

Land transactions and violent conflict, a review of the cases of Turbo, Antioquia and El Carmen de Bolívar, Bolívar*

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SUMMARY

This paper offers an analysis of the links between war, land markets and dispossession based on two case studies: the municipality of Turbo, Antioquia and El Carmen de Bolívar, Bolívar. To this end, firstly, the phenomenon of active paramilitary dispossession is placed in the framework of the general discussion on land grab. Then the general dynamics of the conflict, abandonment and land dispossession in both municipalities is described. Afterwards a broad typology is proposed on land transactions,¹ including abandonment and asymmetrical and symmetrical transactions, based on the observed cases. Then the sequences, actors and associated mechanisms are defined for each case. Lastly, we conclude that even though dispossession did not occur in an institutional vacuum, in the cases studied the use of force as a form of appropriation is the result of specific conditions that are closer to the Hobbesian state of nature, where the armed actor can use and make the rules, whereas the transactions that arise from advantages in asymmetries of power and information are closer to market situations in which the appropriating actor uses the rules, but does not make them.

Key Words: Dispossession of land, transactions, violence, state, market

TRANSACCIONES SOBRE LA TIERRA Y CONFLICTO VIOLENTO, UNA LECTURA SOBRE LOS CASOS DE TURBO, ANTIOQUIA Y EL CARMEN DE BOLÍVAR, BOLÍVAR

RESUMEN

Este documento ofrece un análisis de la vinculación entre guerra, mercado y despojo de tierras a partir del análisis de dos estudios de caso: el municipio de Turbo Antioquia y de El Carmen de Bolívar en Bolívar. Para ello, en primer lugar, se enmarca el fenómeno del despojo activo paramilitar en el marco del debate general sobre el land grab. Posteriormente se presentan las dinámicas generales del conflicto, el abandono y el despojo de tierras en ambos municipios. Luego, se propone una tipología amplia de las transacciones sobre la tierra² que incluye el abandono y las transacciones asimétricas y simétricas, con base en los casos observados. Sobre esta base distingue para cada una de ellas, las secuencias, los actores y los mecanismos asociados. Por último, se concluye que si bien el despojo no ocurrió en el vacío institucional, en los casos analizados el uso de la fuerza como forma

¹ Regarding the generic term dispossession, we have preferred to use the term “transactions” which, though imperfect, is a better reflection of the events in both cases. In any case we consider these to be forms of appropriation that lie somewhere between market situations (“invisible hand”) and violence (“state of nature”).

² Frente al término genérico de despojo, hemos preferido utilizar el término transacciones que, aunque imperfecto, recoge mejor lo sucedido en ambos casos. De cualquier forma consideramos estos tipos como formas de apropiación que se encuentran en algún lugar entre las situaciones de mercado (“mano invisible”) y violencia (“estado de naturaleza”).

de apropiación obedece a condiciones específicas, más cercanas al estado de naturaleza hobbesiano en las que el actor armado puede usar y hacer la norma, mientras que las transacciones dadas por la ventaja de las asimetrías de poder e información suceden más cerca de situaciones de mercado, donde el actor apropiador usa la norma, pero no la hace.

Palabras Claves: Despojo de tierras, transacciones, violencia, estado, mercado

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1. LAND GRAB AND DISPOSSESSION IN COLOMBIA

The appropriation of assets and resources is a constant in the history of humanity; Marx explained this phenomenon as part of the original accumulation of capital. More recently, David Harvey (2004) proposed a new cycle of concentration derived from accumulation by dispossession, which other researchers have associated to a global phenomenon of land grab (Hall, D 2013). The research agenda on the latter was initially devoted to the “construction of meaning”, focusing on identifying the why and how and the magnitude of the global phenomenon known as “the land fever”. This phenomenon was associated to the demand for food by economically powerful countries with a shortage of farmland (Edelman, Oya, Borrás, 2013, 1518), hoarding of water (Franco, Mehta, and Veldwisch, 2013), and of land for bio-fuel, forestry and mining projects (Fortin, 2013) .

Even though the first studies created awareness of the phenomenon at the international level, the theoretical and methodological gaps of this initial research agenda has been widely criticized. Firstly, land grab is not a homogeneous phenomenon, as it displays big longitudinal and territorial differences (Borrás, Hall, Scoones, White and Wolford, 2011). Secondly, the current “land fever” cycle is not new, but should be understood and studied in the more general framework of the longstanding debate on agrarian political economy and of the development of capitalism (Edelman, et al 2013, Baglioni & Gibbon, 2013). In other words, the phenomenon should be studied in connection with aspects such as property rights (Olivier De Schutter, 2011), labor regimes (Murray Li, 2011), and class dynamics (Mannathukkaren, 2011), among others.

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In the Colombian case, the abandonment of lands and active paramilitary dispossession can be understood as specific expressions of land grab. Two elements of the discussion are relevant for our analysis. Firstly, the “hectarocentric emphasis” (Edelman 2013, Borrás et. al. 20013) that fed the early discussion of the issue runs against the enormous difficulties involved in measuring and observing the land, in addition to focusing mainly on property size, setting aside other relevant elements such as the use, the actors and the work. Secondly, the appropriation processes do not occur outside the regulatory frameworks or the intervention of the states (Alden 2012, Visser & Spoor, 2011, Cotula, 2013). In fact, land transactions do not occur in a vacuum; the practices of the actors and their outcomes are framed in the context of the existing agencies and the institutional arrangements (Gutiérrez, 2014).

Additionally, it is necessary to consider that the phenomenon also occurs in contexts in which violence both of the state and of private actors is involved. Given that only a handful of studies address land grab processes in contexts that feature coercion or war, we propose an approach that incorporates the institutions and coercion in the analysis.

2. CONFLICT AND DISPOSSESSION: TWO CASE STUDIES

2.1. Turbo, Antioquia

The municipality of Turbo is in the region of Urabá, which is configured in a sort of arm that connects the department of Antioquia to the Colombian Caribbean Sea on the

border with Panama. This area, which was only recently settled, has highly fertile lands and abundant water resources, and its location features a strategic outlet to the sea, which makes it an area suitable for commerce, smuggling and legal and illegal trading of goods (Botero, 1990; García Reyes, 2008; García, 1996; Ortiz, 1999).

