibility is reinforced from within the borderlands because the outflow of information is restricted, if not prevented.

As considering deals with guerrillas and post-demobilised groups is more efficient and safer than asking the state for help, the communities prefer silence vis-à-vis the state (\*international agency staff, Mocoa (CO) 2011):

People put up with the situation because they know that the state outside does not offer them anything. It is often better to settle on a deal with [the VNSAs], to dialogue and mediate to reach agreements instead of having to leave.<sup>157</sup>

Those who leave do so in “drop-by-drop displacements” which often go unnoticed by the authorities and humanitarian organisations.

Paradoxically, borderlanders themselves reinforce the stigma of borderlands as violent spaces. Borderlanders generalise their violent dynamics to other borderlands across the world. Rather than taking action to address VNSA presence in their territory or demand that the state do so to enhance citizen security, they assume insecurity in their territory is due to geography – to being

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<sup>155</sup> Field notes, 2 March 2012.

<sup>156</sup> This was confirmed by another local contact.

<sup>157</sup> In some cases of confinements, men had to stay while women and children were allowed to leave.

located in borderlands rather than in heartlands. This makes violence in border spaces appear inevitable. Referring back to Girard's (2013) surrogate victim theory, the space "borderlands" itself becomes the scapegoat for any violence inflicted on borderlanders. In Maicao a humanitarian organisation employee (2012) stated:

Arms smuggling, drug trafficking, contraband, deaths, kidnapping - people get scared when talking about the border dynamics of La Guajira, but these things happen at almost all borders of the world. The Mexican [-US] border, for example, is the most heavily guarded one, I don't know with how many soldiers and cameras and still, they smuggle arms from the US [to Mexico]. It is the same with Colombia.

Similar points were raised in Venezuela, for instance by the head of a humanitarian organisation (2012):

You have to realise that all border towns are tense. There is no single border town that isn't tense because the border *per se* implies contraband, trafficking of persons, from the very beginning it bears certain risks. Here, one has to add drugs, which is very serious.



Attributing violence to general insecurity in borderlands rather than to VNSAs further contributes to the stigmatisation of borderlands as violent spaces. As the following example illustrates, borderlanders actively conceal the origin of insecurity in VNSA arrangements to protect themselves. In March 2012, flyers stating that "Ecuador is for Ecuadorians, not the criminals of the FARC" were distributed in General Farfán (\*human rights organisation staff, Lago Agrio (EC) 2012) (see Figure 35).

**Figure 35: Pamphlet against the "Criminals of the FARC" (anonymous interviewee, 2012)**

The local human rights organisation I interviewed immediately rejected the statement to avoid taking sides against FARC which could have provoked retaliation against the population. They emphasised their opposition to any type of violence and appealed to the government to protect the borderlanders. This rejection could be interpreted as supporting FARC, increasing suspicion among rightist groups about locals. It demonstrates the borderlanders' dilemma: if they raise their

voice against a specific VNSA group, they fear retaliation. If they demand protection without specifying the source of insecurity, they receive less attention because insecurity originating in settling of scores, disputes among neighbours and similar issues are considered inherent in borderlands.

The image of borderlands characterised by such trivial violence is reinforced by the very borderlanders as well. They trivialise their insecurity because it has been shaping their everyday lives for a long time. When asking an indigenous leader in Mocoa in 2012 about the security situation in La Hormiga, a small village in Bajo Putumayo, she replied: “Things are fine, nothing happened. There was just one combat this week”. On the other side of the border, in General Farfán, a civil society leader (2012) commented on the combat explosions that they saw over in Colombia: “How nice it is when they celebrate these kind of parties with fireworks...or they have a birthday over there and celebrate it!” Such cynical humour is a way of coping with these events: “Atrocity [is] a poor way to explain yourself; and humour [is] a good way to survive”, notes Keen (2005, 57). Yet it also trivialises, turning insecurity in borderlands into part of everyday life, and making borderlands be considered inherently dangerous. Such trivialisation exists in non-borderlands as well. However, the borderlands’ distance to the state centres, due to which heartlanders empathise little with borderlanders, makes trivialisation particularly plausible, perpetuating the stigmatisation of borderlands.

In the Venezuelan border zone adjoining Colombia, social control disguises VNSA presence, creating an image according to which common crime shapes security dynamics. While crime does contribute to violence, the VNSAs’ non-violent activities that impinge on the communities’ social fabric and on the Venezuelan state-society relationship are overlooked or underestimated. Several interviewees confirmed cases of confined communities or of restricted humanitarian access, as in Guayabo in Machiques. The previously cited citizen security survey of the Venezuelan National Statistics Institute (2010) also points to social control in the Venezuelan border zone. The respondents, divided into those residing in the border states and those in all other states, were

asked whether most crimes are committed by common criminals, guerrillas/paramilitaries, organised criminal groups, the police, the National Guard or the police together with common criminals (INE 2010, 35).<sup>158</sup> 5 per cent of borderland respondents and 1 per cent of respondents of non-border municipalities cited guerrillas/paramilitaries (INE 2010, 160). The difference is only 4 per cent even though the guerrillas and paramilitaries have strong presence in the border municipalities yet low presence in the rest of Venezuela.<sup>159</sup> Indeed, in Apure and in Machiques, the guerrillas commit little violence, but exert social control, hence their minor visibility in such statistics. The responses to another question on the principal group that commits crime support this impression. 3.1 per cent cited paramilitaries from Colombia, 9.2 per cent paramilitaries from Venezuela, 6.83 per cent FARC, 0.88 per cent ELN and 0.67 per cent FBL (INE 2010, 187–190). This is consistent with the fact that while paramilitaries (post-demobilised groups or also called criminal groups) have short-term arrangements that generate violence, FARC, ELN and FBL have long-term arrangements in Apure, and FARC and ELN also in Zulia, in which social control prevails over violence.

Perspectives both from the centres and from the borderlands contribute to the stigmatisation of these spaces as generally violent, obscuring distinct citizen security dynamics that stem from VNSA arrangements, particularly less violent ones such as social control that fosters shadow citizenship. Shadow citizenship in isolated borderlands contributes to nation-wide “fragmented citizenship”, since different forms of citizenship exist at the national level (cf. Safford and Palacios 2002). Borderland communities comprise, or are influenced by, people from both sides of the border rather than only those from the same state, undermining the sense of solidarity of heartlanders with borderlanders and fuelling fluid identities. Through the existence yet ignorance of these trans-border shadow communities, the state “loses” part of its citizenry, thwarting the formation of a nation that comprises all citizens up to the borderline. It questions the state’s role

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<sup>158</sup> Crimes in the survey included homicide, personal injury, sexual abuse, robbery, kidnapping, extortion, corruption, theft, fraud and threat (INE 2010, 26).

<sup>159</sup> Many Venezuelans consider post-demobilised groups criminal groups. This explains why, despite a high homicide rate in Táchira linked to these groups, people do not relate them to paramilitaries.

as the legitimate governance provider across its territory: unless the state engages in bilateral cooperation with its neighbour to jointly provide governance functions, including transnational security and justice, cross-border communities voluntarily or involuntarily join the shadow citizenship provided by VNSAs or any other non-state citizenship. Therefore, borderlands that appear to be tranquil can be the most structurally affected.

### **8.5 Conclusion**

The border effect reinforces rather than changes citizen security dynamics. In all VNSA interactions in which VNSAs use violence against civilians to achieve their goals, most notably in the absence of an arrangement, it works as a facilitator for VNSAs because it renders victimisation invisible, an incentive for VNSAs to resort to violence as they are less likely to be punished for it. In long-term arrangements, the border effect facilitates promoting an illicit economy which helps foster a consensual VNSA-society relationship. It also facilitates social control conducive to shadow citizen security, by making illicit cross-border authority invisible. In short-term arrangements, particularly cross-border spot sales and barter agreements as well as subcontractual relationships, the border effect deters VNSAs from reducing mistrust among each other and vis-à-vis the local population, fuelling interpersonal mistrust which erodes the social fabric. In transactional supply chain relationships, it deters VNSAs from exerting violence as forcefully on foreign territory as on their national territory, helping borderlanders stay safer on one side while working along the cocaine supply chain on the other. The border functions as a magnet for VNSAs, fuelling competition and the fragility of tactical alliances, which increases uncertainty among the local population as to how to ensure security. Finally, the border is stigmatised from without and from within borderlands, alienating borderlanders from the states and promoting shadow citizenship and shadow citizen security in long-term arrangements.

Borderlanders and VNSAs know better than the state how to benefit from the geography of borderlands to influence the security dynamics described above. The state's legitimising authority

in borderlands is curbed by its absence. VNSAs have the “skill to redirect state institutions, undermine state territoriality, and rescale states” (van Schendel 2005a, 61; van Schendel 2005b, 384). Benefitting from cross-border impunity, they can conceal their operations in borderlands from the state and others outside the community. This imperceptibility impinges on citizen security in all VNSA arrangement types: it renders VNSAs less accountable for exercising violence, changing rules and imposing social control. Borderlanders have agency in shaping these borderland dynamics, too. Their local knowledge and labour force allow them, partly, to influence VNSA-imposed rules to ensure their security. In short-term arrangements, such rules are elusive. In the absence of arrangements, borderlanders have hardly any agency in changing rules, but can follow existing ones to increase security. In long-term arrangements, they can influence them, facilitating shadow citizen security. Although vulnerable to the VNSAs’ unlawful actions, borderlanders affirm their independence from the state through their agency. By constantly transgressing the border between states, the legal and the illegal, and a national citizenry and a cross-border community, they contest state sovereignty and challenge the state-society relationship, calling into question the concept of citizen security. Therefore, as Korf and Raeymaekers (2013, 5) note, borderlands “are not just reflective of power relations at the “center”, but they are also *constitutive* of them”.

