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Declaration

I, Nadia Jounes, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

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ABSTRACT

In 2012 the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla commenced peace talks for the first time in many years.

This thesis looks at the Colombian land struggle from its earliest stages to understand the roots of the issue. Then this thesis links these issues with contemporary land contention and the invasion by multinational corporations and the African oil palm industry. Also, in the light of the current peace process, this thesis takes a look at how such foreign investment in Colombia can be an obstacle to peace.

This thesis shows that the Colombian land struggle is greatly affected by Plan Colombia, multinational corporations and the oil palm industry. By analysing these foreign relations and the effect they have on land contention, using Center-Periphery theory, World-Systems Analysis and imperialism, it is clear that these foreign relations greatly benefit the stronger nation (the U.S) whereas the Colombia is being exploited.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUC – Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia

cC – Center in the Center

cP – center in the Periphery

ELN – Ejército de Liberación Nacional

FARC – Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia

FEDEPALMA – Federación Nacional de Cultivadores de Palma de Aceite (Colombian
Palm Growers Association)

IACHR – Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

INCODER – Colombian Institute for Rural Development

MNCs – multinational corporations

pC – periphery in the Center

pP – periphery in the Periphery

SINTRAMINERCOL – Colombian Miners' Working Union

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UP – Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Union)

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

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Dedicated to my beloved parents Basma and
Shawki,
and to my dear husband Stanley.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Colombia is seen as South America's leading democracy, and yet it is troubled by a long and brutal civil war. Today, it is named the world's longest lasting civil war, and the main guerrilla – *las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, the FARC – is the longest existing insurgent group so far (Guáqueta 2003; Leech 2011). There are several questions to be asked in regards to this conflict: How can it be that a country with two coasts, an enormous amount of natural resources, and such extraordinary flora and fauna is struggling with a poor population? Why is it that the internal conflict seems to go nowhere, and why, despite several attempts on peace, has there never been a successful agreement?

It seems clear that there is more to this conflict than just a battle between insurgencies and government. It also seems clear that there are obstacles to any peace agreement that lies deeper than the cocaine production that haunts the country. To understand conflict and why it does not end, it is important to understand the dynamics and the reason to why it started in the first place. As the historical aspects of the conflict will be discussed in the next chapter, it is important to look at a contemporary issue in order to understand the meaning of this thesis.

In the 1980s and 1990s Colombia saw a period of economic transition. According to Gibbs and Leech (2009) and Avilés (2008), an elite (mainly from the extraction sector) came to power and implemented series of neoliberal economic measures dedicated to reduce state regulations and protection of the economy while advocating free market policies and competitions as a necessity for economic growth and development. These measures continued throughout the 1990s and were a key part in the economic strategy of President Alvaro Uribe between 2002 and 2010 and according to Avilés (2008) Colombia was a top destination for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) between 1990 and 2004.

However, according to some (Avilés 2008; Gibbs & Leech 2009; Guáqueta 2003), such integration of the Colombian economy had a price, as the peasants of Colombia have experienced. Open markets have led to competition in agriculture from global large scale producers and the fall of the international coffee prices. Privatised companies have created rural landlessness and major

economic differences (Avilés 2008). Avilés (2008), Guáqueta (2003) and Gibbs and Leech (2009) also argue that the open markets have led to the growing and selling of more profitable crops like coca; an alternative many Colombians deemed necessary. Now, Colombia ranks high on the world's list over countries with the most concentrated landownerships. According to Oxfam, 80% of the land is owned by only 14%, placing Colombia as number 11 of the countries with worst distribution of land (Oxfam 2013).

This thesis will look at the Colombian land struggle from its earliest stages to understand the roots of the issue. Then, this thesis will link these issues with contemporary land contention and the invasion by multinational corporations and the African oil palm industry. Also, in the light of the current peace process, this thesis will look at how such economic relations can be an obstacle to peace.

1.2 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The primary objective of this thesis is to understand both the historical and contemporary land issues. As mentioned above, the Colombian conflict emerged from the opposition to the oligarchic elite who were in control of most of the land. Looking at Colombia today, a minority elite owns the majority of the land. In addition, peasants in large parts of the country abandon their lands due to warfare between the guerrilla, the paramilitaries, the state and the U.S supported Plan Colombia. At the same time as powerful individuals sell land for a small price, the abandoned lands are left for grabbing, and are either used for cultivation of coca or taken by the wealthy landowners. In many cases international corporations take advantage of the displacement to extract natural resources such as oil or minerals. This thesis will describe how Colombia's conflictive land issues are connected to Plan Colombia, multinational corporations and the palm oil industry. Such relations have a considerable economic and political influence in Colombia.

As this thesis will show, there is also a strong correlation between Plan Colombia – the U.S supported military initiative against the cocaine cultivation – and the overtaking of land by the multinational corporations. This thesis will also show the relation between the palm oil industry and forced displacement and land struggles. Several sources – both primary and secondary – have confirmed the my suspicion on this topic.

The research questions for these topics are as follows:

RQ1) What is the effect of Plan Colombia on land contention?

RQ2) Is there a link between Plan Colombia and multinational corporations?

RQ3) What is the effect of the palm oil industry on land contention?

RQ5) How do these foreign relations affect local Colombian politics?

RQ6) Are these foreign relations a stumbling block to peace?

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured in six main chapters. The next chapter (Chapter 2) takes a more profound look at the Colombian conflict as a whole while emphasising the reason for both its beginning and longevity. This chapter will detail the main historical and economic events that led to the civil war and on-going conflict. However, Chapter 2 will not go into major details of the FARC, the paramilitaries or the cocaine business. Although these are important aspects of the conflict, they have been studied profoundly by others. It is not necessary for the outcome of this thesis to include topics.

Chapter 3 describes the methodological approaches of this research, and Chapter 4 analyses the theories of Johan Galtung and Immanuel Wallerstein: center-periphery, imperialism and world-systems theory. These theories will be linked to the empirical findings in chapter 5, based on interviews and documents. Finally, chapter 6 will conclude the research.



Figure 1: Map of Colombia (source: www.schema-root.org)



Figure 2: Map of Colombia with departmental borders (source: www.mapsoftheworld.com)

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

2.1 Historical Background

A common notion is that the Colombian civil conflict, like many other conflict, started in the Cold War era, with the creation of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) guerrilla in 1962 and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) in 1964. However, one can look further back in the Colombian history and find the root of the violence and conflict – the struggle for land equality. The since the early 1900s, Colombian peasants have fought wealthy landowners and requested land reforms, and it is continuing today. As many conflicts *did* slow down at the end of the Cold War, the Colombian civil conflict increased, especially in the 1990s. The appearance of the right wing paramilitaries (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, AUC) in the 1980s and their re-appearance as armed criminal bands in the late 2000s has added a new angle, further deepening the conflict and revealing new underlying reasons for it. The battle continues over wealth, political power and government ideologies as well as grievances of marginalisation and socioeconomic inequalities of peasants (Guaqueta 2003). The left wing insurgents want a socialist system and a fair redistribution of the land still pertaining to a concentrated few. The right wing paramilitaries wanted to get rid of the guerrillas and continue with the political and economic situation as it is (Guáqueta 2003), favouring both the drug business and the wealthy political elite.

This chapter intends to lay out the main historic events that have led to where Colombia is today. It also intends to underline the main issues of the land conflict.

2.2 Simon Bolivar and the peasant uprising

Simon Bolivar became president of Gran Colombia (consisting of today's Venezuela, Panamá, Colombia and Ecuador) after defeating the Spanish in 1821. Bolivar died in 1830 and his dream of a federal Latin America, along with Gran Colombia, fell apart shortly after. Colombia was grasped by warring landowners, and local elites and weak state institutions allowed for regional administration of power. The Colombian topography also contributed to the separation. Already then, Colombia's distinctive historical development was in place. Colombia remained in war for

the rest of the 17th Century. The war of independence was then followed by eight civil wars, 14 local wars, several uprisings, one coup d'etat and two wars with Ecuador.

2.3 Early struggles for land

Whereas the total land area in Colombia consisted of 75% of publicly owned land in 1850, by the end of the century corruption and violence saw a majority of the land in the hands of wealthy land owners (Skretteberg et.al 2009). This in turn increased the powers of the local elites. Laws were passed in 1875 to protect the peasants, but large landowners ignored them. Rather, these large landowners organised armed groups to terrorise the peasants in order to protect their own land (Skretteberg et.al 2009). The struggle for land in Colombia begins here.

Colombia had little export material and too few resources to create a nation and remained economically weak. By the end of the 1800s other Latin America countries had implemented political reforms and liberal economies. But the large landowners in Colombia held on to the traditional hierarchic ways. In 1886 Colombia created a constitution that would strengthen the central government. The army was created and the power of the president was fortified. However, with the collapse of the coffee prices in the 1890s and the exclusion of Liberal party members from important positions a new conflict was looming (Skretteberg et.al 2009).