The presence of armed groups in the region can be traced back to the 1970s, when the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia by its acronym in Spanish) established its 5th Front there. Other guerrilla groups such as EPL (People's Liberation Army by its acronym in Spanish) and ELN (National Liberation Army by its acronym in Spanish) also established operations in the area. There were two high points of the conflict in the area, first when the FARC and EPL guerrillas fought against each other, and afterwards when the paramilitary groups ACCU (United Self-Defenses of Córdoba and Urabá by its acronym in Spanish) and AUC (United Self-Defenses of Colombia by its acronym in Spanish) pushed their way into the region. In addition to creating important alliances with cattle ranchers, banana growers and the rural rich in the area to provide them protection against the constant guerrilla attacks, the paramilitaries implemented a strategy of terror in order to control the drug trafficking routes to the sea by taking over lands and attacking civilians.

The variables of forced displacement due to violence (persons expelled), homicides and abandonment of properties over the 1987-2013 period, the first two according to records of the Unified Victims Registry (RUV by its acronym in Spanish), and the latter of the Unified Registry of Abandoned Properties and Territories (RUPTA by its acronym in Spanish), display four high points and a big peak: the first in the 1988-1990 period, the second between 1992 and 1993, the third between 1995 and 1997 and the fourth in 2007 and 2008. The highest point of lethal violence was in 1996 and of forced displacement in 1995.

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These four moments coincide with four processes: The first is related to the presence of the paramilitary group Los Tangueros commanded by Fidel Castaño Gil (1988-1990). With the support of cattle ranchers and banana companies, Castaño ended up acquiring through purchases and/or dispossession several properties in the region with the objective of creating a strategic corridor for drug trafficking³. In that year alone there were 4 massacres with 94 victims (DAS, 1998)⁴.

The second is the war between the People's Commandos of EPL and the Bolivarian Militias of FARC (1992-1993). The People's Commandos were armed structures created by former fighters of EPL who decided to rearm in order to face off the attacks and persecution by the FARC and by the dissidence of Francisco Caraballo, who did not demobilize when the EPL signed a peace agreement with President Cesar Gaviria. This confrontation involved the selective murder of demobilized fighters organized in the movements Esperanza Paz y

³ www.verdadabierta.com: <http://rutasdelconflicto.com/interna.php?masacre=118> viewed on March 30, 2014

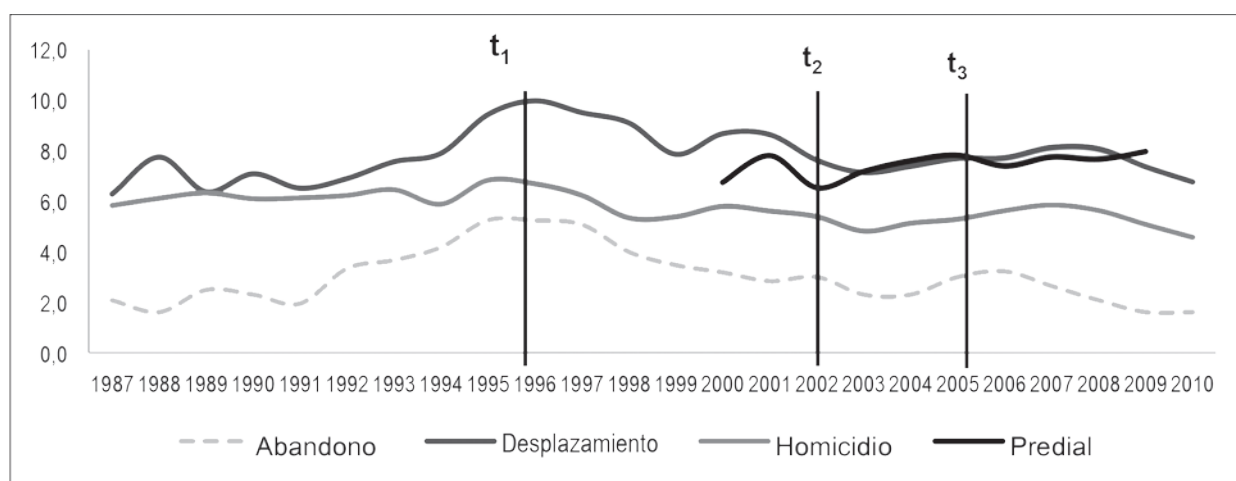
⁴ <http://rutasdelconflicto.com/interna.php?masacre=118> viewed on March 26, 2014. <http://rutasdelconflicto.com/interna.php?masacre=121> viewed on March 26, 2014.

Libertad⁵ and Unión Patriótica⁶, as well as a new wave of massacres, including one in the neighborhood La Chinita in 1994, when the FARC murdered 35 persons⁷.

The third process is associated to a second paramilitary incursion, this time with structures belonging to the ACCU and AUC (195-1998), after which point the violence against social leaders, union leaders and left-wing politicians intensified. In these three years 2,431 persons were murdered and 10 massacres were committed.⁸

The last process was following the demobilization of the paramilitaries⁹ and the rise of the new criminal gangs (2007-2008) that dominate the drug trafficking business in the region.

Graph 1.
Trends of the conflict and abandonment in Turbo (1987-2010)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on RUV and RUPTA. Normalized data.

These periods are related to visible moments of abandonment and of material, legal and administrative dispossession of lands.¹⁰In this sense, a first period of intimidation, coercion

⁵ This was the political movement created following the peace agreement between the EPL guerrilla and the government of César Gaviria in 1991.

⁶ This political movement was created in 1985 during the peace talks between President Betancourt and the FARC.

⁷ http://www.derechoshumanos.gov.co/Observatorio/Publicaciones/Documents/2010/Estu_Regionales/uraba.pdf viewed on March 3

⁸ Calculations by the authors based on reviews of print media and Verdad Abierta.