## 9. CONCLUSION

This thesis has started from a striking observation: although borderlands of the Global South are essential security zones, we lack understanding of how these security dynamics take shape and affect local communities. To narrow this gap, I have tackled the question of how different forms of interactions among VNSAs in the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands affect citizen security. Having presented my analysis based on extensive fieldwork evidence in the previous chapters, I will now recap my findings on these arrangements of convenience. Then, I will discuss the study's theoretical and methodological contributions to Political Sciences, particularly Security and Conflict Studies, Borderland Studies, Anthropology and Sociology. Subsequently, I will present policy implications, and finally, I will indicate avenues for future research and limited generalisations.

### 9.1 VNSA Interactions and Citizen Security in Colombia's Borderlands

In this study I have developed a typology of VNSA interactions under the scope of the conditions of Colombia's borderlands, conceptualised on a fuzzy continuum of VNSA arrangement clusters. The arrangements are informed by distinct distrust-reducing mechanisms – interests, personal bonds, value and power – and varying levels of group interdependence. The continuum enables us to understand how VSNAs interact with each other and influence citizen security.

As Chapter Four illustrated, VNSA interactions are extremely complex and unpredictable. Nevertheless, based on the fuzzy continuum, this study has revealed that each of the eight (i to xiii) interaction types has distinct impacts on observable facts and perceptions of citizen security. VNSA interactions not only inflict violence on citizens, but also erode the communities' social fabric and undermine the state-society relationship. In specific circumstances, they entail shadow citizen security, i.e. VNSA-provided security based on undemocratic means. The impacts concern both “security” and the referent object “citizen”.

In Chapter Five I showed that, in the (i) absence of a VNSA arrangement, citizens experience or expect to experience physical violence, but can adapt behaviour to increase their security. While civil war scholars have focused on territory (Kalyvas 2006), space and time together have not yet been considered as important factors in the literature addressing the impacts of VNSA activities on civilians. However, I showed how specific citizen security impacts are related to rural or urban space combined with the particular phase in the cycle of violence. Three instances stand out. First, in rural areas affected by combat, the lines between the hostile parties are relatively clear. Although informants and deserters distort this context, citizens are generally able to identify individuals as members of a certain VNSA group, and can adjust their behaviour to the group's rules. Second, in contexts of targeted rivalry in urban areas, these rules also exist, but are less clear as the lines between VNSAs and bystanders are more diffuse. Third, during periods of tense calm, perceptions of citizen insecurity, often manifested through fear and anxiety, are high due to the presentiment of the outbreak of violence.

In Chapter Six I demonstrated how, in contexts of short-term arrangements, citizens face uncertainty as to who controls their territory and how. The many different forms of short-term arrangements including material and financial transactions, barter agreements involving human beings and remote subcontracting add to this ambiguity. Citizens can become victims of targeted violence if suspected of being informants or collaborators, generating fear and anxiety among the population. The mistrust *omnium contra omnes* erodes the social fabric at the community level. Trust relationships and solidarity prevail only in small circles, such as the core family. It is unclear whom to support or what kind of activities are desirable or best avoided to ensure one's security.

Kalyvas (2006, 89–91) argues that when civil war actors intermingle with civilians, uncertainty and identification problems arise. Therefore these actors employ violence to impede defection of civilians to the hostile competing side. Accordingly, civilians decide to obey these rules to avoid violence, or to defect. However, Tumaco's and La Guajira's realities show that this is unfeasible

in contexts where conflict and criminal violence converge, and multiple parties ally as well as compete with each other in unpredictable ways. Self-protection mechanisms or avoidance strategies, such as staying home and keeping silent, are employed.

In cases of (ii) spot sales and barter agreements the VNSAs' shared economic interests determine certain behavioural rules that citizens can follow. In (iii) tactical alliances unpredictability predominates because personal bonds can distort economic motivations, and the lines between VNSAs and bystanders are blurred. Citizens are exposed to selective, yet unpredictable violence. In (iv) subcontractual relationships, citizens can protect themselves by abiding by the VNSA-imposed rules.

In Chapter Seven, I showed how VNSAs in long-term arrangements establish alternative political and social orders by assuming governance functions in the territories they control. Citizens have reasonable certainty about the prevailing rules. Compared to the other arrangement clusters, physical violence is relatively rare. However, factors such as social control produce invisible consequences for citizen security. When VNSAs exercise governance functions and are socially recognised by the local population, a mutually reinforcing VNSA-society relationship substitutes the state-society relationship. Such a VNSA-society relationship generates shadow citizen security and shadow citizenship. The social fabric within this community can be dense, but these people are isolated from the rest of the nation's citizenry. Shadow citizenship arises when three partly overlapping phenomena coalesce: first, VNSAs exert political, social and economic control; second, they constitute an authority because they are perceived to be legitimate "governors"; and third, people feel abandoned by the state. In such circumstances, the sense of belonging to the state through citizenship, imperfect even in most democracies, has completely lost meaning.

The type of long-term arrangement is relevant for the VNSAs' social recognition and the extent to which shadow citizen security exists. In contexts of (v) transactional supply chain relationships,

economic opportunities compensate for undemocratic security provision that prevails owing to general mistrust. When VNSAs have (vi) strategic alliances, their individual group identities tend to be unclear, making it difficult for citizens to be loyal. In (vii) pacific coexistence, VNSAs need to be perceived as legitimate to keep up with the group they coexist with, which constitutes an incentive to be more responsive to citizens. In well-established (viii) preponderance relations, VNSAs tend to provide a variety of governance functions and include services such as health in their “portfolio”, which, in regions without state-provided services, can offset undemocratic rules. Individuals perceive rule-compliance to be appropriate behaviour and internalise or informally accept VNSAs-imposed norms and practices.

The line between security through coercion and shadow citizen security is thin. When subcontracted youth groups conduct social cleansing, as in San Lorenzo, it can instil fear. Yet, if a dominant group ensures security and the local population respects them for doing so, as in some regions in Venezuela, shadow citizen security arises. Perceptions matter: one person’s feared social cleansing is another person’s desired and respected security. Even under shadow citizen security however, justice and security services are shadow-like. The VNSAs’ ways of solving problems can be more efficient than state-provided justice but, aiming to maintain what they consider “order”, VNSAs provide security by undemocratic and often violent means. They decide who is a threat to society, inform people about behaviour they consider undesirable and threaten those who do not comply (\*human rights organisation staff, Lago Agrio (EC) 2012).

Each type of VNSA interaction is significant in its own way. Some are more acutely violent and produce immediate visible consequences, but those that are not have invisible consequences which are significant both locally and more broadly. In the long run, such illusorily calm interactions impact on citizen security on the structural level: by alienating citizens from the state. This slowly leads to a perverse *status quo* of citizenship in which citizens do not trust the state, and the state is unable or unwilling to provide governance functions for the benefit of society. Interpersonal mistrust erodes the social fabric and impedes collective action.

Citizen security impacts of VNSA relationships are influenced by the local context, state policies and third parties, particularly state forces. Citizen security across the arrangements is distinctive when marginalised groups such as the indigenous Awá, Otavaleños and Wayúu are concerned.<sup>160</sup>

Table 2 gives a general overview of the distinct impacts of VNSA arrangements on citizen security.

**Table 2: The impacts of VNSA arrangements on citizen security**

	<b>Absence of arrangement</b>	<b>Short-term arrangement</b>	<b>Long-term arrangement</b>
<b>Impacts on citizen security</b>	Violence and clear rules of behaviour	Selective violence and uncertainty	Shadow citizen security and shadow citizenship

Combining my transnational borderland perspective from the margins to the centres and a non-state perspective of VNSA interactions – directed towards citizens as well as towards citizens’ relationships with the state (rather than towards the state alone) – has shed new light on citizen security dynamics. It demonstrated that analysis has to account for differences between the two sides of the border. Given the transnationality of borderlands, VNSA interactions are similar on both border sides. However, due to differing policies and the differing local context, a single VNSA arrangement can have distinct security outcomes on each side of the border; perceptions and realities of security can diverge.

Foregrounding the location of borderlands in Chapter Eight has shown that geography matters. In the Andes, the transnationality of borderlands and their distance from the states’ economic and political centres translate into the confluence of weak state governance systems, a low-risk/high-opportunity environment, and a proneness to impunity. This border effect acts on the citizen

<sup>160</sup> Afro-Colombians constitute a further important marginalised group.

security repercussions of VNSA interactions in four ways. First, the transnationality of borderlands facilitates victimisation by rendering it less visible. It also facilitates the prosperity of illicit economies and illicit cross-border authority. Second, this transnationality deters VNSAs from trusting their counterparts, increasing uncertainty among the borderlanders. In transactional supply chain relationships, however, it reduces victimisation. Third, borderlands attract a large number of VNSAs, increasing the unpredictability of behavioural rules for the community. Fourth, because borderlands are stigmatised by those who live in the state centres, the border effect renders the different nuances in citizen security situations invisible, producing a generalised image of a violent space which tends to be reinforced from within the borderlands. This stigmatisation is further enhanced by the fluid boundaries between understandings of “legitimacy” and “illegitimacy” and of “state” and “non-state” in borderlands of the Global South.