Between 1899 and 1902 around 100,000 people lost their lives in the Thousand Days War (Guerra de los Mil Dias) and the country was left in economic chaos and destruction. In the first years of the 20th Century, Colombia had one of the weakest economies in Latin America. But the rise of coffee prices in the next thirty years would develop an economic basis on which to shape the country. However, modernisation and increased foreign investment had its consequences. Workers mobilised against foreign companies and large establishments¹ and at the same time, the peasants were fighting between themselves for land. This did not affect the elite. Society was still based on authoritarianism and controlled by the Church and the military. The elites were still separated from the state.

¹ the most infamous incident was at the National Fruit Company in 1928, where several union leaders and workers were killed

2.4 Gaitan and La Violencia

Although Colombia saw nine civil wars between pro-free trade Liberals and protectionists Conservatives during the 19th and 20th century (Palacios 2006), the Colombian conflict is known mainly due to two factors: The current is the FARC and the drug trade, whereas the historical one is *La Violencia* (1948-1957), a ten year civil war consisting of violent and irregular confrontations and power struggles - mainly in small towns and rural areas – between supporters of the Liberal and Conservative parties (Guáqueta 2003; Roldán 2002).

While many scholars consider the assassination of Liberal populist Jorge Eliécer Gaitán the crucial event that catalysed *la Violencia*, the factors that led to his death and the unrest that followed can be traced as far as the 1930s and 1940s (Roldán 2002).

Industrial investment and employment had started the transformation of Colombia from a mainly rural country to an increasingly urban country in the early 1900s. The effects of this growth, i.e. the rising living expenses and the increasingly louder lower class, were felt in growing cities such as Barranquilla, Medellin, Cali and Bogotá (Roldán 2002). Growing urbanisation happened at the same time as both the shift from almost fifty years of a Conservative government and the growing popular demands for political recognition and participation. These changes were reflected in the government of Liberal Alfonso López Pumarejo who aimed to shift Liberal politics towards a more socially inclusive direction in 1934. Alfonso López launched social legislations and increased the workers' and peasants' rights and legal recognitions (Roldán 2002).

Agrarian unrest was already at play before López came to power. In some areas, many had migrated in search for “regions with supposedly abundant public lands” (Roldán 2002:17) only to find these lands to be occupied by newly established commercial agriculture and cattle ranching on a large scale. Conflicts rose between the landless people – who were driven away from their lands by sectarian violence and political conflicts in their own region – and the wealthy landowners, as well as between the landless people themselves. In some regions, especially the banana zone in the Magdalena, rural workers organised to protest the changes in tenancy laws, low wages and dismissals on Colombia's many plantations.

To solve the growing problem of agrarian unrest and deter economic interruption in the most conflicted areas, López launched *Law 200* in the 1936 Constitution, declaring that property had a

social function (Roldán 2002). The Constitution also included the right to organize. However, in the later 1930s and the early 1940s polarisation of the Colombian society increased and paramilitary groups appeared (Skretteberg et.al 2009).

President López also attempted to resolve competing claims to public lands and provide titles to those who could prove that they had previously resided on – and improved – the land (Roldán 2002). The negative reaction to the law, however, came from the elite. The new social policies and López's tolerance with communist leaders and labour unions in the strategic oil, mining and transportation sectors fuelled resentment among capitalist landowners and the elitists. President López was seen as extremely radical by both political parties. According to Mary Roldán (2002:18) the resentment and reactions revealed

“...over Lopez's championing of working-class interests and his extension of state authority between 1934 and 1938 formed a critical back-drop to the vituperative red-baiting that helped incite partisan violence in the forties and is only understandable when set against the background of growing capitalist investment and economic expansion taking place in the decade preceding the outbreak of *la Violencia*”.

At the end of López's political term, the Liberal party looked for a candidate that could bring an end to López's reforms and restore elite interests. They found Eduardo Santos: a powerful businessman and the owner of Colombia's largest daily newspaper *El Tiempo* (Roldán 2002). During his presidency Eduardo Santos gagged labour movements and put down strikes. (Roldán 2002). Alfonso López returned as president in 1942, but was forced from office in 1945 and succeeded by the Liberal party's Alberto Lleras Camargo. The Lleras administration prohibited strikes in the public sector, and failure to comply with the strict criteria for labour codes was enough to completely dismiss workers' demand.

Adding to the growing urban population, the industrialisation and the empowered working-class of the 1930s and 1940s, was the emerging middle sector of non-elite politicians with demands of more participation in the national political arena. One of them was the Liberal populist Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Described by Roldan (2002) as “a dark-skinned man of humble birth” (Roldán 2002:19), Jorge Eliécer Gaitán represented the rise of both non-white and non-elitist politicians. The urban lower class joined forces with the provincial middle class to open the political arena. The friction between the young popular forces and the old elite from both parties reached a critical turning point in 1946. The Liberals split internally over their official party candidate Gabriel

Turbay Ayala and the dissident Gaitán, and due to this lost the election to the moderate Conservative elitist Mariano Ospina Perez.

Partisan conflicts emerged once again in the *pueblos*. The Conservatives – excluded from political participation during the Liberal rule – celebrated their victory with intimidation and physical harassment of Liberals all over the country. Through the elections Ospina promised to include the Liberals in the cabinet, offices and municipal positions. However, this was strongly opposed by both followers of Gaitán as well as extremist within the Conservative party. The Liberals won the congressional elections in 1947, and tensions between the two political parties kept rising from that point on and climaxed with the death of Gaitán.

Gaitán was shot and killed in the centre of Bogotá by a young² man on the 9th of April, 1948 (Martín Medem 2009; Roldán 2002), triggering the ten day uprising commonly known as *el Bogotazo* (Livingstone 2003; Roldán 2002). Already agitated by a prolonged drought and electricity rationing, the public of Bogotá unleashed their fury on the city only minutes after the assassination. Prisons were forced open, churches were burned and stores were looted. Bogotá was left in ruins. Corpses were piling up in the churchyards as thousands of civilians lost their lives in Bogotá and hundreds of other towns during the ten days of uproar (Livingstone 2004; Palacios 2006; Roldán 2002).

President Ospina Perez – who refused to step down – cleansed the police of Liberals (many of whom were now siding with the demonstrators), reorganised the cabinet and attempted to establish the bipartisan government once again. Still, partisan unrest was intensifying and Ospina saw it necessary to declare a State of Siege. In November 1949 the Congress was closed and would remain closed for the following nine years, during which Colombia was ruled by a military junta (Roldán 2002).

The duration of La Violencia is disputed. It is commonly agreed that the civil war in itself lasted for a decade until the formation of *Frente Nacional* (National Front): the agreement to share power between leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties (Ballentine & Sherman 2003; Guáqueta 2003; Palacios 2006). Palacios (2006:138) explains that

² Some make it a point that Gaitán's assassin was unstable or mentally disturbed, but Martín Medem's studies and interviews, as well as this author's conversations suggest he was an unemployed (perhaps deranged) man frequently visiting Gaitán's office looking for work. This notion has led to the suspicion that the young man was framed and later thrown to the angry mob for lynching.

“...although la Violencia has often been called a civil war and perhaps can be included among the many Third World conflicts conceived in the heat of the Cold War, let us keep to the specifics of this Colombian catastrophe. “Violencia,” capitalized, refers to some twenty years of crime and impunity facilitated by political sectarianism (1945-65), which dislocated the lives of tens of thousands of families.”

Also, Mary Roldán (2002) adds that the National Front’s politics gave way to new social and economic grievances that would spur leftist insurgents in the early 1960s. Thus, Roldán explains, “it appeared that la Violencia had not ended, but simply evolved” (Roldán 2002:22).

La Violencia was particularly intense in the Andean peasant regions. Between 200,000 and 300,000 people were killed (Palacios 2006; Roldán 2002), and each town usually ended up dominated by one of the two competing political groups. Institutional resources became war gains, and when the usual power institutions, such as the army, the church, the judiciary and the police did not act in public interest, people took matters in their own hands, leading to vigilantism, armed self-defence groups and high level of violent conflict (Palacios 2006).

The main characteristics of la Violencia is that relatively few deaths were the result of armed contracts between the guerrillas and other unofficial forces fighting with the military, police or other state force. One or another armed group, legal or illegal, would take over a territory and impose their control on the population. Deaths were caused less by acts of war, than by atrocities and vengeance. These acts left no witnesses amongst the victims, or the victims fell mute. The vast majority were unarmed civilians, rural rather than urban, poor rather than rich. They were shot point blank, stabbed or slashed by machetes; sometimes quartered, decapitated or burned (Galeano 2004; Palacios 2006; Roldán 2002). They were killed in or near their dwellings, or they were found floating in nearby rivers. Massacres of entire families were common, accompanied by rape, the burning of homes, theft of cattle and coffee and the destruction of harvest.

2.5 The National Front and centralised government

To end the violence, party leaders in Bogota signed a peace treaty after a decade of rural battles; creating the bipartisan government called the *Frente Nacional* (National Front) (Carroll 2011; Guáqueta 2003; Palacios 2006). The pact guaranteed each party access to power and ended the competition and violence between the elites and their supporters. However, it also hindered non-

elite interest from entering politics (Carroll 2011). Colombia's new government excluded both non-elite and interest from the peripheral regions. Colombia, with its centralised institutional arrangements, now had two strong powers that would monopolise political powers together. Although railroads and highways appeared in the late nineteenth century, the centralised institutions endured (Carroll 2011). Presidents would appoint governors and governors appointed county executives based on their ability that best suited the current policies. The political left was thus excluded from local power and lacked influence to elect a senators and representatives (Carroll 2011).