⁹ In 2002, the government began to approach the AUC with the objective of achieving their demobilization. The talks concluded with the “Agreement of Santafé de Ralito to contribute to peace in Colombia”, which led to the start of formal negotiations. Starting in 2003, the group dismantled its military structures and formally began the Justice and Peace process. Up to 2006, 31,651 members of AUC had demobilized, of which some 4500 were found eligible for the benefits of an alternative maximum sentence of eight years in exchange for full confession and reparations for the victims. In this particular case, 452 men of the Banana Block demobilized in 2004, and 1538 men of the Elmer Cárdenas Block demobilized in 2006, both AUC structures with presence in the Turbo region. Data from the High Advisor for Reinsertion and from the National Attorney General Office.

¹⁰ **Material dispossession:** Still appears as the owner but left the property due to violent acts. **Administrative dispossession:** The person reports the dispossession of his property, but when the property registry records and the property history are checked, a resolution is found of cancellation or administrative expiration issued by INCORA or INCODER. **Dispossession through legal channels:** Cases in which the person sold the property, but the deeds have flaws related to consent, the seller was supplanted, or irregular powers of attorney were used. (Superintendence of Notaries and Registry, 2011).

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and violence by the paramilitary structure was followed by pressures on the peasants to abandon and/or to forcibly sell their properties. Lastly, the forgery of powers of attorney and deeds to perform legal transfers of property rights (not in all cases). For the effects of the analysis, we will identify the moments of appropriation as time 1 (t_1), time 2 (t_2) and time 3 (t_3), as shown in the following graph:

APPROPRIATION OF LANDS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TURBO

Turbo is the municipality with the largest number of displaced persons over the period from 1985 to 2013 in the Urabá region of Antioquia, but it is also the main receptor of displaced persons, primarily from the department of Chocó.

Three paramilitary structures were present in the Urabá region: The Turbo Front, the Elmer Cárdenas Block and the Arlex Hurtado Front, all of which were directly involved in cases of land dispossession in Turbo. Unlike Carmen de Bolívar, where lands abandoned as a result of the paramilitary violence were acquired by businesses, in Turbo the direct action of the armed groups in the appropriation, use and exchange of land was evident.

Several documented cases of dispossession of land have been selected from secondary sources that enable identification of the actors involved and the strategies they used to attempt to legalize the titles. All the cases have in common that the cycle of 1 violence, 2 abandonment /forced sale - 3 multiple transactions – 4 final appropriation of the lands by the cattle rancher or banana grower was performed.

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In the dispossession cases performed by the Turbo Front and the Elmer Cárdenas Blocks we find that a period of time elapses between when the violence that led to the forced displacement of the peasants took place, and the time when they attempted to legalize or clean the titles. Several cases illustrate this. Firstly, the dispossession that occurred at *Vereda Paquemas Corregimiento El Tres*. These lands had been awarded to peasant families by INCORA in 1994, but a year later the peasants were forcibly displaced on orders of a.k.a. El Tigre¹¹ and by the terror created by the massacre of Pueblo Galleta perpetrated by the Turbo Front under the command of Ever Veloza a.k.a. HH. In this case, a key factor was the action taken by the civil servants, because a Councilman and an employee of INCORA put pressure on the peasants to sell their lands at low prices¹². In the meantime, they were left to be used by a.k.a. “Megateo”¹³, a paramilitary who appropriated these lands. In 2008, after several transfers had taken place, some of them with deeds forged at the notary in Carepa, the properties came to be owned by Álvaro Mesa Cadavid (prestigious cattle rancher from the region), who was declared to be an opponent in bad faith in a ruling on land restitution¹⁴.

¹¹ Jesús Albeiro Guisao Arias “el Tigre”

¹² Eladio Torres (Turbo councilman) and Climaco Chamorro, civil servant of INCORA

¹³ Miguel Ángel Serrano a.k.a. Megateo.

¹⁴ Higher court of the judicial circuit of Antioquia. Civil chamber specializing in land restitution. First chamber. Ruling. Substantiating Magistrate Javier Enrique Castillo Cadena. Medellín, February 28, 2014. File: 050453121001-2013-00413-00

Even though the displacement took place in 1995, the attempt to legalize or clean the titles through a notary began only a decade later. The same *modus operandi* was found at *Vereda San Pablo de Tulapa*, where the peasants were displaced and abandoned their lands due to the paramilitaries in 1995. Afterwards they were contacted by land brokers who offered to buy them at ridiculously low prices. But it was not until 2005 when, through forged powers of attorney¹⁵ and deeds were the lands acquired by third parties,¹⁶ two of them paramilitaries from the Elmer Cárdenas Block¹⁷ (Notary and Registration Superintendence, 2011)¹⁸.

Another case in *Tulapas*¹⁹ was the dispossession perpetrated by the Córdoba Cattle Fund led by Benito Osorio Villadiego²⁰. Through forged powers of attorney in the name of a relative of the Castaño clan, and defective deeds, the peasants' lands became the property of the Fund. Afterwards, in mid-2005, at some of these properties Freddy Rendón Herrera a.k.a. El Alemán implemented the Social Alternative Program PASO with agro-industrial, forestry and rubber projects to generate income for the demobilization of his men²¹.

Lastly we find the case of *Vereda Blanquicet Corregimiento Macondo*. In 1996 the paramilitaries were camped at the estate "El Trébol", owned by Ángel Adriano Palacios (cattle rancher who is currently in prison under investigation for land dispossession). That year, the paramilitaries forcibly displaced the peasant members of the cooperative Cootraglobam and took over their lands²² to raise cattle. Only in 2001 did the forced sales begin by means of forged deeds and multiple transfers of ownership²³, including one to Hugo Fenel Bernal, a paramilitary and drug trafficker who was extradited²⁴ (Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, 2011).

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¹⁵ In 2005 powers of attorney were granted to Carlos Alberto Grajales Gómez, Jorge Eljach Zuñiga (assistant accountant at a banana growing estate), Fabián Darley Roldan Villa (all three under investigation for conspiracy).