## **9.2 Theoretical and Methodological Contributions**

Combining insights into the relevance of territory for micro-dynamics of violence (Kalyvas 2006), on how spaces are illicitly governed rather than ungoverned (Clunan and Trinkunas 2010), and on how the problem of distrust among groups shapes their engagement in arrangements (Gambetta 1993) has helped understand the relationships between VNSAs from different categories rather than from a single category. It also has brought new insights into their relationships with the communities in which they are embedded. Scholars such as Gutiérrez Sanín (2008) have analysed how the group nature is relevant for distinct security impacts, yet such studies have neglected the nature of the relationships *among* those groups. Complementing these synergies with anthropological approaches to strategies of citizens to cope with or avoid insecurity, including rules to adapt to the context of citizen insecurity (Rotker 2002a; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Taussig 2002), has revealed that the availability and efficacy of these strategies are related to specific VNSA interactions. Situating this analysis in borderlands of the Global South has proffered further theoretical insights. Similar to Donnan and Wilson (1994), and Baud and van Schendel (1997), my work highlights the transnationality of borderlands and, in

line with Andreas (2009), the resulting economic incentives. However, by discussing how this transnationality is relevant to citizen security dynamics and perceptions of borderlands from the centres, I have linked its importance to broader debates on security dynamics generated in civil war and organised crime contexts. I have done so by speaking to the literature on citizenship and citizen security (O'Donnell 2001; Whitehead 2002), through which I demonstrated how, due to this transnationality, borderlands are breeding grounds of shadow citizen security and shadow citizenship. It makes them extreme cases of situations in democracies where the state-society relationship is deficient.

### 9.2.1 The Fuzzy Continuum of VNSA Arrangement Clusters and Citizen Security

Conceptualising the VNSA arrangements on the fuzzy continuum demonstrates how varying levels of group interdependence and different distrust-reducing mechanisms are relevant to the distinct citizen security impacts of VNSA arrangements. Clustering them into the absence of an arrangement, short-term arrangements and long-term arrangements facilitates identifying common patterns of the arrangements within each cluster. My specific findings suggest the following insights, which would have to be tested in other studies to explore the extent of their broader validity.

In some cases, distrust-reducing mechanisms are more relevant for citizen security impacts, for example when comparing transactional supply chain relationships with strategic alliances: in the former, personal bonds with a third party reduce mistrust for the specific business transaction but do not eliminate general mistrust of and among the community. In the latter, shared values reduce general mistrust, allowing for a more open VNSA-society relationship. In pacific coexistence, groups are less interdependent than in strategic alliances, making social recognition by the local community more important.

The principal insights on the distrust-reducing mechanisms are relevant when comparing different clusters:

- If distrust among VNSAs is reduced through shared interests, as in short-term arrangements, community members can employ avoidance strategies to minimise citizen insecurity because the arrangement is issue-specific.
- If distrust among VNSAs is reduced through shared values, as in long-term arrangements, the VNSAs are more likely to respect the community's needs, to establish clear rules towards which to orient their behaviour and to resort to less violence than if other distrust-reducing mechanisms are operative.
- If distrust among VNSAs is reduced through personal bonds among group members or with a third party such as a broker, it is more likely that community members are also involved in the arrangement than when other distrust-reducing mechanisms are at play. This makes it more difficult for community members to take collective action to influence citizen security.

The principal insights on group interdependence are relevant within each cluster:

- Within one arrangement cluster, high interdependence among VNSAs leads to relatively low levels of violence in comparison with the other arrangements that belong to the same cluster.
- Within one arrangement cluster, those arrangements with low interdependence among VNSAs entail more uncertainty among the local community. They are more likely to change suddenly and hence produce changes in citizen security, than other arrangements in the same cluster.

The continuum yields insights into the incidence of shadow citizen security and shadow citizenship. Correlating with the type of arrangement, the distrust-reducing mechanism and level of interdependence, VNSAs fulfill different state functions in varying ways.

- In cases where VNSAs reduce distrust through a third party rather than through shared values or power, a consensual VNSA-society relationship is hard to establish because general mistrust prevails.

- If groups are highly interdependent, they are likely to be less concerned with social recognition because, due to shared information or asymmetric power, it is unlikely that one group will strike deeper roots in the community to the other's disadvantage.
- If the arrangement is towards the fuzzy continuum's right and groups are less interdependent and coexist pacifically, or are preponderant, they are more likely to establish a consensual VNSA-society relationship to reduce the costs of coercion and hence shadow citizen security and shadow citizenship are easier to attain.

The continuum's fuzziness reflects the variable nature of these arrangements. The three arrangement clusters are analogous to Wendt's Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian culture, but while Wendt (1999, 312) argues that moving backwards from a Kantian or Lockean to a Hobbesian culture is unlikely, long-term or short-term arrangements among VNSAs can easily fall into an absence of arrangements. Furthermore, the arrangements' exact location within each cluster may vary. External influences contribute to shifts in arrangements. For instance, Quito's decision to increase militarisation of the border zone entailed shifts from pacific coexistence to the absence of an arrangement between some VNSAs present in Ecuador's border zone. Such changing forms of interaction among VNSAs produce more uncertainty as to how to ensure citizen security than a stable arrangement or the constant absence of an arrangement because they do not allow adaptive behaviour. In short-term arrangements changes are most frequent and people are least certain of how to behave.

In any form of arrangement, if one group decides to break it, previously established rules suddenly cease to apply or reduce insecurity only to a limited extent. Citizens are likely to feel insecure because they do not (yet) know how to protect themselves. They have to select behaviour according to the demands of either group to ensure their security. Depending on how closely the groups had been collaborating beforehand, deciding which group to obey may be challenging. Under preponderance relations, for example, citizens can follow relatively clear rules imposed by the preponderant group to remain safe. Yet when another group starts to dispute this

preponderance, they must decide whether to stick to the erstwhile preponderant group's rules or whether to adapt to the new group's rules. In strategic alliances group identities are blurred, therefore ascertaining who is on which side once the alliance breaks down can be difficult. While in rural areas terminating an arrangement results in there being two antagonistic groups, in urban spaces this often leads to a complete reconfiguration of group constellations. New groups benefit from power vacuums, some members form splinter groups and others defect from one group to join another. In rapidly changing constellations, perceptions of insecurity prevail.

### 9.2.2 Multi-sited Fieldwork with a Borderland Perspective

Conducting extensive multi-sited fieldwork on both sides of the 2,200 and 585 kilometres long borders of Colombia with Venezuela and Ecuador respectively has added to the findings' depth and richness. It allowed me to examine examples from across Colombia's borderlands, assuming a truly transnational borderland perspective that considers borderlands as one transnational unit, yet accounts for differences on each side of the border. Examples of all VNSA arrangement types can be found in both the Colombian-Ecuadorian and the Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands. However, the local context, state policies and third parties including state forces influence citizen security dynamics of the same type of arrangement in myriad ways.

First, tactical alliances exist both in Tumaco near the Ecuadorian border and in La Guajira. However, being largely Wayúu territory, in La Guajira the citizen security dynamics are influenced by their propensity to resort to violence when dealing with inter-clan disputes. Due to the existence of private armies and the historical involvement of citizens in illegal economic cross-border activities in La Guajira, the lines between VNSAs and community members are more blurred, making it harder for citizens to adopt strategies to reduce insecurity. This raises questions such as: who constitutes the social base of the VNSAs and social groups, such as indigenous clans, are allies? Given the entanglement of community members and VNSA group members, how can one draw the line between VNSAs and community members and determine whose citizen security is affected? Analysing differing local contexts demonstrates that ambiguity

regarding identity matters in VNSA arrangements and influences citizen security. Communities in regions where such uncertainty exists lack clarity about whom to obey and how to behave to avoid being perceived as undermining the allied groups' interests. Second, aggressive military state policies as in Colombia may provoke more violence by VNSAs against citizens as suspected informants than more cautious or conniving policies, as in Ecuador and Venezuela. At the same time, the militarisation of Ecuador's northern border zone led VNSAs to operate with a low profile, including cross-border authority. They were physically present in Colombia yet exerted social control on the Ecuadorian side, for example in Carchi. Against this, the relative connivance, or arguably support, of Venezuelan state forces vis-à-vis Colombian VNSAs resulted in their presence in the Venezuelan border zone being an open secret. The case of Apure demonstrates that this facilitated VNSA-imposed shadow citizen security. Third, state force presence renders security dynamics more visible to the heartlands which can influence state policies vis-à-vis VNSAs. It also gives VNSAs reason to mistrust the community because citizens may be state informants, as in regions such as Zulia.

The methodologically reinforced borderland perspective has also demonstrated how the border effect arising from the transnationality of borderlands and their distance from the economic and political centres reinforces the citizen security impacts of VNSA arrangements. This study thus has put a spotlight on the invisibility of nuanced borderland security dynamics. These are lacking in the literature so far, and yet were stressed by interviewees from different sectors, classes and ethnic backgrounds across both borderlands. The concept of citizen security is typically applied to urban centres, however moving it to the margins has revealed how the referent object "citizen" is particularly vulnerable in such transnational borderland communities.

Using ethnographic methods to address Political Science and interdisciplinary puzzles is increasingly valued and used by scholars across the Social Sciences, particularly with regard to the European, African and Central American regions (Woodward 1995; Autesserre 2010; Wood 2003). Nonetheless, many political scientists remain sceptical about extended in-depth fieldwork

while anthropologists may find a mixed elite and grassroots interview approach in multiple sites not sufficiently ethnographic. As a pioneer application of ethnographic methods to multiple South American countries in Political Science, this work has demonstrated how powerful such an approach is in tackling questions that link micro-dynamics of violence in difficult settings with broader questions of the state and security. Interviews with perpetrators, victims and bystanders combined with participant observation, including my own experiences of tense and worrying environments in which death becomes part of everyday life, facilitated nuanced insights into the various elements of citizen security, notably perceptions such as fear and uncertainty. Elite interviews in the capitals made it possible to contrast these with state-centric views on border security provided by government officials in Bogotá, Quito and Caracas. This novel methodological approach facilitated building theory that, through categorisation based on the interplay of empirical findings and existing theories, can inspire, if not guide, research avenues in other contexts too.