National Front governed Colombia between 1958 and 1974 and caused bitter and radical Liberals to fractionize and join members of the Communist Party, creating a group of Marxist rebels. However, armed peasants and insurgencies are not new to Colombia and have been present since the early 1900s. The Colombian population has long endured the inequality and unfair distribution of land, where a few wealthy elites hold a major share in the Colombian land (Carroll 2011; Rohl 2004). During the 1920s Colombia saw the emergence of small groups of Communist peasants, arming themselves to protect their lands and families from the wealthy elite. These peasant movements also came as a reaction to high taxation of coffee export – which was the main income of most farmers – and low income.

The peasant groups would eventually form *el Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) in 1962 and *las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* in 1964 - internationally known as FARC³ (Brittain 2010; Carroll 2011; Guáqueta 2003). The FARC and the ELN aimed for equal land distribution and a socialist economic structure in place of the elitist one. The National Front Party was a rotation of Liberal and Conservative rule over sixteen years and participation of other parties was highly restricted, at the same time the Colombian army was strengthened to suppress popular reform (Brittain 2010; Guáqueta 2003; Stokes 2005); making the struggle bitterer. The FARC's demand of land reform, the end of feudalism and the end of an elitist government were shared by most Colombians and in their early stage they had the public's support in the rural areas (Grajales 2013a; Palacios 2006).

³ According to Brittain (2010) and Leech (2011), the FARC were originally called the Southern Bloc in 1964, and were formed after a stand-off between the peasant guerrilla, led by Manuel Marulanda, and the Colombian army in Marquetalia. It was not until the Second Guerrilla Conference in 1966 that they became the FARC, and on the Seventh Guerrilla Conference in 1982, the FARC became *las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP).

2.6 The contemporary conflict and peace initiatives

The cocaine business increased rapidly in the 1980s. Alliances between the cartels and armed security groups were made and the paramilitaries were created. According to literature on the guerrillas (Brittain 2010; Guáqueta 2003; Leech 2011) the FARC taxed the cocaine traffickers, but had no other involvement in the drug business in its early years (see also Ungerman & Brohy 2003). However, according to Guáqueta (2003), targeting oil companies for ransom and taxation was already a good profit for the FARC by the time of the first peace initiative in 1984.

The Conservative President Belisario Betancur engaged the FARC in peace talks in 1984. At the same time, members of the FARC, the Colombian Communist Party (CCP) and other sympathisers formed the Patriotic Union (*Unión Patriótica*, UP). Within the next few years, more than three thousand UP members are assassinated – including two presidential candidates – by paramilitaries and corrupt military personnel (Guáqueta 2003; Leech 2011; Skretteberg et.al 2009). On December 9th, 1990, the FARC headquarter *Casa Verde* in Marquetalia was attacked by the Colombian army (Brittain 2010). The FARC learned the danger of cease-fires, and as Casa Verde had been the centre for peace talks, this event has affected later attempts at peace negotiations. In 1998 President Pastrana orders two thousand soldiers and police to withdraw from five municipalities in south Colombia. The area, known as the Caguán zone (or *Zona de Despeje*), was handed over to the FARC and left as a safe area in which peace negotiations could take place (Leech 2011). However, the FARC continued to mobilize and conduct attacks, not adhering to the ceasefire (Brittain 2010; Egeland 2008). In 2002, the Colombian military invades Caguán on orders from the President, ending the ceasefire and the peace talks. The government blamed the FARC for not following the ceasefire and the FARC blamed the government for not dismantling the paramilitaries and for not taking Colombia's economic and social problems seriously (Guáqueta 2003; Leech 2011).

After informal discussions in since 2010, the FARC and the Colombian government led by President Juan Manuel Santos initiated peace talks again in 2012. With Norway and Cuba as guarantors and Chile and Venezuela as supporters, an agreement was signed on August 26th 2012, setting out the key points of discussion and procedures for the negotiations (BBC 2013).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative versus Quantitative Research Methods

To best answer the research questions for this thesis, the qualitative research method is the most appropriate. Descriptive data was required to 1) understand the Colombian conflict related to land contention; and 2) understand what effect external economic and military relations might have on this problem. It is important to be able to research and understand both the historic and contemporary land issues from different angles and put them in context. The qualitative research approach allows more flexibility and therefore creates a richer dataset based on mainly secondary data supported by primary data.

Data interpretations in quantitative and qualitative methods are done differently. Quantitative data analysis deals mainly with numbers using statistical programs, whereas qualitative data interpretation produces longer texts. The interpretation of qualitative data allows a discussion and formulation of theory (Bryman 2008) which will further guide the researcher to collect more data and specify the research questions.

3.2 Deductive and Inductive Approach

Qualitative research methods are mainly inductive. I have used the inductive approach for this thesis as it will best help achieve the desired result. According to Hyde (2000) the deductive approach is a theory-testing process, where the researcher first identifies a theory and then looks for the implications of the theory in the research results. The researcher, as stated in Bryman (2008), deduces a hypothesis on the basis of knowledge he or she might have about a phenomenon. The hypothesis is then tested rigorously (Bryman 2008). Put simply, the deductive approach helps the researcher to test the hypothesis with data (Hyde 2000). As Bryman (2008:9) stated: “the role of theory in relation to research (...) is principally used in sociology to guide empirical inquiry”. The theory and hypothesis comes first and drives the process of gathering data.

At the same time, as indicated by Lazar (2004) “scientific theories are claimed be derived from observation” (Lazar 2004:9). This process is called induction. An inductive approach starts with research to end in theory, where the researcher is able to draw conclusions from several observations (Lazar 2004).

3.3 Data collection, Sampling and Interviews

In relation to data sampling, Bryman (2008) states that “social scientists need to specify how data can be collected in relation to the concepts that make up the hypothesis” (Bryman 2008:9). Therefore, in my search for interviewees and data, I used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is when the researcher looks for specific facts in regards to a subject, and looks for interviewees or sources who are most likely to contribute to the topic (Bryman 2008). The aim of purposive sampling is to find interviewees who can help uncover important issues to the study (Hay 2000). My interviewees were found through a forum and a seminar in relation to the peace negotiations between the FARC and the Colombian government. On October 15th 2012, three days before the official press meeting in Oslo, a seminar was held in the Peace House in Oslo. Several Norwegian academics were present and giving presentations. Also present, were Colombian former guerrilleros, former politicians, journalists with experience in the Colombian conflict, Colombian scholars and as well as several Norwegian and international organisations. Only one interview was conducted that day. On later occasions one interview was conducted face to face in Oslo, two by phone and two more by Skype.

I have also tried to use snowball sampling to obtain data. Snowball sampling is used to obtain a sample or data when there is no predetermined idea of whom to interview (Bloch 2004). When snowballing, the researcher obtains new interviewees and data by asking existing interviewees to recommend others, or spread the word (Hay 2000). This was done on one occasion, but I have not been successful in obtaining an interview based on that information.

According to Byrne (2004) a qualitative interview usually refers to in-depth, loosely or semi-structured interviews. These have been referred to as “conversations with a purpose” (Burgess, cited in Byrne 2004:181). They are often used to encourage people to talk. In-depth interviews and qualitative interviews are time consuming. Therefore, the breadth of social research might be sacrificed for the depth. This means that the *representativeness* – external validity, may be seen as

questionable. Nevertheless, exploratory research can reveal phenomena that no one else has noticed before (Seale 2004). Qualitative interviews for this thesis have proven fruitful in terms of both collecting valid data and finding new information.

I have used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were suitable as the flexibility and style of the questions made it easier to have flowing conversations with the interviewees. Facts and statements that were not asked about were casually mentioned, which led to more questions and a richer set of data. Some of the interviews were followed up on other occasions by a second interview of the same interviewee.

I had prepared an interview guide beforehand and a list of specific questions before each interview, knowing that it might change as the interview went on. Some questions were at times answered before I had asked them and I occasionally asked unprepared questions when I thought it necessary with a follow up to the interviewee's answer.

For this thesis I have used of both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data has been important in making a significant contribution to answering the research questions and to assist in the control of the quality of data. Primary data was mainly retrieved from personal interviews over phone, Skype or emails, but also by attending seminars. Secondary data was retrieved through journal articles, news articles, government and official statements and documents, books and internet resources. The reliability of the secondary data sources were checked in order to make sure that this research project is not merely based on vague information. Primary data was an added value to the secondary data.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

All social research involves ethical decision making. This may become relevant in the formulation of a research question, when sampling, when gaining access to data or research respondents, when collecting and analysing data and publishing the findings (Ali & Kelly 2004). Informed consent has been viewed as a focal point of research ethics after the Declaration of Helsinki, both in natural and social sciences. Informed consent is a procedure that aims to support the individual autonomy and is widely agreed to be a safety guarantee for the rights of interviewees and participants (Ali & Kelly 2004). Informed consent can be given both verbally and in writing through an information-sheet.