¹⁶ Including Benjamín José Alvarado Bracamonte (who has two arrest warrants in his name)

¹⁷ Zulma Yibi Romero Cerquera (Acquired 18 properties) all in deed N^o 1564 dated December 26, 2005, Humberto León Atehortua (demobilized from the Elmer Cárdenas Block. Qualified for benefits of law 975 of 2005) acquired 6 properties, deed 1563 dated December 26, 2005; Otoniel Segundo Hoyos Pérez Otoniel (member of the command structure of the coastal front, qualified for benefits of law 975 of 2005) acquired 3 properties, deed 1562 dated December 26, 2005

¹⁸ Also see: Hearing of cancellation of fraudulent titles, September 16, 2011, Candidate for alternative sentence: Fredy Rendón Herrera. Witness: Dayron Mendoza Caraballo

¹⁹ In the area between Turbo and Necocli

²⁰ Currently judicial authorities are investigating the former president of the Cattle Fund of Córdoba, Benito Osorio Villadiego, for his links with the paramilitaries of the Elmer Cárdenas Block and for promoting the forced sale and dispossession of lands in Urabá. He pleaded guilty and accepted to cooperate with the authorities. The former governor of Córdoba pleaded guilty for land dispossession. *El Colombiano* (October 7, 2014). For a detailed description see *Despojo de Tierras en Urabá. Verdad Abierta*. (s,f) Available at <http://www.verdadabierta.com/despojo-de-tierras-en-uraba>

²¹ *La Telaraña de los paras en Urabá. Verdad Abierta* (2011, 14 de junio). Viewed at: <http://www.verdadabierta.com/component/content/article/48-despojo-de-tierras/3330-la-telarana-de-los-paras-en-uraba>.

²² Luis Emilio Úsuga, a.k.a. "Palillo", and Luis Ángel Ramírez, a.k.a. "55" or "campeche occupied the properties

²³ In 2001 Duvián Humberto Henaó Ciro transferred to Hugo Fenel Bernal Molano (well-known paramilitary and drug trafficker who was extradited to USA).

2003: to Carlos Alberto Vélez Gallego and Gustavo Adolfo González Villada.

in 2005 property was transferred to Miguel Ramón Medina

²⁴ There are currently precautionary measures on the property. The victims of the cooperative have not been able to return.

Unlike the previous cases, the dispossession carried out by the paramilitaries of the Arlex Hurtado Front under the command of Raúl Emilio Hasbún, a.k.a. Pedro Bonito, had a shorter cycle. For example, in the case of *Vereda Nueva Unión Corregimiento Nueva Colonia*,²⁵ in 2003 the self-defenses put pressure on the peasants to leave their lands, arguing that they belonged to the “Boss” Raúl Emilio Hasbun. In this case the involvement of banana grower Felipe Echeverri was a key factor, as he forced the peasants to sell their properties under pressure. According to Acción Social, in 2010 there were 10 properties controlled by the paramilitaries, 9 occupied by third parties and 18 abandoned properties (Acción Social, 2010).

A similar case occurred at the property “La Niña” in Vereda California Corregimiento de Nueva Colonia. This estate of 103 hectares owned by the company Hasbun y Cia, of the family of cattle rancher and banana grower Raúl Emilio Hasbun (before he became a paramilitary), was invaded by peasants in the late 1980s and confiscated by the government claiming forfeiture. But before this could occur, the paramilitaries of the Arlex Hurtado front and Felipe Echeverri put pressure on the peasant to either sell or leave. Most of the peasants began to pay for the land through the discount offered for each box of banana that was exported. In other words, they paid the paramilitary for lands that were already owned by the government. Some of the peasants were forcedly displaced and have not been able to return because the land is now occupied by third parties (Acción Social, 2010).

Table 1:
Cases of dispossession of land in Turbo

Case	Paramilitary Block	Violence	Year of Event	Dispossession strategy	Beneficiaries
Vereda Paquemas	Turbo Front under the command of HH	Massacre, threats and selective murders	1995	Forced sales Forged deeds	Ganadero Alvaro Mesa Cadavid
Vereda San Pablo de Tulapa	ACCU and Elmer Cárdenas Block	Selective murders and threats	1995	Forced sales, forged powers of attorney, corrupted deeds	Humberto León and Otoniel Segundo Hoyos (paramilitaries- fronts for El Alemán)
Tulapa	ACCU and Elmer Cárdenas Block	Selective murders and threats	1995 - 1996	Forced sales, forged powers of attorney, corrupted deeds	Córdoba Cattle Fund Elmer Cárdenas Block Salvatore Mancuso
Vereda Blanquicet	ACCU- Banana Block	Selective murders and threats	1996	Forced sales, defective deeds	Hugo Fenel Bernal Molano, drug trafficker extradited to USA and others.
Vereda Nueva Unión	Arlex Hurtado Front	Threats	2002 and 2004	Forced sales	Felipe Echeverri and Raul Emilio Hasbun
“La Niña” at Vereda California	Arlex Hurtado Front	Threats	2000 and 2004	Forced sales	Raul Emilio Hasbun

²⁵ Territory that features a high level of informality in land ownership, where the peasants do not have property titles, but are holders or possessors (Acción Social, 2010). Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation. Project for the protection of lands and properties of displaced populations. Study on ownership in the municipality of Turbo. 2010

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ALL THE CASES IDENTIFIED IN TURBO DISPLAY THE FOLLOWING:

- * They clearly display the cycle of 1 violence, 2 abandonment /forced sale- 3 multiple transactions – 4 appropriation by a cattle rancher or banana grower or the armed actor.
- * The three paramilitary structures with presence in Urabá were involved in the land dispossession processes in the municipality of Turbo, and they played two key roles: as generators of violence to intimidate and cause violence against the population so that they would abandon and sell their lands, and as buyers, front men or de facto holders of the dispossessed properties.
- * In the documented cases on dispossession, the beneficiaries were cattle ranchers and banana growers such as Felipe Echeverri, Álvaro Mesa Cadavid, Ángel Adriano Palacios, Benito Osorio Villadiego and Paramilitaries who acted as front men, including Humberto León Atehortua and Otoniel Segundo Hoyos, or who acted in the capacity of Chiefs such as Pedro Bonito and Freddy Rendón a.k.a. El Aleman.
- * In all the cases fraudulent operations were performed, including forged signatures, powers of attorney and deeds. However, through coercion and vitiated consent, the peasants were forced to sell their lands at ridiculously low prices. In this sense, the recurrent strategy was that of forced sales.