### **9.3 Policy Implications**

“Studying security is important because it may help people [...] to achieve security” (P. D. Williams 2012, 10). The fuzzy continuum of VNSA arrangement clusters may be a useful tool to help achieve security through transition and post-conflict strategies in Colombia and elsewhere. Despite demobilisation processes, transitions from conflict to peace tend to feature VNSA reconfigurations rather than their disappearance. In Colombia, FARC have gained strength over the course of the peace talks. The different interaction types are still present. Rather than mutating into new forms, the VNSA arrangements have shifted to the right on the fuzzy continuum because in many regions FARC have become preponderant again, for example in areas of Catatumbo and in Nariño where they had been in conflict or in short-term arrangements with other VNSAs around 2012. In a post-conflict scenario, another reshuffling of arrangements is likely, yet the continuum’s validity should remain intact. This should help design strategies targeted to specific arrangements, even if the groups themselves change.

Distinguishing VNSA interactions from each other and observable facts from perceptions of citizen security should increase the efficacy of citizen security policies on the ground. This understanding can also inform drug policies, which have mostly neglected consequences for citizenship in the sense of democratic governance nationally and on a transnational level. It helps develop “second-best” evidence-based policy interventions which target those citizen security impacts that can be mitigated most effectively rather than implement one-size-fits-all programmes to transnational security challenges of VNSA presence in borderlands. Pragmatically, I start from the assumption that in the near future democratic states will, even if inadequately, be the actor most capable of providing citizen security in the Andes. This assumption is supported by the fact that, where Latin American states have implemented institutional reforms and adjusted their security policies democratically in the past few years, citizen security has been strengthened (UNDP 2013a, 111). It is also based on citizens’ perceptions: according to the public opinion survey Latinobarómetro (2013, 32), 93 per cent of Venezuelans, 81 per cent of Ecuadorians and 75 per cent of Colombians in 2013 think that democracy may have problems, but is the best form of government.

### 9.3.1 Citizen Security Policies

In regions that have faced the *absence of a VNSA arrangement*, reparation for displacement and for loss of relatives is not sufficient. In 2011, Colombia reportedly invested only 0.1 per cent of its health budget on mental health (Médicos sin Fronteras 2011). Yet, as I have shown in Chapter Five, terror and fear has affected these communities over generations as has the adaptation to actors who base their rule on violence. Victims’ compensation should include psychological assistance to these communities to facilitate healing and reconciliation if future generations are to live not only in peace among people, but also of mind.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> The Restitution Unit’s strategic plan 2013/2014 includes a “psyco-social” approach, yet no concrete measures (URT 2013).

Where the state entered borderlands such as Tumaco with military forces, it destroyed some of the *short-term arrangements* among VNSAs, especially tactical alliances, yet these endeavours came along with soaring rates of violence and were unsustainable. The ready supply of groups and recruits that lack alternative opportunities facilitates the formation of new alliances while violence as a means to an end becomes more normal. Providing alternative livelihood strategies and demonstrating that security can be achieved through a functioning justice system would help make recruitment more difficult. Programmes to foster these communities' social fabric, eroded by interpersonal mistrust and constant uncertainty due to quickly shifting alliances, may help give these citizens a voice in security policies.

In *long-term arrangements*, VNSAs usually strive to be the providers of services, goods and opportunities to receive the community's social recognition which helps minimise costly violence and avoid being trumped by other VNSAs or the state. Having lost its monopoly of violence and its obligation to provide goods and services to other actors, the state has lost its legitimacy as a respected counterpart in the state-society relationship. If the state is not sufficiently capable and responsive to achieve its legitimate monopoly of violence, should policies aim for a non-state, yet stable, form of (legitimate) governance exerted by VNSAs? During FARC's preponderance in Putumayo in the 1990s, for example, such governance partially prevented violence and uncertainty, yet it has increased the distance between the communities in these areas and the central state. Considering territory differently than conventional analysis suggests, helps tackle this dilemma. In addition to territories with combat among various groups, and territories controlled by one group, there are many territories where several groups have different arrangements with each other.

Targeting non-military state interventions to those regions where the state's legitimacy is most easily to be won is likely to yield better citizen security results. The analysis of long-term arrangements has demonstrated that by identifying distinct VNSA interactions, we know where gaining state legitimacy and thus reducing the risk of shadow citizen security is likely to be

easiest: in regions where several VNSAs are engaged in strategic alliances. In such cases, VNSAs have a harder time winning social recognition than where they coexist peacefully or are preponderant. Since in strategic alliances the individual groups are not clearly identifiable, they lack legitimacy, making it more feasible for the state to enter as a “legitimate governor”. This suggests that designing security policies according to levels of violence (cf. Chapter One), as the Colombian government’s Consolidation Plan does, is likely to be unsuccessful because it fails to take into account the foundation of citizen security: a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship. In addition to drawing on homicide and displacement rates as security indicators, employing legitimacy indicators could ensure a more targeted, and thus more successful, approach to transforming insecurity or shadow citizen security into citizen security in regions with VNSA presence. Consider, for instance, cases where citizens complain that the state provides coffee crops but does not construct roads to transport products to the market as in Putumayo, or provides seeds that do not grow as in Sucumbíos; or where citizens agree with the VNSAs imposing rules because otherwise there is disorder due to state absence as in Apure. In such cases state legitimacy is low and needs to be enhanced for any state policies to be successful. Yet in regions such as Cesar citizens pretend to have seen guerrillas on their streets, only to make the authorities act. In such regions the state may implement policies with the community’s support and design citizen security policies based on a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship without having to gain too much legitimacy beforehand. A state is only likely to win back the hearts and minds of cross-border shadow community members with adequate provision of public goods and services while being responsive to the citizens’ needs. This is not as immediately perceivable as drug violence, consequences of toxic fumigations or public health in drug market countries, but it is relevant to society in the long run.

It is not always easy to identify to what extent shadow citizen security exists; different arrangements can overlap. Nevertheless, identifying these dynamics and overlaps is useful for more effective security policies.

### 9.3.2 Drug Policies

To effectively interrupt the cocaine supply chain, a focus on how and through whom the arrangements that link different VNSAs within the cocaine supply chain network are enabled is an appropriate entry point. Analysing how VNSAs interact along cocaine supply chains has revealed a change of control from two monopolies (the Medellín and Cali Cartels) and the fragmentation of groups after the AUC's demobilisation to a "multi-monopoly model" with several powerful narco-brokers who control supply chains in certain regions. This is an opportunity for drug policy makers because, unlike a decade ago, they can target these narco-brokers rather than dealing with disintegrated groups of traffickers. Powerful narco-brokers are difficult to replace because they require high trustworthiness based on a wide-reaching network of supporting and trusted actors in multiple sectors of society. Having to convince all parties of their trustworthiness, brokers have to build a long-standing reputation of being honest with their clients, whereas VNSA groups only require the trust of intermediate business partners. Manipulating trust relationships among different groups by targeting the broker could therefore be a creative and useful option to address the illegal drug problem. To protect local communities from ensuing waves of violence, this manipulation has to take into account that the elimination of narco-brokers often entails violent power struggles among successors.

Having discussed both powerful narco-brokers and small *financieros* I suggest that brokers of all levels should be addressed because they are the glue between the cocaine supply chain's links that keep the business moving. Paying more attention to the *financieros'* role, and to how they impose the prices of coca paste and coca leaves can help reduce uncertainty and mistrust among rural communities who do not always know which VNSA is behind the *financieros* and thus cannot adapt behaviour to their rules.<sup>162</sup> This is important in reducing interpersonal mistrust and strengthening the communities' social fabric, essential to raising their voice on citizen security policies.

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<sup>162</sup> In July 2014 staff members of Colombian government institutions and a UN agency confirmed this need.

Targeting VNSA groups involved in the drug trade hardens the trend of the drug business's constant adaptation and reconfiguration that has produced rapidly changing, unpredictable VNSA arrangements which have undermined citizen security in Colombia's borderlands and elsewhere. In the long run, addressing the mechanisms that connect different links in the cocaine supply chain promises to be a more effective drug policy approach while providing opportunities for enhancing citizen security along the cocaine supply chain.

### 9.3.3 Borderland Policies

This research has demonstrated the need for governments to prioritise social development policies in their borderlands, not only borders, as limits of national sovereignty. It has illustrated how VNSAs use borderlands to engage in interactions and their consequences for citizen security. Viewing borderlands as spaces rather than lines is a precondition for recognising that in these spaces VNSA interactions can take place. Colombia's security policies during the 2000s have pushed the conflict towards the country's margins, contributing to making Colombia's borderlands breeding grounds of diverse VNSA interactions with multiple citizen security repercussions. These repercussions extend across the borders and therefore need to be addressed together with Ecuador and Venezuela respectively. Colombia's Victims' Law, introduced in 2011, is a step forwards in compensating those whose relatives died in conflict or who had to leave their homes. Likewise, in Ecuador's and Venezuela's border zones, Colombian conflict actors have inflicted suffering on communities, albeit on foreign territory. However, their victimisation does not fall under that Law. Bogotá, Quito and Caracas should fully recognise the presence of Colombian VNSAs and assist victims in the neighbouring border zones. This is particularly crucial for a post-conflict scenario where those conflict actors who reject demobilisation may continue to operate on the non-Colombian side of the border.

Illusorily calm borderlands require attention from "heartland policymakers" so that borderlanders are respected and protected as citizens in the same way as nationals from non-borderland regions. Media coverage and government discourses typically draw the attention to the visible incidences

of violence while presumably calm situations with VNSA presence are neglected. However, the citizen security impacts of VNSA interactions take shape both in the form of physical violence and by eroding the social fabric and undermining the state-society relationship. Stigmatising borderlands as violent spaces and consequently neglecting border territories with shadow citizen security and shadow citizenship has helped the guerrillas and, partly, the post-demobilised groups, foster a social base in these spaces, including establishing illicit cross-border authority.