Both verbal and written informed consent was used when conducting interviews. Informed consent was written both in English and Spanish, allowing the interviewees to understand the research project, its purpose and to sign that they had understood the purpose of the interview. However, the individuals who were interviewed for this research are academics and public figures. Only verbal consent or consent via email was necessary, and I was granted the permission to use their names and answers in the research.

At the very beginning of the research project I made contact with the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). This was in order to secure the information and data gathered by the researcher and to make sure that the research subjects and interviewees would not have their rights infringed or lives endangered by issuing confidential information or information considered harmful to a person or a community. Interview guidelines, research questions, informed consent sheets and information on the research project was sent to the NSD and accepted before I could start the research. Once finishing the research, all confidential information will be deleted. The NSD are continuously informed of the progress of this research. There has not been given any confidential or endangering information by any of the interviewees.

3.5 Data Analysis

Whereas data analysis in quantitative research occurs after data collection, the process of data analysis in qualitative research is continuous (Bryman 2008). Grounded theory, a process where data collection and analysis are recursive, has been used in the data collection and analysing process of this research. Some data was collected and analysed, which in turn decided the next step of data collection. Bryman (2008) states that the researcher may change his or her view of the literature and theory as a result of the analysis of the data collected: new findings and analyses may be published by others before the researcher is finished with the analysis, or the relevance of a dataset for the theory may become evident only after the data has been collected (Bryman 2008). This has been evident during this particular research process. Analysing the data went through several stages. Different data was used, and new data was continuously brought in for analysis, as seminars, news and articles are constantly published about the topic of this research.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

How do we know that it is a certain factor that causes this kind of relationship? Do the theories and observations of the researcher match? This is argued to be the “strength of qualitative research” (Bryman 2008:376).

External validity concerns whether the conclusion can be generalised or not. According to Seale (2004) external validity may present a problem in qualitative research because of the researcher’s tendency to do “intensive studies of single settings or a small number of people” (Seale 2004b:75). Internal and external validity can be difficult to adapt to qualitative research. Thus, Bryman (2008) proposes alternatives to internal and external validity: credibility and transferability.

Credibility is the equivalent of internal validity and is concerned with whether the observations or experience of the researcher are plausible (Hay 2000). In a world of various truths and accounts, it is the credibility of the research findings that will determine whether the findings are acceptable or not.

Transferability is the equivalent to external validity and is concerned with whether the research findings can be generalized to other research contexts (Hay 2000). Because qualitative research tends to concern an intensive study of a single phenomenon or a small group, the “contextual uniqueness” (Bryman 2008:378) makes it hard for qualitative studies to be transferable, or generalized. However, some findings may apply to general contexts. Research contexts need to be “thick” (Bryman 2008:378) in order to be able to compare cases or phenomena.

According to Hammersley (1992a in Bryman 2008:381) validity and credibility is achieved when research results are reasonable and credible and when the amount and kind of evidence used to obtain the results are taken into account. The validity of the claims made by the researcher must be judged on the basis of the qualification of the evidence used to reach that claim. This means that a claim can be “valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise” (Hammersley, 1992a:69 in Bryman 2008:382). Further, Maxwell (2013) suggests that the validity of a research project is not “guaranteed by following some standard, accepted procedure” (Maxwell 2013:121). Rather, he argues, the validity of the research depends on the relationship between the research results and reality. Maxwell (2013) further adds that the threats of bias and reduced validity can be ruled out by evidence, and not methods.

In order for this research paper to be credible, I have made sure to use a broad spectre of resources. Information has been gathered with the intention of answering the research questions as

thoroughly as possible. Considering that only one type of resource is not sufficient, I have therefore made sure to back up primary data with secondary data and vice versa. I have also intended to confirm web resources by using academic writings on the different topics.

3.7 Limitations

According to Bryman (2008), there are weaknesses and limitations related to qualitative methods. Due to the nature of qualitative methods – the lack of standard procedure of research – a “true replication” (Bryman 2008:391) is difficult to create. The procedures and methods used by the researcher create a risk of bias and a weakened validity.

The researcher’s epistemology also has an influence on the methodology used. Although a researcher seeks objectivity, his or her own values and will shape the way the research is conducted and possibly the outcome. The researcher can – by purposive sampling – choose to interview people who will have the most relevant information and ask questions to obtain a specific answer. The interviewees may in turn guide the researcher to other people who might provide the same kind of answers. These are issues that may affect the validity of a research project. Walliman (2006) emphasises the importance of awareness of these issues. Further, he suggests that such issues should be communicated to the reader, if not avoided completely. At the same time, Maxwell (2013:122) states that the researcher does not have to get to the bottom of a matter to obtain a valid result. It is sufficient to obtain a result on which the researcher “can stand on securely”. Having the issues of validity in mind, I have intended to keep this thesis as balanced as possible.

By attempting to contact people and organisations from both sides of the fence I hoped for a more objective and argumentative thesis. In addition to interviewing former Colombian combatants I attempted to contact the Colombian Embassy in the United States and the United States Agency of International Development (USAID). I could not get in contact with the Colombian Embassy, and USAID were unable to answer my questions related to my topic. USAID referred me to a contact in the Colombian Embassy, but due to time constraints it was not possible to contact him on time, let alone conduct an interview.

I also lost contact with some of my prospectus interviewees. I was briefly in contact with a former pilot for the US Special Forces, who at first agreed to answer my questions as he seemed to have

knowledge of the Colombian conflict and Plan Colombia. After sending him my questions and informed consent form I did not hear from him again. Although my questions were neutral, they might have been unsuitable for him, or he might not have had the knowledge to answer. I also interviewed a Colombian scholar and a former combatant from the ELN guerrilla early in the research process. However, as this thesis developed I saw the need of asking more suitable questions closer to the subject of the thesis. I was unable to communicate with them again.

This thesis would have been more complete if I had done my research in Colombia. In order to conduct the appropriate research for this thesis I would have had to travel to slightly remote areas with low security. I was therefore dependent on a travel companion. At the time of my research this would have been difficult as there were no travel companion available. At the same time, lack of personal finances also made a field trip to Colombia difficult. A field trip to Colombia would have contributed greatly to the result of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEORY

The following chapter will give an overview of the most important and relevant literature regarding the Center-Periphery model and World-System Analysis.

4.1 The Center - Periphery Model and World-Systems Analysis

In order to answer the research questions and to understand the relationships that create both previous and contemporary land contentions in Colombia, Johan Galtung's Center-Periphery theory and Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Analysis are examined. These are suitable ideas to understand the effect of exploitative relations on a nation and the elite interests in regards to such relations.

Johan Galtung (1971) claims that the world is made of Center nations and Periphery nations. In turn, all have their own Centers and their own Peripheries (Galtung 1971) as well as there are semi-peripheral nations who serve as a link between the Center and the Periphery without being neither Center nor Periphery nations themselves. The central claim of the Center-Periphery approach is that the relationship between the Center and the Periphery only benefits the Center and the center in the Periphery; and that the Center exploits the Periphery.

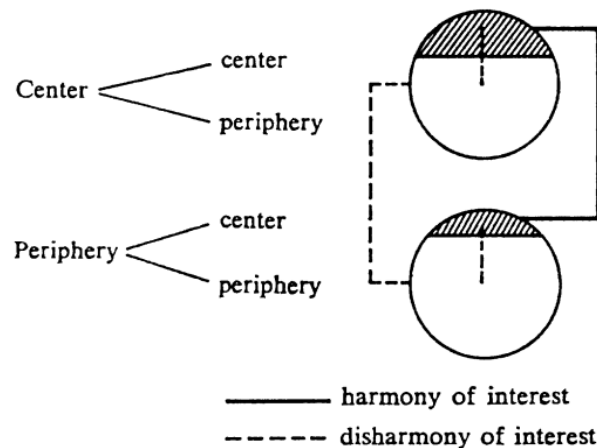


Figure 3: Center-Periphery model (source: Galtung 1971)

The interaction network – the manner in which states interact with each other – is what best defines Center and Periphery (Galtung 1977). A Center – Periphery relation is defined in terms of rank difference, relationship of exploitation and network position. The relationship of exploitation

is to Galtung the most important relation when analysing imperialist systems and for theory-formation in general. It is this type of Center-Periphery relation this study will take into account.

Like Galtung's Center-Periphery theory, Wallerstein's world-systems analysis describes three economic zones. Those are the core, semi-periphery and the periphery. I will only focus on the Core-Periphery relationships. I will also use Galtung's terminology and refer to the *core* as Center. In his book *The Modern World System- Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Wallerstein describes how world economies are divided into "core states and peripheral areas"⁴ (Wallerstein 1974:349). To avoid confusion, the term Periphery, and not areas, will be used.

The Center nations are the so-called machineries that drive the world-economy. They are organized and have high capital accumulation. They are also militarily strong. The United States, Canada and Western Europe are commonly seen as the Center. The Peripheries, like in Galtung's theory, have low capital accumulation and weak industrialization. They are not organized and struggle with weak state institutions (Peet & Hartwick 2009) and relate to the poorer developing nations (Flint & Taylor 2007).