2.2. El Carmen de Bolívar

The municipality of El Carmen de Bolívar is located in the center of a region known as Montes de María²⁶. Due to its location this region came to be at the epicenter of the armed conflict. Because it forms a type of corridor, groups of different types transited through it, outwards with illegal drugs from the Mountain of San Jacinto and inbound with weapons smuggled through the Gulf of Morrosquillo. Also, its mountainous areas (Chalán, Colosó, Morroa, Ovejas and Los Palmitos) and mountain side areas (María la Baja, San Onofre, Toluviejo and San Antonio de Palmito) served as hideouts from guerrilla groups, where they planned kidnapping, extortion and recruitment (Hernández 2009, ILSA 2012: 13).

The presence of different armed groups in the region²⁷ implied ongoing violence against the civilian population (Ideaspaz s.f., 12) with two specific breaking points. As was the case in Turbo, the proposed variables display three clearly defined peaks and two troughs. Regarding the former, the greatest incidence of displacement, homicides and abandonment of properties was in 2000, 2004 and 2006. The years 2005 and 2008 display lower intensity of the conflict. These trends are associated to identifiable events. In the first case, 1999 and 2000 were the most critical years of the paramilitary incursion in the region and the municipality, including massacres²⁸ with substantial numbers of victims, though the repor-

²⁶ The region of Montes de María is located between the departments of Bolívar and Sucre, covering 15 municipalities (Córdoba, El Carmen de Bolívar, El Guamo, María La Baja, San Jacinto, San Juan Nepomuceno and Zambrano in the department of Bolívar and Colosó, Chalán, Los Palmitos, Morroa, Ovejas, Palmito, Tólu Viejo, San Onofre in the department of Sucre). In 2014 the population, according to DANE estimates, totaled 353,591.

²⁷ Several groups have disputed the region: FARC, ELN, Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT), Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) and Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC),

²⁸ Between 1997 and 2009 in the region of Montes de María, the paramilitaries committed 45 massacres, including those that took place in Carmen de Bolívar, known as the massacres of Macayepo and El Salado.

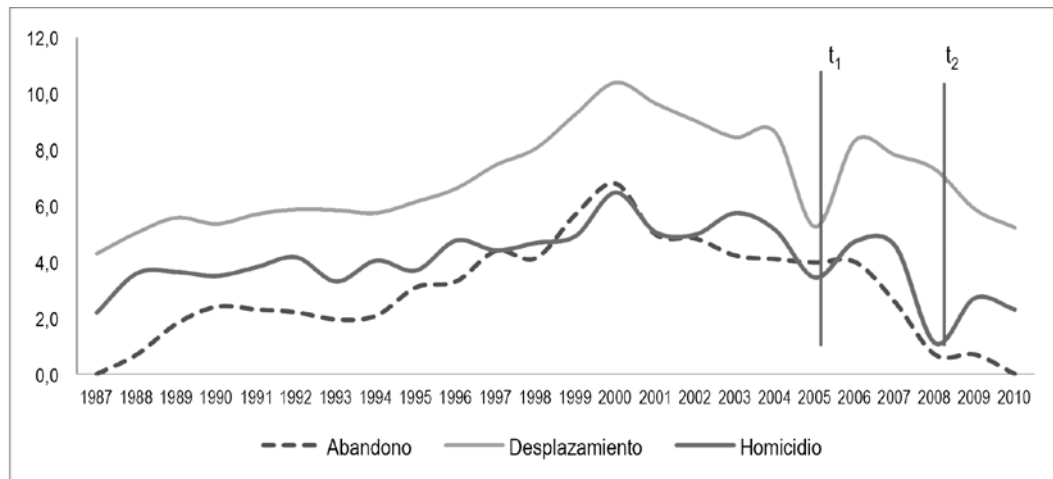
ted figures vary depending on the source, but in any case between 80 and 135 personas murdered in the two years²⁹.

In 2004 and 2006 the variables are not as clearly associated with specific events, though there are relevant events worth mentioning. In September of 2002, Montes de María was declared a Rehabilitation and Consolidation Zone in the framework of the Territorial Consolidation Plan formulated during the first term of President Álvaro Uribe (2002-2006). This involved increasing military deployment with the launch of five counter-guerrilla squadrons and an increase in the informant network (Observatory of the Presidential Program for HR and IHL: 6, ILSA 2012: 18). This arrangement was declared to be unconstitutional (Ruling C-1024, 2002) and the zones were decommissioned in 2003, which may reflect the increase in the figures the following year. Also, the period from 2000 to 2003 was the peak of confrontations between the AUC and the FARC, mainly in El Carmen de Bolívar, Córdoba and Ovejas (Ideaspaz s.f.: 13). Also, 2006 was the year after the demobilization of paramilitaries in the region, and after that the confrontations were primarily between the FARC and the National Army (ILSA 2012: 16).

The situations associated with the observed reductions are more evident. On July 14, 2005, 594 members of the Héroes de los Montes de María Block of the AUC demobilized (Higher Court of the Judicial District of Bogotá, Peace and Justice Chamber, December 7, 2011). Additionally, the Joint Caribbean Command was established, which reinforced the Marine Infantry with army troops and support from the Air Force (Hernández 2009). In 2007 “Martin Caballero”, the FARC commander in the region, was pronounced dead, and consequently the group focused its activities in other areas (ILSA 2012: 25).

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Graph 2.
Trends of the conflict and abandonment in El Carmen de Bolívar (1987-2010)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on RUV and RUPTA. Normalized data.

²⁹ The massacre at El Salado (February of 2000) was committed by a paramilitary group that murdered 66 persons including men, women and children in four days. For an analysis of the deployment and social repercussions of this massacre see the report of the Historical Memory Commission (s.f.). There is abundant literature available with detailed accounts of the violent deployment in Carmen de Bolívar, in the context of Montes de María.