#### **9.4 Avenues for Future Research and Limited Generalisations**

The findings of this thesis give rise to at least five future research avenues. First, due to complex causality, the link between specific VNSA interactions and citizen security impacts is necessarily imperfect. Through process tracing, I have explored how certain VNSA interactions influence citizen security without attempting to be exhaustive or exclusive of other contributing variables. The multi-sited fieldwork design facilitated examining factors such as the local context, and my transnational perspective has facilitated insights into the relevance of state policies. However, more research is needed to find out to what extent other variables intervene. Specifically, the role of state interaction with VNSAs requires attention.

Second, as presented in Chapter Two, fieldwork in an area of ongoing conflict such as Colombia's border zones and in violent and fragile settings such as Ecuador's and Venezuela's border zones means that data are not easily accessible. The research topic's sensitive nature makes it more difficult, hence the findings are based on partial insights even though on a very large number of interviews with a wide range of informants over a large geographic space. In a post-conflict scenario in the hopefully not too far distant future, people might provide additional information that could be used to scrutinise to what extent exposure to insecurity may change in a setting of probably continuing violence yet without a context of conflict.

Third, the theory I have built is derived from the context of Colombia's borderlands. Yet the overall insights should be stimuli for similar studies in other regions to find out under what conditions the theory can be applied elsewhere around the globe. In regions such as the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands, the Golden Triangle or the Somali borderlands, armed conflict coupled with drug trafficking shape security dynamics. These borderlands feature the presence of multiple VNSAs. Further research could identify differences depending on the type of transnational organised crime (cocaine industry in Colombia versus heroin industry in Afghanistan) and the supply chain's stage (production in Colombia and Afghanistan versus the emerging transit region in Somalia). It could also explore to what extent the fuzzy continuum of arrangement clusters developed in the Andean context can be employed in borderland and non-borderland contexts in which ethnically and religiously motivated VNSAs operate.

Fourth, exploring how these borderland dynamics influence security in the heartlands could help make the case for increased attention by "heartland-biased policymakers" to border regions, especially those that feature long-term arrangements among VNSAs with little visible security impacts such as shadow citizen security. Informing the states' legitimacy and political authority and the citizenry's identity, citizen security dynamics in borderlands are crucial to the state's centres. Yet this can only be understood when considering states, cross-border arrangements and transnational flows concurrently (van Schendel 2005a, 61). The question of whether the state is the most appropriate actor to provide citizen security remains. Outsourcing security to private companies, leaving it to non-state actors such as indigenous leaders or ceding it to VNSAs – voluntarily or involuntarily – are models that exist across the world. Whether and how democracy based on the state-society relationship supersedes such models in the Andes deserves scrutiny, especially with a view to the consequences for the referent object of security, the citizen.

Fifth, considering borderlanders as agents of security rather than prioritising territorial security, reveals that borderlanders can influence VNSA interactions as (non-)collaborators in the absence of an arrangement; as informants, messengers or providers of infrastructure in short-term

arrangements; and as a labour force or social base in long-term arrangements. They can thus indirectly influence security dynamics. Future research should scrutinise this agency more closely to demonstrate what others can learn from (transnational) borderland communities, including their positive outlook and their sense of community, maybe as a result of alienation from the state.

In Arauca, a woman told me that life at the border in some ways is more sustainable than elsewhere because one can live from contraband. Rather than the Colombia-Venezuela border's recent closure, governments should support the borderlanders' eagerness to engage in cross-border trade and foster licit means for them to do so. In the same region, on the way from Arauca to Saravena, I passed through several villages, all of them with guerrilla graffiti on the house walls. In one village, Troncal, all houses were newly painted and decorated with paintings of cacao plants – to cover graffiti (see Figure 36). A sense of community and dense social fabric reinforced through these paintings reaffirmed the villagers' say on what citizen security should look like: based on united efforts to transform the VNSAs' actions in a creative, rather than violent way. I saw the cacao plants as a symbol of an alternative livelihood strategy to the cocaine industry – and as a reminder that the state must play its part to allow for such strategies to bear fruit and foster a mutually reinforcing state-society relationship in borderlands – the groundwork of citizen security.