Put simply, Wallerstein's world-systems analysis describes the unequal economic and political relations between nations and states, in which the industrialized, strong states dominate the world-economy. The way these nations – the Center nations – dominate can be by matter of global corporations. The peripheral nations, or areas, are subject of exploitation from these Center nations, and the Center's global corporations deplete the peripheral nations of their resources. It is a system of "structural-spatial parts" (Peet & Hartwick 2009:175). Wallerstein (2004) argues that within this framework one can conduct a comparative analysis of the whole system and the development of the regional parts within the system.

Wallerstein describes a global world system – the modern world system – also known as the capitalist world-economy (Flint 2007; Wallerstein 2004). According to Wallerstein, the global social system has been a capitalist world-economy since the 1450s, after the Peace of Westphalia (Flint 2006; Østerud 1987; Peet & Hartwick 2009; Wallerstein 2004). In his world-system analysis the geopolitical powers are called the hegemonic powers, and the basis for hegemonic powers is a strong economy that creates a dominant influence in global economy and trade. In

⁴ Wallerstein chooses the term areas instead of states/nations "because one characteristic of the peripheral area is that the indigenous state is weak, ranging from its nonexistence (that is, a colonial situation) to one with a low degree of autonomy (that is, a neo-colonial situation)." (Wallerstein 1974:349)

world-system analysis, hegemony is an economic process that fits the selfish aims of the hegemon itself (Flint 2006; Wallerstein 2004). In addition, Wallerstein (2004) states that capitalist firms (i.e multinational corporations) thrive in the economic environments created by hegemonies. Hegemony thus becomes useful to such enterprises, particularly if politically linked to the hegemonic nation/power (Wallerstein 2004).

Wallerstein also formulates that all core-periphery models imply that the “core exploits, and the periphery is exploited” (Flint & Taylor 2007:15). This happens during different processes operating in the Center and Periphery. The Center-Periphery processes are different types of production relations, where the Center process consists of higher wages and the Periphery process entails “low wages, rudimentary technology and simple production mix” (Flint & Taylor 2007:15). The Center and Periphery nations are precisely that because of the processes that operate within them.

4.2 Center-Peripheries and the structure of interaction

The Center- Periphery idea can be seen from a structural interaction perspective. A structure of interaction is the interaction that ties actors (such as nations, states, governments etc.) together not only in one system, but in several systems. This implies that the actors interact with each other on several levels and in several contexts.

Whereas the actor-oriented perspective sees society as a set of actors with individualities – as in the way each country differs from the other – in the structure-oriented perspective the individual actors are less important. What is important are the structures of interaction in which they are involved. The structure of interaction can both be studied at the level of a single system and at the level of a total set of various systems (Galtung 1974:3).

Through the study of structural interaction an analysis of imperialism can be conducted. How do Center nations relate to nations in their Peripheries? Here, the individual characteristics are not relevant. What matters is the structural position of the actor. According to Galtung (1974), what is important is not the difference between actors, but rather the relationship between them. And the most important relation between actors is the interaction relation. Galtung goes on to explain that “the best way to reflect vertical interaction would be to introduce the notion of exploitation” (Galtung 1974:4). Here, if a relationship can be defined as exploitative by analysing the

consequences of interactions between actors, “it should be possible to locate the exploiter and the exploited, identify them as actors and we would immediately have the basic element in a Center-Periphery theory” (Galtung 1974:4).

Galtung then states that by using the structure-oriented perspective and with the idea of exploitation in mind one would look for political interaction between actors, economic transactions, military relations and also cultural and communication patterns. Galtung then asks; who gains the most and which actor is depending on the other in the relations mentioned?

4.3 Imperialism

Imperialism is a relationship of dominance, between the Center and the Periphery. Imperialism as a theory has for a long time been neglected in academia. To Flint and Taylor (2007), the term *imperialism* is a concept that “cannot be properly defined in either political or economic categories alone” (Flint & Taylor 2007:80). They further imply that imperialism’s contribution to the modern world is ignored by the current development schools (Flint & Taylor 2007). However, according to Flint and Taylor (2007) it seems that for the capitalist world-economy and the Center-Periphery hierarchy to thrive, imperialism (in one form or another) is required.

Flint and Taylor argue that there are two types of imperialism: Formal imperialism and informal imperialism. Formal imperialism is related to the old colonial powers. It describes the colonisers’ dominance over their empires, and the political expansion of borders. *Informal* imperialism, however, is the contemporary dominance in the world-economy exerted by the Center, and emphasizes an economic process and expansion of the economy (Flint & Taylor 2007). Still, as formal imperialism created the periphery, informal imperialism continues to do so. The main actors of the contemporary informal imperialism are the multinational corporations. These produce and trade across borders, usually benefit the Center nation and have been a major economic factor to for example U.S hegemony (Flint & Taylor 2007).

According to Galtung (1974) imperialism is about linking two structures together. The theory of imperialism – because it is a theory of *relations* between countries and not the differences between them – can only be formulated in a structure-oriented perspective (Galtung 1974). Specifically, imperialism is a relationship between a Center nation and a Periphery nation shaped so that 1) *harmony of interest* exists between the Center nation’s center (Cc) and the Periphery

nation's center (cP); 2) the *disharmony of interest* is stronger in the Periphery nation than in the Center nation; and 3) there is a *disharmony of interest* between the peripheries of both Center and Periphery (pC and pP). These are the three points that define imperialism, according to Galtung (1971). The basic idea, Galtung explains, is that the “center in the Center nation has a bridgehead⁵ in the Periphery nation, and a well-chosen one: the center in the Periphery nation.” (Galtung 1971: 83). Galtung further explains that in this way, the cP is tied to the cC with the “best possible tie”: that of *harmony of interest* (Galtung 1971:83).

Also, inside the two nations exists a disharmony of interest. Both nations are in one way or another vertical societies with gaps in living conditions, however, the fundamental idea for the whole theory to be developed, according to Galtung (1971) is the idea that there is “more disharmony in the Periphery nations than in the Center nation” (Galtung 1971: 84). Re-defining imperialism, one can summarise it like this: in the Periphery nation, the center (cP) grows more than the periphery (pP), due to the organization of the interaction between center and periphery. The center (cP) is more enriched than the periphery (pP), but not necessarily by economic interaction. However, Galtung (1971) explains, the center in the Periphery only functions as a transmission belt - for example by trading and commercial companies - for values such as raw materials. These values are forwarded to the Center nation and received in the center of the Center nation (cC), with some of them trickling down to the periphery of the Center nation (pC). As such, there is less disharmony of interest in the Center nation (between cC and pC) than in the Periphery nation (between cP and pP), making it appear as if the structure is in the interest of the periphery in the Center (pC). Where the pC and cC can be opposed to each other, the pC are more “partners” with the cC, than the pP. This, according to Galtung (1971) is the trick of the game. There is little interaction between the peripheries in order to decrease the threat to the central power (cC). Here, the Center nation becomes more cohesive, and the Periphery nation become less able to “develop long-term strategies” (Galtung 1971: 84).

According to Galtung (1971) the three points that define imperialism mentioned above describe the true form of imperialism. However, if the second and third point does not hold, one can still

⁵The Merriam-Webster definition of bridgehead is 1) a fortification protecting the end of a bridge nearest and enemy; 2) an area around the end of the bridge; and 3) advanced position seized in a hostile territory. Wikipedia's definition of a bridgehead: “an area of ground on the enemy's side of a bridge, especially one that needs to be taken and defended in order to secure an advance”.

talk about imperialism, as the first point is the most important one. Galtung, in his *A Structural Theory of Imperialism* (1971) elaborates that there are five types of imperialism. Those are 1) economic; 2) political; 3) military; 4) communication; and 5) cultural imperialism. The order of these types is random, and imperialism can come from any of these, depending on the type of exchange between the Center and Periphery nations (Galtung 1971). Economic and military imperialism are the most relevant in this context and to this thesis.

The economic type of imperialism signifies that the Center nation holds an economic benefit. The Periphery nation is subject to either economic sanctions or economic transaction that will benefit the cause of the Center nation. One such transaction can be multinational companies moving on from the Center nation to the Periphery nation to pull resources from the Periphery and back into the Center. Also, economic imperialism can be the purchase of large areas of land by the multinational companies from the Center nation, in order to extract resources or build plantations that will eventually benefit the economy of the Center nation.

Concerning the military aspect of imperialism, the Periphery depends on the Center for protection or other military means, such as counterinsurgency. Here, the Center nation provides military assistance – in the form of alliances or treaties – that in the end is for the benefit of the Center nation itself (Galtung 1971). Military imperialism can also mean that the Center nation uses an excuse to enter by force or deploy military personnel to a periphery nation.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 The struggle for land

The Colombian conflict and the displacement of the people has its fundamental origins related to *la lucha de la tierra* – the fight for land (Arteta, 2013)⁶. A vast majority of the displaced people in Colombia are originally farmers who have been forced from their lands by means of political, military and paramilitary violence. These abandoned lands were later appropriated by *impresarios*, entrepreneurs and large landholders with false holding titles and by the help of corrupt politicians (Arteta 2013)⁷

According to Arteta (2013) Colombia is a rich, fertile land. However, there's a concentration of the land by *latifundistas*, large land owners, who have appropriated the land by political violence, violence by paramilitaries or the Colombian army and the expulsion of small farmers. According to Arteta (2013) these small farmers become displaced in cities or in to mountainous areas or areas of dense forests, where the agricultural condition is difficult. This chapter will look at displacement as a consequence of export industries such as palm oil and mining. The chapter will look at Plan Colombia as a major factor leading to the displacement of peasants and link it with the emergence of multinational corporations and oil palm cultivations. The findings will be linked to Galtung's Center-Periphery theory and Wallerstein's World-Systems Analysis, as well as imperialism.