As in the case of Turbo, in El Carmen de Bolívar the identified moments are associated with identifiable periods of abandonment and/or appropriation of lands. Thus, there is an visible long cycle of abandonment that began even before the arrival of the 37 Front of FARC to the municipality, and that extends to the end of the period of the study, with high and low points that match the moments described for the conflict. There are two visibly higher points of land appropriation in 2005 and 2008, when the intensity of the conflict was lower due to the reasons indicated above. For the effects of this analysis, we will identify the moments of appropriation as time 1 (t_1) and time 2 (t_2), as indicated in the following graph:

3. ABANDONMENT AND APPROPRIATION IN EL CARMEN DE BOLÍVAR

In 2011, the Superintendence of Notaries and Registry carried out a study on the registration status of rural properties in Montes de María (Superintendence of Notaries and Registry, 2011, Superintendence of Notaries and Registry s.f.), finding that “mass sales” had taken place in the region, after which a substantial amount of land was transferred from local peasants to outside businessmen. It identified fifteen mass buyers, who acquired through different strategies 27,248 hectares in the different municipalities of the region. The report also identified a set of “tricks” that enabled them to perform such transfers. Before describing them, let us first set the context of the phenomenon in terms of the trends of the conflict in the region, based on the moments we have identified.

3.1 Abandonment

According to official sources, in 2010 the municipalities of El Carmen de Bolívar, María la Baja, San Jacinto and Zambrano were among the 100 municipalities in the country with the highest levels of abandonment, where El Carmen was the most affected by this phenomenon and the second-highest in terms of number of displaced persons (Project for the Protection of Properties and Assets of the Displaced Population, s.f., Annex 5, pages 26-29). In this municipality, the observed indicators of conflict and abandonment of properties rise and fall simultaneously. On this basis, two major acquisition cycles take place, which coincide with the moments at which the conflict level is at its lowest. In fact, between 1987 and 2004 we find 93.6% of the persons who abandoned their properties, 90.6% of displaced persons and 89.2% of homicides. It is only in 2005 (t_1) when the phenomenon of land acquisitions by outsiders becomes noticeable.

Acquisitions t_1

The first major buyer in the area was the businessman from Antioquia Álvaro Echeverría, a partner of Agropecuaria Tierras de Promisión. In 2001, Mr. Echeverría acquired 3,000 hectares in Tetón, rural district of Córdoba, despite the precarious security conditions. As he narrated, he “held on” until the situation improved in 2005. In this way he came to acquire 4000 hectares of land, and at the same time became the spearhead of a surge of property buyers in the municipality (interview with Álvaro Echeverría, March 21, 2014). However, it was not until 2008 (t_2), following the death of Martín Caballero, commander of the 37 Front of FARC, that the mass land acquisitions took place.

[32]

Acquisitions t2

The dismemberment of the 37 Front of FARC in the region attracted outside investors. There were five major buyers in Carmen de Bolívar according to the aforementioned study of the Superintendence of Notaries and Registry (2011), whose names we state for presentation purposes: Álvaro Ignacio Echeverría, Agropecuaria Carmen de Bolívar S.A., Raúl Mora-Otto Bula, Agropecuaria Tacaloa and Freddy Barrios. The study found that said buyers acquired 18,666 hectares. Even though based on available information it is not possible to establish which of these are located in El Carmen, interviews suggest that it was a substantial amount. In several interviews narrations are made of long lines of peasants at the door of “cachaco” offices, to offer their properties for sale.

The “cachacos”³⁰ arrived, and the people were standing in line to be bought out. So now, the same ones who sold to those people are also filing claims. Specifically, I did not see them force anybody here (Interview Daitania Enríquez, El Carmen de Bolívar, March 21, 2014).

The existence of these two moments in El Carmen and their association with the cycles of abandonment and appropriation enable us to develop, in combination with what was observed in the municipality of Turbo, a typology of land transactions in times of violence with differentiated actors and mechanisms.

3. LAND TRANSACTIONS IN TIMES OF CONFLICT: PROPOSED TYPOLOGY

[33]

Based on what was observed in these two municipalities we may conclude that not all the abandoned properties were appropriated, that the appropriations take place along a continuum that runs from violence to market, and that the government institutions served as venues for the transactions. Based on these considerations, we can define three types and two sub-types of transactions: 1) abandonment, 2) asymmetric transactions (derived from the use of force and from asymmetric information) and 3) symmetric transactions. Below we discuss each type, indicating their associated sequences, actors and mechanisms.

3.1. ABANDONMENT

This is the basic form, and it occurs when the owner of the land, under any legal arrangement, stops working on it in a continuous manner, as a direct or indirect result of the armed conflict.

SEQUENCE

These are the trends of abandonment identified above for El Carmen de Bolívar. There, a large number of abandoned properties remained without being used or occupied for several years after displacement. This involves a combination of events that follow the following sequence: (i) An armed group direct or indirectly threatens the integrity of the

³⁰ This is what people from the capital of the country are called.

land owner or prevents him for using and enjoying it as a results of the group's presence, (2) the land owner seeks to preserve his life by abandoning the property and/or seeks an alternative means to earn a living, (3) the land owner and his family go through a process of de-peasantization as a result of displacement.

ACTORS

The actors involved in transactions of this type are, on the one hand, the owners from the region, under any legal arrangement, and on the other hand, the actors who are the source of the threat. In the case of El Carmen de Bolívar the 37 Front of FARC and the Héroes de los Montes de María Block of the AUC are identified. Their nature of agents of abandonment is established based on their objectives and strategies. As indicated in the interviews, the guerrillas were agents of abandonment for both small and large land owners. However, they also seem to have played some type of role as agents of distribution inasmuch as they propitiated the displacement of the latter, and consequently the sale of their properties to the Colombian Agricultural Institute (INCORA by its acronym in Spanish) (interview with Dairo Kuhlman, Secretary of Government of El Carmen de Bolívar, April 20, 2014; Interview with Cecilia Torres, Public Instrument Registrar, El Carmen de Bolívar, May 6, 2014).