**Figure 36: House with cacao plant painting in Arauca, Colombia**

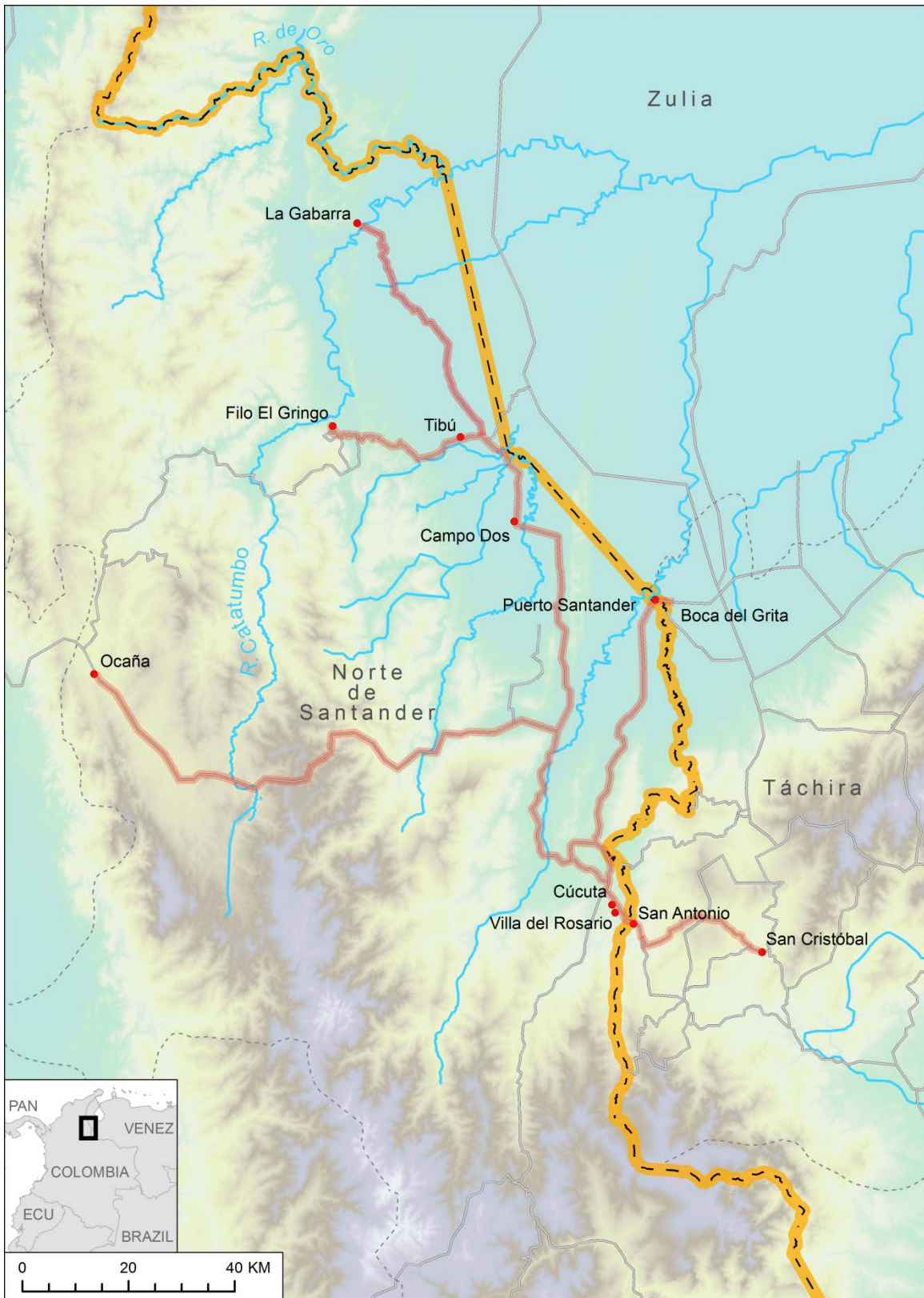
## APPENDIX I: FIELDWORK ITINERARY



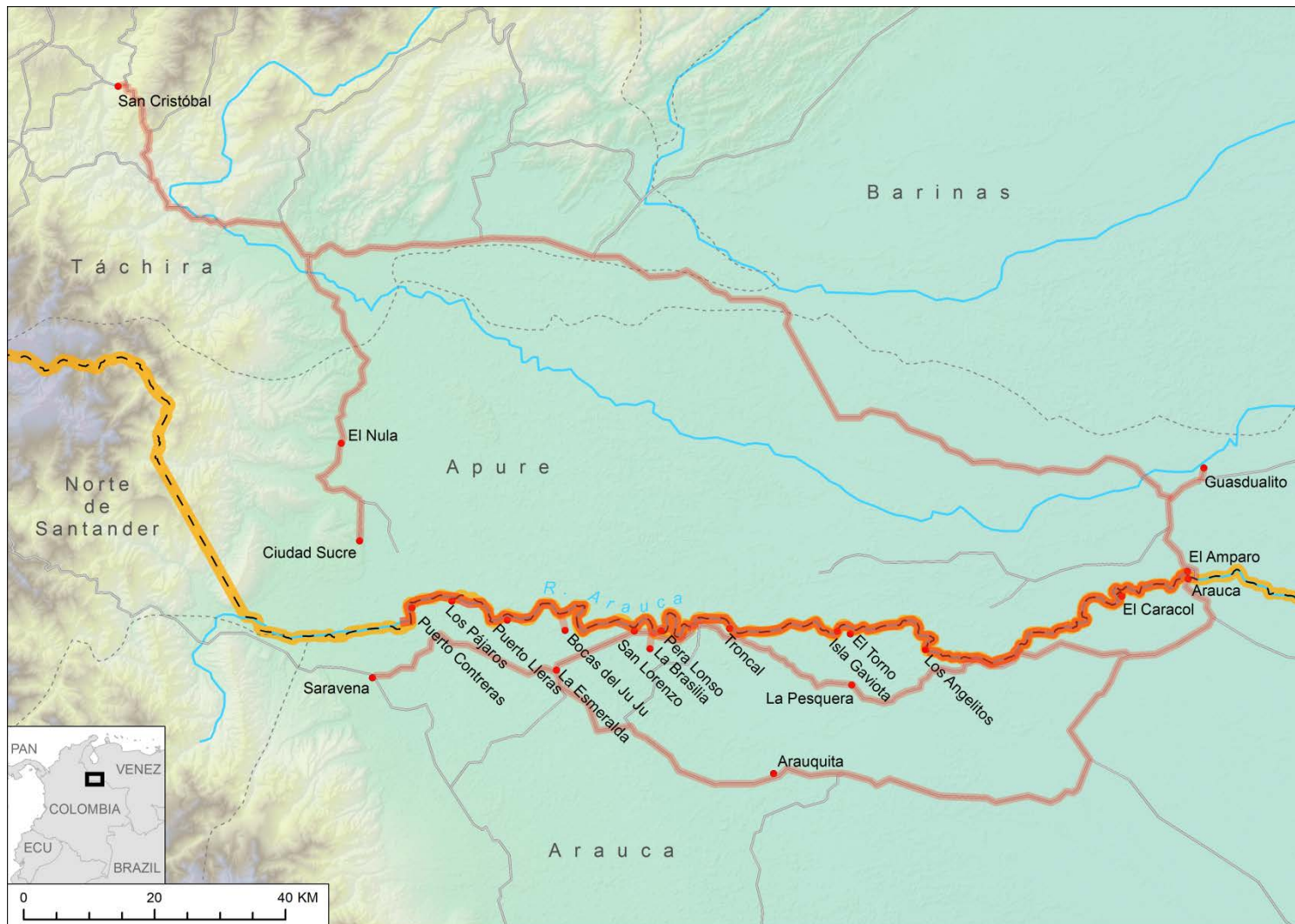
**Map 19: Fieldwork Itinerary, Phase 1**



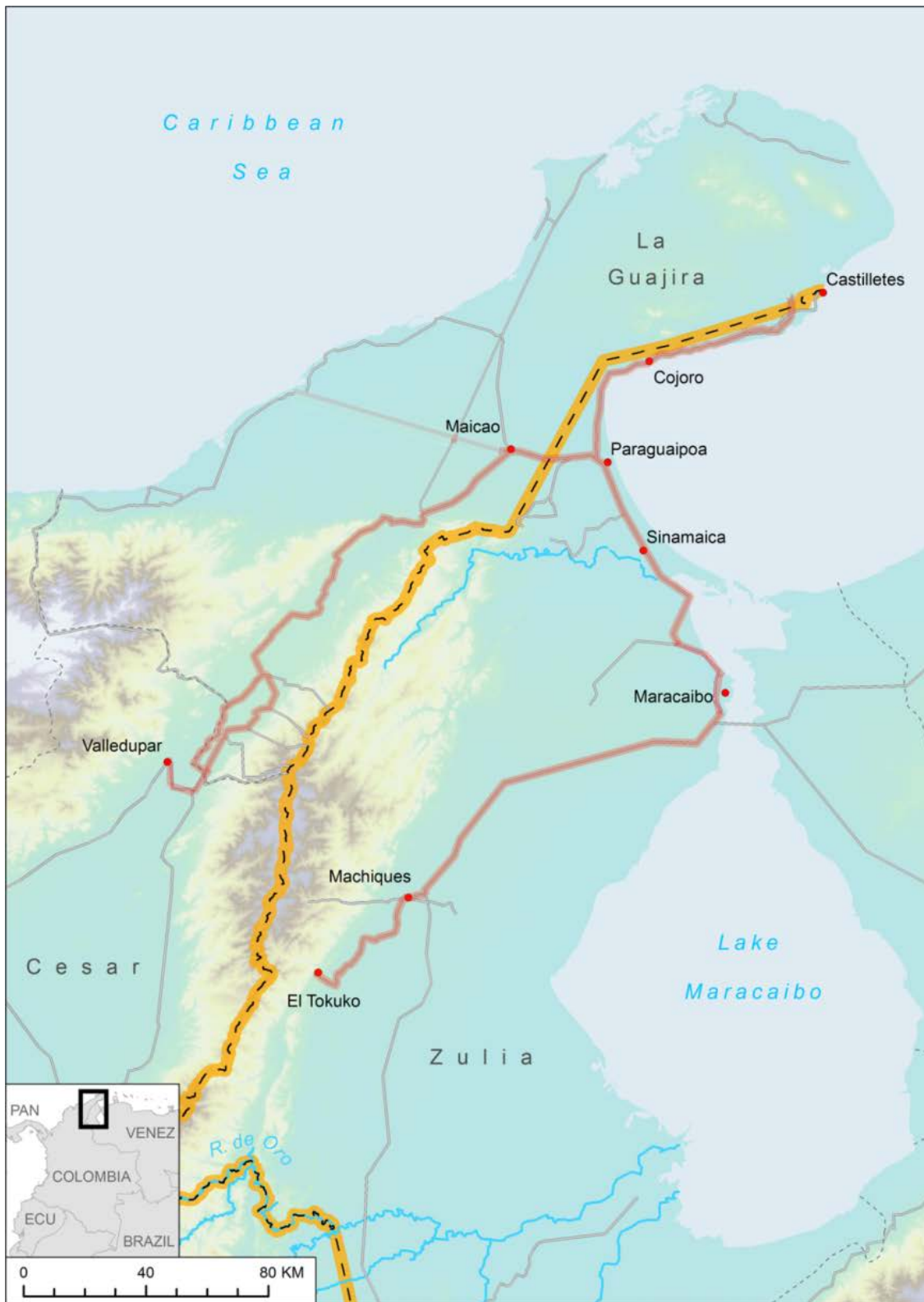
**Map 20: Fieldwork Itinerary, Phase 2, Part 1**



**Map 21: Fieldwork Itinerary, Phase 2, Part 2**



**Map 22: Fieldwork Itinerary, Phase 3, Part 1**



**Map 23: Fieldwork Itinerary, Phase 3, Part 2**



**Map 24: Fieldwork Itinerary, Phase 4**

## APPENDIX II: GUERRILLA PAMPHLETS DISTRIBUTED IN APURE, VENEZUELA



FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIAS  
DE COLOMBIA - EJÉRCITO DEL PUEBLO  
F A R C - E P



### COMUNICADO A LA OPINION PÚBLICA

La Columna Móvil Julio Mario Tavera del Décimo Frente de las FARC-EP informa a la opinión pública del área de frontera Colombo-Venezolana, lo siguiente:

1. Nos complace enormemente el contundente triunfo que nuevamente ha logrado el bravo pueblo venezolano en beneficio del proceso revolucionario que debe ser extendido a toda América. Una vez más ha quedado demostrado que el sentir de las mayorías se enrumba hacia un verdadero cambio social nutrido de bienestar a la población menos favorecida y que había sido negada mezquinamente por los gobiernos oligárquicos e imperialistas durante siglos.
2. Aunque decir que todo esta en orden sería desconocer la realidad; Esos planes diseñados por el imperialismo norteamericano de sabotear y acabar con el proceso revolucionario Bolivariano no terminan aún y han encontrado dos (2) fuertes aliados que le hacen juego a tan criminales pretensiones. Por un lado el Estado Colombiano con su más fiel servidor Uribe Vélez, quien de forma constante han enfilado sus engendros

paramilitares hacia Venezuela con el propósito de crear el terror, la zozobra y el desplazamiento en bastos sectores de la zona de frontera especialmente en los Estados de Zulia y Táchira. El cobro de vacunas, la extorsión, el chantaje y el secuestro de venezolanos ha sido su principal mecanismo de desestabilizar el proceso revolucionario y a la vez se ha convertido en su principal fuente de obtener recursos para fortalecer su aparato de guerra y narcocriminal.

3. Otro factor que ha ocasionado la incertidumbre ha sido los múltiples asesinatos que se han presentado en los últimos tiempos en sectores como los Bancos, Mate Balso, Tres Esquinas, El Nula, entre otros; protagonizados por el sicariato organizado obedeciendo órdenes de algunos mandos del Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), disfrazados de revolucionarios. A estos hechos alzamos nuestra voz de protesta y aclaramos a la población que rechazamos estas acciones que solo obedecen al alto grado de infiltración por parte de los enemigos del proceso revolucionario que carcome a dicha organización.
4. Invitamos a todas las organizaciones cooperativas y comunales a fortalecer los mecanismos de fiscalización y veeduría ciudadana con el fin de evitar el desvío o despilfarro de los recursos provenientes del Estado en beneficio de las obras de desarrollo e infraestructura, ya que existen funcionarios inescrupulosos y corruptos que causan el más grave daño y desprestigio al proceso revolucionario Bolivariano.
5. Nuestro compromiso es de combatir todos estos elementos que ocasionan lesivos daños al proceso revolucionario, por eso estaremos atentos y a la ofensiva para que no solo en Venezuela, sino en toda América se pueda consolidar los cambios sociales y el bienestar del pueblo negado por los gobiernos mezquinos y corruptos.
6. Por último nos queda desearles a todo el pueblo de la frontera Colombo-Venezolana una Feliz Navidad y un Prospero Año 2007 lleno de alegría, justicia social y lucha; recordando que "En Bolívar nos encontramos todos".