5.2 The Effect of Plan Colombia on Land Contention

According to some (Nieto 2007; Stokes 2005) the Colombian government has always been friendly with the U.S and have been especially close to the U.S security policies. Colombia adopted the U.S stand on communism and the lead of the War on Drugs, it fought as the only Latin American country in the Korean War (Nieto 2007; Skretteberg et.al 2009; Stokes 2005) and it suggested the expulsion of Cuba from the Organisation of American States (OAS) in 1961. In the 1960s Colombia also agreed to share intelligence with the U.S and leaders in the Colombian

⁶ Author interview, August 2013

⁷ Author interview, July 2013

army incorporated a U.S developed national security doctrine (Nieto 2007; Richani 2003). Nieto (2007:116) also states that under the George W. Bush administration, Colombia was praised as the United States' "strongest regional ally in the war against terrorism".

Counter-narcotic policies were initiated in 1973 in Colombia, and continued with Ronald Reagan's "War on Drugs" in 1986. These policies were later joined by counter-insurgency policies and became the "defining element in the U.S security assessment in Colombia" (Nieto 2007:116). This brought on the suspension of fundamental rights and freedoms, political opposition and social protests were criminalized and the responses to social conflicts were militarized, putting the country in a state of siege (Nieto 2007). A new constitution in 1991, with greater focus on human rights (Higginbottom 2008), replaced this state of siege with a more limited state of emergency (Nieto 2007). But with the escalation of both cocaine production and internal war in Colombia in the 1990s, the U.S realised that their model of stability (being Colombia) was now becoming a threat to the security in the entire region (Nieto 2007).

This realisation led to the initiation and the implementation of Plan Colombia. Plan Colombia was proposed by President Pastrana in 1999. It aimed at solving the drug problem, poverty and the civil conflict that has been going on for decades. Plan Colombia sought to restore peace, by establishing negotiations and peace with the guerrilla, and strengthen the state. The Plan also included strategies for economic and social development (Fukumi 2008). According to Fukumi (2008), it was important to attract international help and commitment to the plan. To do so, the initial proposal for the plan was written in English and not Spanish, reflecting the fact that it was targeted to the international community, and not Colombia. In addition, Luis Cruz, Senator in the Colombian Congress at the time, has stated that Plan Colombia was never directly discussed with the Colombian Congress. Decisions were made solely by the executive branch and the U.S State Department (Ungerma & Brohy 2003).

Originally, the plan presented by Pastrana was called "the Marshall Plan for Colombia" (Fukumi 2008:180). The Colombian government sought for US\$7.5 billion of which 55 percent was military aid and 45 percent for development aid (Fukumi 2008; Stokes 2005). This plan, however, could not get funds from the U.S. According to Fukumi (2008), Thomas Pickering, the then U.S Undersecretary of State, suggested that certain elements of the plan should be revised, and the U.S would then dramatically increase aid to Colombia. The element specified was the part on drug control. Fukumi then states that Colombia was looking to create peace with the insurgency groups, whereas the U.S emphasised drug control and the eradication of cocaine (Fukumi 2008). According to Stokes (2005), the final proposal stated 80 percent of the money would go to the

Colombian military (Stokes 2005). This can also be verified by Ungerman and Brohy (2003) and Garcia-Peña (2012)⁸. Plan Colombia was implemented in July 2000, making Colombia the world's third highest ranking recipient of U.S military aid, after Egypt and Israel, and the pillar of the United States global counter-narcotics policy (Gibbs & Leech 2009; Nieto 2007; Petras 2000).

Under Plan Colombia, the U.S government initiated a development alternative in the form of "community pacts" (Stokes 2005:94). These pacts, worth US\$68.5 million, were an agreement between the Colombian government and coca farmers with total crops of three hectares or less. It was stated by the U.S that if these coca farmers voluntarily eradicated their crops the "pacts" would give the money and technology needed to cultivate alternative crops such as corn, coffee or mango. 37,000 families signed the pacts by 2001 in Putomayo, the first region to be affected by Plan Colombia. By 2002, only 8,500 of these families had received any help or money. According to Ungerman and Brohy (2003) the amount that each family would receive was two million Colombian pesos, the equivalent of approximately US\$950, per year. According to Ungerman and Brohy (2003) the peasants wanted the pact, but at that rate "...we will starve to death (...) if the government doesn't fulfil its promise, we are going back to growing coca". At the same time, coca proved a much higher profit compared to the legal crops (Dion & Russler 2008; Petras 2000).

By the year 2000, five municipalities and a total of 74,000 hectares were fumigated in Putomayo, but satellite pictures that year showed an increase in coca crops and production (Ungerman & Brohy 2003). Stokes states that – based on the UNCHR – forced displacement in 2002 increased by 100 percent compared to 2001, due to violence and threats from paramilitary. However, aerial fumigation has been an effective factor in displacing people as well, as it has led to large-scale destruction of food crops in the regions where Plan Colombia has been implemented. According to Dion and Russler (2008) the decrease of coca cultivation is not due to areal eradication and heavier military presence. Rather, coca cultivation in areas of fumigation and manual eradication has decreased due to high levels of peasant displacements (Dion & Russler 2008).

The War on Drugs would later become the War on Terror. The attacks of September 11th 2001 and the failure of negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC in 2002 saw the redefinition of the war discourse. The election of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe later in 2002 under the notion of "democratic security" (Nieto 2007:115) favoured the change (Higginbottom

⁸ Author interview, October 2012

2008; Nieto 2007). The military's presence and confrontations intensified significantly during Uribe's term (Skretteberg et.al 2009).

Plan Colombia fits the framework of military imperialism. Military imperialism implies that the Periphery depends on the Center for protection or other military means, and in this case it is counter-narcotic and counter-insurgency. As the Center nation provides military power in the form of treaties or alliances, the Center nation will itself benefit from the outcome. The Center nation will gain in the form of loans, bargains or other means of returning the favour from the Periphery nation.

Plan Colombia, in the form of monetary aid, also fits the framework of economic imperialism. According to Galtung (1971), economic imperialism implies the economic benefit of the Center, and comes either as economic sanctions or transactions.

5.3 Plan Colombia and the Connection with Multinational Corporations

According to Garry Leech, who himself has done substantial research on Colombia, the U.S Secretary of Energy under the Clinton Administration, Bill Richardson, stated in 1999 that

“the U.S and its allies will invest millions of dollars in two areas of the Colombian economy, in the areas of mining and energy, and to secure these investments we are tripling the investment of military aid to Colombia” (Leech 2013; see also Avilés 2008:425)

Leech (2013) claims that Plan Colombia has helped the army in Putomayo to protect the interests of the oil companies there. He calls Putomayo a “Ground Zero” for Plan Colombia, as it is a region incredibly rich in oil, and the job of the Colombian army was and is to protect the oil pipelines.

Both the statement from Bill Richardson and the claim made by Leech (2013) link Plan Colombia and the U.S to Wallerstein's World-System Analysis and imperialism. Here, the U.S is the selfish hegemon which creates the favourable terms for multinational corporations. The Center nation (here, the U.S) dominates by matter of multinational corporations, and the Periphery is subject to exploitation from the Center.

When the Colombian and U.S Governments realized that fumigation was not helping, they started manual eradication: manually uprooting the coca plants. There were also alternative projects implemented. According to Leech (2013)

What has happened in many of these areas is that many of the people have left. For example in Meta, when they started manual eradication, many were either afraid of the army, afraid that they would be accused of being guerrilla accomplices or they saw that they could not grow coca anymore and any other alternative would not work so they'd flee, often to the cities⁹

The alternatives to coca production were for many peasants a bad alternative. According to Ungerman and Brohy (2003) the profit made from the coca production is irreplaceable. For the price of one kilo of coca paste produced by the peasants, the peasants have to produce hundreds of kilos of their normal crops such as corn, yucca and bananas, in order to make a profit. These crops then have to be transported by either boat or by mule – the most common vehicle in Colombia's rural areas – and it would take days. Leech (2013) justifies this by adding that “this is the traditional neglect of the rural regions. The government has never invested in rural regions for peasants”¹⁰. Leech (2013) further adds that many of the rural areas have very poor infrastructure. Where roads do exist, they are of very bad quality. The peasants have to endure very long walks to the major cities, and more so if they have to walk through the mountains. In addition, there are often landslides and closed roads in the rainy season, and when the food crops already sell for a lot less than easily transported coca paste; there is a huge challenge for Colombia's peasants (Leech 2013).