[34]

Regarding the second group, they used some rural properties to establish military camps, as illustrated by two examples: One is the case of the estate Las Palmas, in San Onofre, which was used by the Héroes de los Montes de María Block as a training camp, operations center and cemetery. The other is the estate La Alemania, also in Onofre, used by a.k.a. "Cadena", commander of the Block, as camp and training grounds for close to one year³¹ (Historical Memory Group, 2010).

MECHANISMS

The mechanisms associated with the abandonment of properties are linked to the conditions of the environment and individual motives, including:

- * Absence of protection /presence of violence that threatens lives and/or livelihoods.

[...] The thing is we can't go out to the fields and plant, you see, because there were confrontations, there were mined areas. So if you couldn't plant, it didn't make sense to stay on the property. [...] We didn't have any way to move the products. So the plot, the piece of land, was abandoned, not dispossessed, but abandoned (Interview Cecilia Torres, Public Instrument Registrar, El Carmen de Bolívar, May 6 mayo, 2014).

31 "Especial Montes de María", Verdad Abierta, http://www.verdadabierta.com/gran_especial/montes_de_maria/montes_de_maria.html. Viewed on June 15, 2013.

* Fear that is stronger than attachment.

[...] 5, 16 years went by, some people who came from over there because they had killed their son at the farm, because their father disappeared from the farm, and now these people no longer want to go back to the farm because what happened there is still on their minds. They went to Barranquilla, they went to Cartagena...” (Interview with Cecilia Torres, Public Instruments Registrar, El Carmen de Bolívar, May 6, 2014).

* Configuration of alternatives

Here we didn't even have public utilities, and many of the peasants told me “Dr, what am I going to do back there at the farm, now that I've learned to take a shower... in Barranquilla, in Cartagena, I'm not going back to (bathing with) a crock”. Because there were no decent conditions to go back to. (Interview with Cecilia Torres, Public Instruments Registrar, El Carmen de Bolívar, May 6, 2014).

After several years and even decades of abandonment, the properties began to be acquired by outside investors. In the case of El Carmen, these transactions were of the type where asymmetric information exists. However, other asymmetries were involved in the transactions observed in Turbo, which we will discuss before going back to what was observed in El Carmen.

3.2 Asymmetric transactions

3.2.1 with use of force

The stronger party becomes a de facto or legal owner of the other party's property rights as a result of the use of threats or force, in the framework of the armed conflict.

SEQUENCE

This is the type involved in the forced sales in Turbo in 1995 and 2002 and it runs the following cycle: (i) the land is abandoned due to a direct or indirect threat of the paramilitaries, (ii) brokers seek out the displaced peasants to acquire their lands at very low prices, (iii) fraudulent transactions are made involving forged powers of attorney and forged deeds to record changes in ownership of the property between the dispossessed peasants and the new owners (in some cases front men, on other cases paramilitaries), (iv) in an attempt to legalize the dispossession, a process of multiple transactions is initiated in which acquisitions/sales of the properties are recorded at notaries and public registration offices.

ACTORS

Several actors are involved in transactions of this type. On the one hand the peasants, under any type of legal holding of the properties. On the other, members of the paramilitary groups, who played a dual role as both direct appropriators of lands or as front men who acquired the properties but did not use them; cattle ranchers and banana growers who

[35]

in the end became owners of the land following the transactions, and politicians and civil servants (notaries, registrars, INCORA employees, and even a councilman) who put pressure on the peasants to sell the lands or were in charge of legalizing the false transactions.

MECHANISMS

The mechanisms associated with transactions of this type are linked to the conditions of the environment.

- * Establishment of alliances or coalitions.

Unlike the case of El Carmen, the paramilitaries acted as a coalition for dispossession directly with businessmen as in the cases of Felipe Echeverri, Ángel Adriano Palacios, José Vicente Cantero and the Board of Directors of the Cattle Fund of Córdoba.

- * Privatization of security

The banana growers and cattle ranchers in the case of Turbo had the incentives, the means and the mechanisms to ensure private security for themselves through the paramilitaries and to appropriate lands.

3.2.2. Derived from asymmetries of information

[36] The strong party becomes a de facto or legal owner of the other party's property as a result of the use of information that only the strong party has access to and manages in the best manner, related both to the situation of the conflict and to applicable law for transfers, in the framework of the armed conflict.

SEQUENCE

This is the type involved in the mass acquisitions/sales that took place in El Carmen de Bolívar in 2005 and 2008. Both can be interpreted using the same sequence, even through certain mechanisms were present at different times: (i) the land was abandoned due to direct or indirect threats from armed actors. The long period of the abandonment leaves the lands idle, (ii) the level of the conflict ebbs to levels that can be considered more or less stable (e. g., demobilization of the paramilitary groups, killing of "Martín Caballero"), (iv) the buyers' interest in the lands is sparked by their low price resulting from the conflict and abandonment, to start up different projects, (v) the sellers are interested in selling for their own reasons and pressures of the environment. The phenomenon becomes generalized because both the motivations and pressures are the result of shared situations, (v) a transfer process begins from the displaced peasants (sellers) to the interested investors (buyers).

ACTORS

The actors involved in transactions of this type are, on the one hand, the owners of the land from the region under any legal arrangement, and on the other hand the businessmen/investors with financial capacity and knowledge of the regulations related to

property transactions. The buyers in El Carmen de Bolívar had several characteristics in common: they are from Antioquia, they plan to plant crops that are different from those of the traditional plot of land (eucalyptus, buffalo, dairy cooperative) and they have sufficient resources to acquire large quantities of land (Interviews with Álvaro Ignacio Echeverría and Manuel Medina Muñetón, El Carmen de Bolívar, April 20, 2014). Another element worth highlighting is that three of the large buyers have links to situations of appropriation of lands in other regions, as shown in the table below. The information on the number of properties and hectares are indicative, as reported by the Superintendence for the entire region of Montes de María.