**COLUMNA MÓVIL "JULIO MARIO TAVERA"  
DÉCIMO FRENTE "GUADALUPE SALCEDO"**

**LA SOBERANÍA NACIONAL**



**FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIAS  
DE COLOMBIA - EJÉRCITO DEL PUEBLO  
FARC - E P.**

**COMUNICADO DEL DÉCIMO FRENTE A LA OPINION PÚBLICA  
COLOMBO-VENEZOLANA**

El Estado Mayor del Décimo Frente. Hace saber a la opinión pública Colombo-Venezolana:

1. Que realizada la correspondiente investigación a nivel de todas las unidades de nuestra organización se ha podido constatar que no hubo participación de ninguna de nuestras tropas (guerrillas o milicias), en los hechos ocurridos el día viernes 17 de Septiembre en cercanías de caserío de Mate caña, donde fueron masacrados 6 soldados del ejército venezolano y una ingeniera de la compañía PDVSA los cuales se desplazaban en una canoa por el río Sarare.
2. Que en ningún momento hemos considerado a las autoridades civiles y militares de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela como nuestros enemigos, por tal motivo no son considerados objetivos militares de nuestra organización revolucionaria.
3. Se ha podido establecer por medio de informes de inteligencia la presencia de elementos provocadores de extrema derecha en el área, dedicados a desestabilizar el proceso revolucionario liderado por el presidente Hugo Rafael Chávez en Venezuela.
4. Hacemos un llamado a las comunidades del **área fronteriza Colombo-Venezolana** a mantener la **vigilancia en** los pueblos y **caseríos con el fin de** evitar la infiltración de los grupos paramilitares **patrocinados por el gobierno** colombiano y por los sectores de oposición venezolanos, que solo buscan crear el caos y la confusión entre la población.

Frontera Colombo-Venezolana, septiembre 21 del 2004

**ESTADO MAYOR DEL DÉCIMO FRENTE  
"GUADALUPE SALCEDO"  
BLOQUE ORIENTAL FARC-EP.**

**CON BOLIVAR POR LA PAZ Y LA SOBERANIA NACIONAL**



**FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIAS  
DE COLOMBIA EJERCITO DEL PUEBLO  
FARC - EP**

Abril 30 del 2007

**COMUNICADO A LA OPINIÓN PÚBLICA  
NACIONAL E INTERNACIONAL**

La Columna Movil Julio Mario Tavera del Décimo Frente de las **FARC - EP**, hacemos saber a toda la opinión pública colombo venezolana lo siguiente:

1. Que no tenemos nada que ver con los hechos acontecidos el día Domingo 29 de Abril del 2007 en la población del Nula, donde resultaron heridas dos personas y tres (3) muertos entre ellos un niño de tan solo 14 años de edad, el cual se dedicaba a sus estudios.
2. Por el contrario repudiamos estos hechos realizados por los matones del ELN que hacen presencia en esta localidad.
3. reiteramos una vez más, que la confrontación entre las FARC - EP, y el ELN es por principios ideológicos, pues estos no se venden y el ELN con sus actuaciones pareciera ser una organización paramilitar.
4. Invitamos a la población colombo venezolana a que haga un analisis, si estas actuaciones son de una organización revolucionaria y de igual forma denunciar los atropellos que reiteradamente ha venido realizando esta organización supuestamente revolucionaria en contra del pueblo colombo venezolano.

**EL PRESENTE ES DE LUCHA Y  
EL FUTURO SERÁ NUESTRO**

Y LA SOBERANIA NACIONAL.





**FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIAS  
DE COLOMBIA – EJÉRCITO DEL PUEBLO  
FARC - EP**

**COMUNICADO A LA OPINIÓN PÚBLICA**

La Columna Móvil Julio Mario Tavera del Décimo Frente de las FARC – EP, informa a los habitantes del Departamento de Arauca y la zona de frontera Colombo Venezolana lo siguiente:

1. Que los hechos que han venido aconteciendo con el ELN hacen parte de un plan de esta organización de acabar con los líderes y colaboradores de nuestro Movimiento Revolucionario.
2. Como resultado de este plan tenemos las bajas que estos han venido en forma selectiva ocasionando tanto a la militancia como a guerrilleros y milicianos de las FARC, con la modalidad de capturarlos, torturarlos y luego desaparecerlos; en algunas oportunidades no se han encontrado los cuerpos de estas víctimas, como los casos de Eliécer, Rambo y Jhon, tratando de culpar a las autoridades venezolanas y al paramilitarismo.
3. Que el día 12 de Diciembre, mandos del ELN alias la Ñeca y Culebro, citaron a dialogar al Comandante Che del 45 Frente en el sitio conocido como el cruce del río Cusay Puerto Nidia – Botalón y en el momento de despedirse de estos lo asesinaron de forma cobarde por la espalda.
4. En el caso de la zona de frontera, cuando han ocurrido estos casos hemos dado respuesta acatando las conclusiones de la Octava Conferencia Guerrillera, donde nos habla que “de acuerdo al trato que nos den; daremos.”
5. Informamos y aclaramos a la población civil del Departamento de Arauca y la zona de frontera, que el accionar del ELN contra nuestro proceso no tiene principios revolucionarios y obedece al infiltramiento que el enemigo mantiene en esta organización.
6. Ratificamos nuestro compromiso con el proceso revolucionario y con el pueblo colombiano, respetando las bases de las organizaciones de izquierda que se perfilan hacia el verdadero cambio social que requiere nuestra patria.

Montañas y Sabanas de Arauca, Diciembre 20 del 2005

**COMANDO DE DIRECCION  
COLUMNA MOVIL “JULIO MARIO TAVERA”  
DÉCIMO FRETE “GUADALUPE SALCEDO”**

**CON BOLIVAR POR LA PAZ Y LA SOBERANIA NACIONAL**



**FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIAS DE  
COLOMBIA - EJERCITO DEL PUEBLO  
F A R C - E P**

**COMUNICADO A LA OPINIÓN PÚBLICA**

Ya son más de las 450 personas que han tenido que desplazarse hacia otro lugar de la geografía nacional víctimas del atropello que a diario reciben de la fuerza pública en el departamento de Arauca en cabeza del gobernador Julio Acosta Bernal, la XVIII brigada del ejército, la policía y los grupos paramilitares instalados en esta zona por ellos mismos. A la frontera venezolana han llegado una cifra aproximada de 340 personas provenientes de los municipios de Tame, Arauquita, Fortul y Saravena que no encontraron otra salida, sino la de abandonar sus tierras y propiedades para proteger sus vidas y la de sus familias. La política de "Tierra arrasada" implantada por el fascista presidente Uribe Vélez y llevada a la práctica por los organismos de seguridad del estado, no es otra cosa más que otro experimento de los cuales han realizado en esta región del país. El ejército colombiano quiere asegurar la ejecución y la implantación del nefasto proyecto del ALCA, y para eso ha desarrollado la más implacable persecución a los dirigentes populares, al campesinado Araucano y en especial a aquellos que viven sobre la vía Arauca - Pueblo Nuevo - Tame, la cual la convirtieron en el centro de operaciones de la política de exterminio a sangre y fuego. Muchas de estas familias campesinas han abandonado sus tierras en busca de protección, otros se han incorporado a la lucha contra ese estado que les quiere arrebatar lo que con mucho sacrificio han logrado formar y muchos de ellos se encuentran en la otra trinchera esperando a que muy pronto se dé una solución definitiva al conflicto que por muchos años se viene desarrollando en nuestro país.

El otro problema lo encontramos con las autoridades venezolanas que operan en la frontera, quienes se empeñan en cobrar impuestos hasta por reírse en el área donde mantienen su influencia. En varias ocasiones han hecho incursiones militares en distintos sectores del área y en especial a los de caño Trónqueras, los Bancos, Cutufi y

Mata de Balso; donde le dan plan sin compasión a los campesinos, saquean las fincas, roban gallinas, animales, electrodomésticos, dineros y en algunas oportunidades le echan plomo a las personas que consideran sospechosas, como lo ocurrido el día 10 de septiembre, cuando una patrulla al mando del teniente Medina Zambrano afanado por que no le habían cancelado la cuota semanal que cobra por dejar trabajar a los comerciantes de la gasolina, abrió fuego de fusiles desde el barranco frente a Puerto Contreras contra una canoa en la que viajaban civiles hiriendo a los señores Albeiro Téllez con un tiro en el pecho el cual le perforo un pulmón y al señor Duber Armando Vargas con un tiro en la pierna derecha.

En las poblaciones del Nula y el piñal los agentes de la DISIP, el DIM y PTJ, en complicidad con el DAS colombiano y escoltados por el ejercito venezolano, se han convertido en los grupos de exterminio al estilo paraco, pues ya en repetidas ocasiones han desaparecido a más de 25 personas sin dar explicación del los hechos o acusaciones, convirtiéndose en la amenaza más latente en el área fronteriza. Hechos como estos se cometen en un país donde se supone existe un gobierno amigo del pueblo y en el cual se desarrolla un proceso revolucionario encaminado al bienestar de sus habitantes y donde deberían ser las autoridades militares quienes tomaran las riendas de la consolidación de dicho proceso y ponerse al lado del pueblo, pero ocurre todo lo contrario; El pueblo repudia y rechaza a estas autoridades y prefieren nuestras orientaciones que están enfocadas al bienestar colectivo sin represión ni atropellos y al crecimiento del socialismo y la unión latinoamericana. Invitamos a toda la población colombo-venezolana a seguir apoyando nuestras estructuras políticas y militares. Nosotros seguiremos adelante con esta lucha en beneficio del pueblo y al lado del pueblo.