The abandoned land is then usually taken over by large planters or multinational companies. Due to the economic component of Plan Colombia which consists mainly of aid in the form of IMF loans,

...forced Colombia to privatize state industries, open up natural resources to foreign investment, lower royalty rates on oil and minerals making it a favourable climate for foreign companies. 82% of foreign investment in Colombia is in oil and mining (Leech, 2013)¹¹

Adding to this statement, Yesid Arteta claims that

⁹ Author interview, June 2013

¹⁰ Author interview, June 2013

¹¹ Author interview, June 2013

...if the U.S gave so much funds to Plan Colombia, it is because it has some interests in the Colombian territory. It is not just about interests to attack the production sites of coca¹².

Further, Leech argues that “the economic component of Plan Colombia has always been highly focused on opening up Colombian natural resources to foreign multinationals. All these resources are found in the country side” (Leech, 2013)¹³. Leech (2013) states that a major part of the now abandoned lands were controlled by the FARC throughout the 1990s. When Plan Colombia shifted strategy from focusing on the cartels to focusing on the peasant coca growers in FARC controlled territories, Plan Colombia automatically – in addition to displacing the peasants – helped gain the land back from the FARC. This in turn has provided security for the foreign oil and mining companies. Earlier, these foreign companies were unable to invest without risk in these areas due to the insurgencies.

The above statements are examples on how the hegemon creates favourable terms for exploitation by corporations related to the hegemon itself. By providing favourable economic environments and security to certain areas of Colombia, U.S multinational corporations will thrive. This fits with the World-Systems Analysis framework.

Economic imperialism can also be added here. According to Galtung (1971) economic imperialism can be acquisition of large areas of land by the Center nation or by multinational corporations related to the Center nation. The Center nation or the multinational corporations related to the Center can then extract resources or commit to agricultural industries that will benefit the economy of the Center nation.

According to the Colombian Mining Workers’ Union (SINTRAMINERCOL 2003) Plan Colombia provided the field for the construction of three headquarters for counter-narcotics in mineral-rich zones where foreign MNCs are trying to move in (see also PBS Frontline (2002); Avilés (2008)). According to PBS Frontline (2002) there are several U.S based MNCs who have invested several million U.S dollars in the Colombian petroleum industry. One such corporation is Occidental Petroleum. Occidental Petroleum suffered several attacks on its oil pipelines and employees (in 1988, 2000 and 2001) by guerrillas. Occidental Petroleum lobbied directly for the implementation of Plan Colombia as well as it promoted increased U.S military aid to Colombia (PBS Frontline 2002).

¹² Author interview, July 2013

¹³ Author interview, June 2013

Putomayo was the first place to be targeted by Plan Colombia's fumigations. According to Leech (2013), Putomayo is a region very rich in oil and it was also a major coca-producing region and a FARC stronghold (Gibbs & Leech 2009; Leech 2013). In the first year, Plan Colombia also focused on the southern and south-eastern departments of Colombia – such as Meta, Guaviare, Caquetá as well as Putomayo – which were also coca-producers and FARC territories (Gibbs & Leech 2009). This, however, did not eradicate coca. Rather, the production spread from six departments to 23 departments in the first few years of Plan Colombia. With this, Plan Colombia saw it necessary to expand other departments, including Nariño and the Chocó (Gibbs & Leech 2009).

In addition to the expansion due to increase in coca production, Leech (2013)¹⁴ argues that Plan Colombia move in to the department of Arauca for oil. Arauca is an oil-rich department. However, was not producing coca, and the counter-narcotics part of Plan Colombia that was presented to the Congress and the Colombian government could not be used in Arauca. But, after the September 11th attacks of 2001, the Bush administration included Colombia in the War on Terror, and counter-terrorism aid was delivered immediately (Leech 2013). Leech (2013) also adds that the U.S sent U.S Army Special Forces to Arauca to train the Colombian army to protect the oil business in the region. Plan Colombia was now expanded to the War on Terror, and military aid from the U.S could now be used in all regions of Colombia, and not just the coca-producing regions (Leech 2013).

According to Avilés (2008) imperialism fits the answer to why Plan Colombia was implemented and why it has continued despite its failures. Avilés (2008:413) claims that

“the biases of Plan Colombia that contribute to indirectly assisting right-wing paramilitary actors and intensifying pressure upon the guerrilla insurgency are consistent with the expectations of the imperialist perspective.”

However, Avilés (2008) also claims that whereas the imperialist perspective would refer to the hegemon simply dictating its policies to the peripheral nation, this is not the case in Colombia. In Colombia, he states, as well as in other Latin American countries, leading political elites “...welcome, concede and help to construct policies that they have internalised as being in their country's interest” (Avilés 2008:413). This statement coincides with Galtung's theory of imperialism, where he describes the political elite in the peripheral nation (the center of the Periphery – cP) as a bridgehead to the Center nation.

¹⁴ Author interview, June 2013

5.4 The Effect of the Palm Oil Industry on the Land Contention

According to Mark Maughan (2011) the commercial cultivation of oil palm started in 1945 in the department of Magdalena, when the United Fruit Company created a palm oil plantation in the Magdalena banana zone. Palm oil production has now spread to several other departments, and can be found in Magdalena, Atlántico, Norte del Cesar and the Guajira (Northern departments); Santander, Norte del Santander, Sur del Cesar and Bolivar (Central departments); Meta, Casañare, Cundinamarca, Caquetá (Eastern departments); and the Nariño (West) (Maughan 2011). Maughan (2011) also states that the palms arrived in Nariño by violent means in the 1980s when local politicians and businessmen connected with the Cali drug cartel “sought to establish plantations as a way of laundering drug money” (Maughan 2011:9).

According to Oslender (2008), African palm (oil palm) cultivation is of increasing importance to Colombia’s economy. Grajales (2013a) states that since the 1990s, oil palm is one of the Colombian government’s top priorities in the agro industry. According to FEDEPALMA (Colombian Palm Growers’ Association), there are 360.000 hectares of plantations in Colombia. This figure is expected to double over the next decade (Grajales 2013a). At the same time, studies show that the Afro-Colombian communities in the departments of Chocó and Nariño are being forced to cooperate with African palm companies, such as Urapalma and Asociación de Palmicultores del Darién (Association of Palmcultivators of the Darién) (Oslender 2008). In the Madreselva farm in Mapiripán, a land of 4.000 hectares, the local landowners were displaced from their banana and grain crops by the paramilitaries (Verdad Abierta). According to the Verdad Abierta, witnesses tell that the paramilitaries have been present at the land since 2001, and that by the end of 2005 between 100 and 150 hectares of oil palm had been cultivated.

In his *‘Speaking law to land grabbing’: land contention and legal repertoire in Colombia* Grajales (2013b) uses a cases study from the Lower Atrato region in the Chocó department (north-west) to shed light on the dark side of the palm oil industry. According to Grajales (2013b) 17,000 people were forcibly displaced from the Lower Atrato region in Chocó between 1996 and 1998, due to the violence of a counter-insurgency campaign by the Colombian army and the paramilitaries. According to the INCODER (Colombian Institute for Rural Development), twelve firms had taken over more than 26,000 hectares in 2005. More than 5,000 hectares of oil palm had been planted (Grajales 2013b). Grajales states that a link between forced displacement and land-

grabbing was confirmed after a series of inquiries by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

The rapid increase in palm oil production is linked with the Colombian demand for biodiesel, as well as the prospective foreign demand (Grajales 2013b). According to Grajales (2013), unlike the rest of Colombia, the paramilitary control of the Lower Atrato is not a result of an alliance with local elites. According to Grajales (2013), it was a colonisation by white and mestizo entrepreneurs, who violently rid the lands of its black population and claimed the land to be vacant. Oil palm was planted shortly after the eviction (Grajales 2013).

Although the palm oil plantations in the Lower Atrato region are not connected with a local political elite, the Colombian government have helped the cultivations. Due to the economic importance of the palm oil market, the Colombian government implemented a program during the 2000s. The program was to subsidise the palm oil industry, and a majority of the subsidies were allocated to palm oil companies in the Lower Atrato region. Despite enormous critique from the IACHR, the palm oil industry in the Lower Atrato region received millions of US dollars in public subsidies over several years (Grajales 2013b). Urapalma, one of Colombia's biggest palm oil companies, received more than US\$2.5 million from the Colombian public fund for agricultural development (*Fondo para el Financiamiento del Sector Agropecuario – Finagro*). Urapalma also received funds from the United States Agency for International Development, USAID. Through a program for illegal crop substitution, Urapalma received over US\$6 million from USAID (Grajales 2013b; Maughan 2011). Cultivation of palm oil increased while the locals of Chocó were displaced on several occasions. According to Grajales (2013b), 13 cases of massive forced displacement were reported between 1996 and 2007, and 115 civilians were murdered in the zone during these incidents.

According to Grajales (2013b), the Ombudsman Office of Colombia recognised the link between the cultivation of palm oil and forced displacement, especially in the Afro-Colombian communities. The Ombudsman's report states that oil palm had been cultivated illegally by companies and individuals unconnected to the local communities (Grajales 2013b).