Septiembre 30 del 2004, frontera colombo-venezolana

**ESTADO MAYOR DEL DECIMO FRENTE**  
**"GUADALUPE SALCEDO" BLOQUE ORIENTAL**  
**FARC-EP.**  
**CON BOLÍVAR POR LA PAZ Y LA SOBERANÍA NACIONAL**

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- 256 Community leader, Mataje, February 2012
- 257 Army officer 1, Palma Real, February 2012
- 258 Army officer 2, Palma Real, February 2012
- 259 Community leader, Palma Real, February 2012
- 260 Citizen, Pampanal, February 2012
- 261 Community leader, Proyecto San Miguel, January 2012
- 262 Academic 1, Quito, January 2012
- 263 Academic 2, Quito, January 2012
- 264 Academic 3, Quito, February 2012
- 265 Academic 4, Quito, February 2012
- 266 Academic 5, Quito, March 2012
- 267 Academic 6, Quito, March 2012
- 268 Academic 7, Quito, March 2012

269 Academic 8, Quito, March 2012  
270 Academic 9, Quito, March 2012  
271 Academic 10, Quito, March 2012  
272 Civil society leader of Tumaco, Quito, January 2012  
273 Development agency staff 1, Quito, January 2012  
274 Development agency staff 2, Quito, February 2012  
275 Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, Quito, March 2012  
276 Former Colombian intelligence official, Quito, February 2012  
277 Government official 1, Quito, January 2012  
278 Government official 2, Quito, March 2012  
279 Human rights defender, Quito, March 2012  
280 Human rights organisation staff, Quito, January 2012  
281 Intelligence official 1, Quito, February 2012  
282 Intelligence official 2, Quito, February 2012  
283 Intelligence official 3, Quito, February 2012  
284 Intelligence official 4, Quito, February 2012  
285 Intelligence official 5, Quito, March 2012  
286 International agency staff 1, Quito, January 2012  
287 International agency staff 2, Quito, March 2012  
288 International agency staff 3, Quito, March 2012  
289 International agency staff 4, Quito, March 2012  
290 International agency staff 5, Quito, March 2012  
291 International agency staff 6, Quito, March 2012  
292 Local government official, Quito, January 2012  
293 Ministry of Defence official 1, Quito, March 2012  
294 Ministry of Defence official 2, Quito, March 2012  
295 Ministry of Security Coordination official, Quito, March 2012  
296 NGO representative 1, Quito, February 2012  
297 NGO representative 2, Quito, February 2012  
298 NGO representative 3, Quito, February 2012  
299 NGO representative 4, Quito, March 2012  
300 NGO representative 5, Quito, March 2012  
301 Technical Secretary of Plan Ecuador official, Quito, March 2012  
302 Afro-Ecuadorian leader, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
303 Citizen 1, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
304 Citizen 2, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
305 Citizen 3, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
306 Citizen 4, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
307 Citizen 5, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
308 Cleric, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
309 Community leader, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
310 Human rights defender, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
311 Human rights organisation staff 1, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
312 Humanitarian organisation staff 2, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
313 Journalist, San Lorenzo, February 2012  
314 Navy officer, San Lorenzo, February 2012

- 315 NGO representative, San Lorenzo, February 2012
- 316 Police officer, San Lorenzo, February 2012
- 317 Refugee from Tumaco 1, San Lorenzo, February 2012
- 318 Refugee from Tumaco 2, San Lorenzo, February 2012
- 319 Citizen, Santa Barbara, February 2012
- 320 Citizen 1, Santa Rosa, January 2012
- 321 Citizen 2, Santa Rosa, January 2012
- 322 Community leader 1, Santa Rosa, January 2012
- 323 Community leader 2, Santa Rosa, January 2012
- 324 Community leader, Tambillo, February 2012
- 325 Citizen 1, Tufiño, February 2012
- 326 Citizen 2, Tufiño, February 2012
- 327 Academic, Tulcán, February 2012
- 328 Army officer, Tulcán, February 2012
- 329 Citizen of Tufiño, Tulcán, February 2012
- 330 International agency staff 1, Tulcán, July 2011
- 331 International agency staff 2, Tulcán, February 2012
- 332 Local government official 1, Tulcán, August 2011
- 333 Local government official 2, Tulcán, February 2012
- 334 Local government official 3, Tulcán, February 2012
- 335 Local politician, Tulcán, February 2012
- 336 Police official, Tulcán, February 2012
- 337 Prison worker, Tulcán, August 2011

## **Venezuela**

- 338 Civil society member, Altocuco, October 2012
- 339 Academic 1, Caracas, August 2012
- 340 Academic 2, Caracas, August 2012
- 341 Academic 3, Caracas, August 2012
- 342 Academic 4, Caracas, August 2012
- 343 Academic 5, Caracas, August 2012
- 344 Academic 6, Caracas, September 2012
- 345 Academic 7, Caracas, September 2012
- 346 Citizen from Rubio, Caracas, August 2012
- 347 Colombian refugee 1, Caracas, August 2012
- 348 Colombian refugee 2, Caracas, August 2012
- 349 Colombian refugee 3, Caracas, August 2012
- 350 Colombian refugee 4, Caracas, August 2012
- 351 Colombian refugee 5, Caracas, August 2012
- 352 Colombian refugee 6, Caracas, September 2012
- 353 Colombian refugee 7, Caracas, September 2012
- 354 Former prison director, Caracas, August 2012
- 355 Government official 1, Caracas, August 2012
- 356 Government official 2, Caracas, August 2012
- 357 Government official 3, Caracas, September 2012

- 358 Historian, Caracas, September 2012
- 359 Human rights organisation staff, Caracas, September 2012
- 360 Humanitarian organisation staff, Caracas, August 2012
- 361 International agency staff 1, Caracas, August 2012
- 362 International agency staff 2, Caracas, August 2012
- 363 International agency staff 3, Caracas, August 2012
- 364 International embassy staff, Caracas, September 2012
- 365 Journalist, Caracas, September 2012
- 366 Local government official, Caracas, August 2012
- 367 NGO representative 1, Caracas, August 2012
- 368 NGO representative 2, Caracas, August 2012
- 369 Radical Chávez supporters, Caracas, September 2012
- 370 Think-tank staff 1, Caracas, August 2012
- 371 Think-tank staff 2, Caracas, August 2012
- 372 Asylum seeker, Ciudad Sucre, August 2012
- 373 Refugee, Ciudad Sucre, August 2012
- 374 Colombian refugee, El Amparo, September 2012
- 375 NGO representative 1, Cojoro, October 2012
- 376 NGO representative 2, Cojoro, October 2012
- 377 NGO representative 3, Cojoro, October 2012
- 378 NGO representative 4, Cojoro, October 2012
- 379 Teacher, Cojoro, October 2012
- 380 Wayúu representative, Cojoro, October 2012
- 381 Citizen, El Nula, August 2012
- 382 Civil society representative 1, El Nula, August 2012
- 383 Civil society representative 2, El Nula, August 2012
- 384 Civil society representative 3, El Nula, August 2012
- 385 Cleric 1, El Nula, August 2012
- 386 Cleric 2, El Nula, September 2012
- 387 Female farmer, El Nula, September 2012
- 388 Human rights defender, El Nula, August 2012
- 389 Male citizen, El Nula, September 2012
- 390 Citizen, Guasdualito, September 2012
- 391 Cleric, Guasdualito, August 2012
- 392 Female citizen, Guasdualito, August 2012
- 393 Human rights defender, Guasdualito, September 2012
- 394 Humanitarian organisation staff 1, Guasdualito, August 2012
- 395 Humanitarian organisation staff 2, Guasdualito, August 2012
- 396 Humanitarian organisation staff 3, Guasdualito, August 2012
- 397 Humanitarian organisation staff 4, Guasdualito, September 2012
- 398 International agency staff, Guasdualito, August 2012
- 399 Lawyer, Guasdualito, August 2012
- 400 Local government official 1, Guasdualito, August 2012
- 401 Local government official 2, Guasdualito, September 2012
- 402 Male citizen, Guasdualito, August 2012
- 403 National Guard official, Guasdualito, September 2012

- 404 Police official, Guasdualito, September 2012
- 405 Police officials, Guasdualito, August 2012
- 406 Refugee, La Tinta, May 2012
- 407 Cleric, Machiques, October 2012
- 408 Humanitarian organisation staff 1, Machiques, October 2012
- 409 Humanitarian organisation staff 2, Machiques, October 2012
- 410 Local government official, Machiques, October 2012
- 411 Citizen, Maracaibo, October 2012
- 412 Director of humanitarian organisation, Maracaibo, October 2012
- 413 High-ranking police commander, Maracaibo, October 2012
- 414 Humanitarian organisation staff 1, Maracaibo, October 2012
- 415 Humanitarian organisation staff 2, Maracaibo, October 2012
- 416 Journalist, Maracaibo, October 2012
- 417 Human rights defender, Paraguaipoa, October 2012
- 418 Human rights organisation staff, Paraguaipoa, October 2012
- 419 Indigenous leader, Paraguaipoa, October 2012
- 420 Schoolmaster, Paraguaipoa, October 2012
- 421 Wayúu leader, Paraguaipoa, October 2012
- 422 Humanitarian organisation staff, San Antonio, May 2012
- 423 Academic 1, San Cristóbal, May 2012
- 424 Academic 2, San Cristóbal, May 2012
- 425 Academic 3, San Cristóbal, May 2012
- 426 Human rights defender 1, San Cristóbal, May 2012
- 427 Human rights defender 2, San Cristóbal, May 2012
- 428 Human rights defender 3, San Cristóbal, May 2012
- 429 Humanitarian organisation staff 1, San Cristóbal, May 2012
- 430 Humanitarian organisation staff 2, San Cristóbal, May 2012
- 431 International agency staff 1, San Cristóbal, May 2012
- 432 International agency staff 2, San Cristóbal, May 2012
- 433 Police official, San Cristóbal, May 2012

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