Grajales (2013a) states that the prospects of the palm oil industry are attractive to the paramilitaries. The industry presents both public subsidies and possibilities for money laundering: both sources of significant profitability to the paramilitaries. The industry also presents the possibility of land grabbing profits with the financial support of the Colombian state. Further, Grajales (2013a) claims that the palm oil industry shows that the relation between the

paramilitaries and the Colombian state reaches economic public policies. Grajales (2013a:119) states that “public investment in the palm business created perverse incentives to armed actors, favouring force displacement and land grabbing.” Though this connection is difficult to prove, Grajales (2013a:119) claims that it is “unequivocal that criminal actors not only managed to legalize their profits, but also finance this conversion with public funds.”

Although the Colombian Palm oil industry is not directly linked to Plan Colombia or multinational corporations, it can still be seen within the frameworks of Center-Periphery theory, World-Systems Analysis and imperialism. The palm oil industry in Colombia seems to be both directed and financed by the Colombian state and the U.S. There is a clear harmony of interest between the cC and the cP, as the United States (cC) benefits from the biofuel industry, together with the Colombian state (cP) who will be exporting the biofuel. There is also a clear disharmony of interest between the cP and pP. In addition, the palm oil industry can be seen from an economic imperialism perspective. As the biofuel export from Colombia benefits the Center nation – in this case the U.S – the U.S has made transactions in the form of monetary aid towards the Colombian palm oil industry.

5.5 The Crimes of the Powerful – the center in the Periphery

Both the government and paramilitary groups are forcing the peasants off their lands. The Colombian government itself forces people to move, with the reason that it has given concessions to mining companies. Mining companies such as the Marmato goldmine and the Serrejón mine in the Guajira region keep expanding and forcibly displace people without consulting them.

Moser (2001) quotes a community affairs manager in regards to the consultation of locals for the initiation of a project by a multinational corporation in Colombia (Moser 2001:303):

“It depends on how you define consultation. It is not ask communities if they want project and they say “no”, then not undertake the activity. Instead it is to say “we have this project and we are going to undertake, since we have the contract with National Government.”

Al Jazeera’s *Fault Lines* confirms this in an interview with Colombia’s President Juan Manuel Santos’ cousin Juan Carlos Santos, who is the corporate manager of Medoro Resources. Medoro Resources, a Canadian mining company, now owns the Marmato mines. Juan Carlos Santos says that

“...there are government pressures, if you like to call them that way, that can help out ... I mean we can negotiate, we can compensate them with our... basically with our chequebook, I don't want to sound overbearing or arrogant but I mean, it ends up being a matter of money basically, also history and a lot of things but basically money. Simply the company pulls out the chequebook and tells everyone: well, are there 30 families here in this place? Okay. How much does each family want?”

When asked about the situation when locals refuse to move and take the compensation, Juan Carlos Santos answered to AlJazeera (2011)

“...well, that will be a huge problem. In Spanish, there is a famous phrase that's called: “The common rights are always on top of private rights”. I mean when a country like Colombia needs to exploit areas and our country is full of indigenous and Afro-Colombian people, we sometimes have to think in the bigger picture”.

According to several sources (Arteta 2013; *Colombia 2012* 2012; Leech 2013; Ungerman & Brohy 2003) the Colombian government receives royalties from the mineral and oil profits, but has lowered both taxes and profit sharing. Ungerman and Brohy (2003) state that profit sharing with multinational corporations went from a 50-50 profit sharing to offering 75 per cent profit in favour of the multinationals. According to Leech (2013), this way the Colombian government profits from investments that can pay off the country's foreign debt. However, the other part of the coin is that it only benefits a small elite in Colombia: those who work with the MNCs and those who get employed by the MNCs (Leech 2013)¹⁵.

Further, Higginbottom (2008) states that due to the privatisation of state-owned companies in the 1990s, Colombia's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) increased significantly in 1995. By 1997 FDI accounted for 40 per cent of all investment in Colombia. Privatisation along with the implementation of free-market policies that removed regulations, lowered tariffs and lifted restrictions paved the way for capital inflow (Higginbottom 2008).

Higginbottom (2008) states that despite the attention to human rights in the 1991 Constitution, Colombian authorities have failed to protect the people from both the interest of multinational corporations and the related paramilitary violence. Higginbottom (2008:166) claims that

“the alliance between state authorities and multinationals, supported by a tacit involvement paramilitary forces and bolstered by U.S intervention, has provided both motive and

¹⁵ Author interview, June 2013

opportunity for crimes of the powerful. There is a de facto regime of impunity for multinational corporate crime in Colombia.”

By this statement, Higginbottom concurs that there is a powerful connection between MNCs and the Colombian elite’s interest. Here, there is a clear harmony of interest between the cC and cP, and a disharmony of interest between the cP and the pP. The cP – the Colombian state and elites – work as a bridgehead to the Center nation. The pP is exploited and the cP benefits. But the greater benefactor is the cC, who’s multinational corporations are extracting resources from the Periphery.

5.6 Foreign Investment as a Stumbling Block to Land Reform

Borras and Ross (2007) claim that a democratic solution to land conflict through redistributive land reforms can create peace and prevent rural conflicts. Borras and Ross (2007:3) further state that because rural violence and conflicts are not a suitable “investment-friendly socio-political and economic environment, which is viewed as the main agent for capitalist development” , scholars and development practitioners in favour of the global market - and with links to international development agencies such as USAID - have voiced the importance of land policies and helped put these policies back into the agendas of such international development agencies. Thus, they claim that many intentions at land reform and peace have happened not because of true conviction that land reform is for the peasants’ benefit, rather because it is deemed a necessity for the government in order to obtain peace and therefore investment-friendly environments (Borras & Ross 2007). In addition, Avilés (2008) states that there is an elite of politicians and bureaucrats who promote the policies of the multinational corporations, such as privatisation and free markets. Avilés (2008) argues that this elite play on their own interests that are often imagined to be a national interest. Avilés (2008) goes on to argue that the pro-globalisation governments and elites promote an ideal business environment for MNCs not because they are politically pressured, but because it seems to be in their own personal interest.

According to The Economist (2012), the FARC guerrilla and the Colombian government reached a tentative agreement in regards to land restitutions during the negotiations in 2012. In less than a year the Colombian government has received 26.600 claims – just under two million hectares – to land under the land restitution scheme. However, the Colombian government states that land distribution to peasant farmers will only involve idle, uncultivated lands (The Economist 2012).

This is due to the Colombian government's emphasis on the export of biofuels and agricultural goods (The Economist 2012).

According to Garry Leech (2013)¹⁶, the Colombian government states that foreign investment and the economy are currently non-negotiable. As the government is only willing to talk about land restitution, the FARC claim that land restitution and foreign investment are linked, because 82% of the foreign investment conducted in Colombia is in the rural areas. As more and more land is being assessed for investment and given to large multinational corporations in the rural areas, land-reform is harder to negotiate (Arteta 2013; Leech 2013). The FARC has argued for land reform since the establishment of the guerrilla. During the press conference in Oslo on October 18th 2012, the FARC's representative leader Luciano Marín Arango (alias Iván Márquez) stressed the importance of the confiscation of Colombian land held by foreigners as well as supplying the local market rather than focussing on exporting goods¹⁷ (see also The Economist). Foreign investment and the removal of the MNCs from Colombian soil is one of the FARC's main pillars.

¹⁶ Author interview, June 2013

¹⁷ Author's personal live recording from the direct broadcast on NRK, October 18th 2012

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion

This thesis has looked into the effect that Plan Colombia and the palm oil industry have on land contention in Colombia, as well as the connection between Plan Colombia and the multinational corporations.

This thesis shows that the Colombian land struggle is greatly affected by Plan Colombia, multinational corporations and the oil palm industry. By analysing these foreign relations and the effect they have on land contention, using Center-Periphery theory, World-Systems Analysis and imperialism, it is clear that these foreign relations greatly benefit the stronger Center nation (the U.S) whereas the Periphery (Colombia) is being exploited. The center in the Periphery, here the political elite in Colombia, benefits by working as a bridgehead to the Center nation. However, all interaction between the Center nation and the Periphery nation benefits the Center nation a great deal in the end.

This thesis shows that foreign investment in the form of MNCs and the palm oil industry might be an obstacle to peace. As the Colombian government has no plans of pulling out the MNCs or nationalise the country's resources, jeopardising an agreement and a potential solution to the land issue.

6.2 Suggestions to Further Studies

Seeing what Plan Colombia's fumigation policy has contributed to the displacement of peasants and the difficulties in transporting and selling their legal cash crops, there is one more issue rising. The Colombia-U.S Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has proven to be another problem. With the Colombian government allowing for imports of goods that are normally produced in Colombia, and the U.S flooding Colombia with subsidised agricultural products, the Colombian small farmers are facing harsh competition by cheap subsidised agricultural import (Arteta 2013; Leech 2013). The question is, if land-reform is implemented, will the small farmers still be able to survive on that land? Will they turn to illicit crops and again be fumigated off their lands? The FTA will be an interesting study that could contribute more to the topic on land and the Colombian conflict. Further, a deeper study into the multinational corporations and the Colombian political elites that are involved in such corporations would greatly contribute to the land

contention issue. It will contribute to the understanding of the obstacles to peace in Colombia, and perhaps shed light on a necessary solution.

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