Table 2.
Mass acquisitions in El Carmen de Bolívar

Buyer	Description	Number of properties	Hectares
Álvaro Ignacio Echeverría Ramírez (AIER)	Álvaro Echeverría, businessman from Antioquia, manager of Álvaro Uribe's campaign to the governorship of Antioquia in 1994. Accused of dispossession in the case of La Porcelana ³² .	79	6294
Agropecuaria Carmen de Bolívar S.A. (ACB)	This company and Agropecuaria Génesis were established by members of the Colanta cooperative. The largest shareholders in both companies is Guillermo Gaviria Echeverri, founder of Uniban and Carbocol, accused by Raúl Hasbun, a.k.a. Pedro Bonito of financing the self-defense groups in the Urabá region of Antioquia ³³ , but the case precluded for lack of evidence ³⁴ .	155	8618
Raúl Mora-Otto Bula (RMOB)	Raúl Mora Abad is the legal representative of Agropecuaria Montes de María. Prior to this he was associated with Otto Bula, who made several acquisitions. The former raises horses and is owner of Fedequinas. The latter was the deputy of Senator Mario Uribe (2000-2002), accused of having links with the paramilitaries. Named by "Don Diego" ³⁵ , "Tuso Sierra" ³⁶ and the Álvarez Mayendorff brothers ³⁷ as their front man	65	2373
Agropecuaria Tacalao S.A.S (TCLOA)	Representative Yisela Acosta Vásquez.	43	1,380
Freddy Barrios (FB)	ND	ND	ND
Total		342	18665

[37]

Source: Prepared by authors based on Superintendence of Notaries and Registration (2011).

³² "Tensión en La Porcelana", 4 marzo, 2014, Verdad Abierta, <http://www.verdadabierta.com/lucha-por-la-tierra/5274-tension-en-la-porcelana>, viewed on April 1, 2014.

³³ "Las pruebas del Caso Guillermo Gaviria Echeverri", El Espectador, 25 abril 2012. <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/tema-deldia/pruebas-del-caso-guillermo-gaviria-echeverri-articulo-341168>, viewed on April 1, 2014.

³⁴ "Precluyó proceso contra Guillermo Gaviria Echeverri", El Colombiano, 27 septiembre 2013. http://www.elcolombiano.com/BancoConocimiento/P/precluye_proceso_contra_guillermo_gaviria_echeverri/precluye_proceso_contra_guillermo_gaviria_echeverri.asp, viewed on April 1, 2014.

³⁵ Semana, February 27, 2014. "El ventilador de Alias 'Don Diego'". <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/don-diego-confeso-su-relacion-con-la-clase-politica-colombiana/378839-3>, viewed on March 26, 2014.

³⁶ Nuevas Revelaciones, October 10, 2010, "Nuevas revelaciones de el 'Tuso Sierra'" <http://noticiasunolaredindependiente.com/2010/10/10/noticias/nuevas-revelaciones-de-el-tuso-sierra/>, viewed on March 26, 2014.

³⁷ El Espectador, May 26, 2013. "Bienes de narcos enredan a dos excongresistas". <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-12824412>, viewed on March 26, 2014.

MECHANISMS

The mechanisms associated with transactions of this type are linked to conditions of the environment, individual motivations and the use of government regulations. The following may be found:

* Existence of “circles of information” and “circles of power”

This mechanism indicates that the buyers belong to environments where specific information is circulated that place them at an advantage compared to the peasant sellers, who lack this type of knowledge. It is a type of inverted main agent dilemma in which the agent is the one who lacks the full information to carry out market-based transactions.

“Álvaro Echeverría is close to Álvaro Uribe, of the leading class from Antioquia. They are wanderers, they are born with a silver spoon and they pass on their businesses from generation to generation [...] He and his group of fellow members get together at a place called “La Frutera” I think, in Medellín. That is how he ended up bringing in other buyers such as Juan José Penagos, Manuel Medina, Jairo Avendaño, Elías Hincapié, Guillermo Gaviria, Alberto Uribe Múnera, Darío Builes.” (Interview with Jairo Bayuelo, March 21, 2014).

This war will be won! Buy, Buy! That was what investors were told by Álvaro Echeverría, who acknowledges that he is the great leader and pioneer of the mass acquisitions. His partner, Esteban Echavarría, says that the idea of investing came after listening to a public official while they were horseback riding with President Uribe, in Christmas of 2006: He indicated his concern because the area was being recovered, but he was worried that once the FARC left the people would not come back, and he said that it was necessary to create jobs. (El Tiempo 2013, En la Mira).

[38]

Similarly, it indicates that the buyers belong to social circles that favor them:

At my request I wanted to be accompanied by the people from the foundation Amigos de los Montes de María, Dr. Daniel Arango, Raúl Andrés Mora, Daniel Saldarriaga, Jairo Uribe and Dr. Cuartas, honorable people from Medellín. I was born and grew up with them. They are my friends and I am not afraid of these people coming here to invest (...) (Andrés Fernández, Minister of Agriculture 2009-2010, September 3, 2009³⁸).

The first estate of Álvaro Echeverría in the area is called Jacinto, it's behind El Salado, between El Carmen and Córdoba; it has 3,000 hectares. Mr. Frieri, the first owner of the lands, sold them to some people from Antioquia and in 2001 Mr. Echeverría made a deal and bought them, because the owner couldn't come here due to the insecurity. Then the guerrillas asked him for money, but Mr. Echeverría would not yield; he traveled to the property escorted by the Infantry” (interview with Jairo Bayuelo, March 21, 2014).

³⁸ ¿Técnicas del despojo?, August 31, 2011, El Espectador, www.elespectador.com/print/296058, viewed on September 13, 2013.

* Debts and economic downturn

This mechanism refers to the costs of reactivating the plot of land following its abandonment, to which an institutional fact is added: the sale of the past due receivables of Incofer to the private entities CISA and COVINOC, which initiated coercive collection processes against the peasants, which might also call “massive”³⁹.

Ironically, the first thing the Santos administration will find is that the State itself, in 2007, ended up selling to the powerful collections agency Covinoc old debts that the peasants had with Caja Agraria, with their plots of land as collateral. Covinoc retained an army of lawyers to seek out the plot owners and collect the debts. This was the case of Olga Villegas, whose land was awarded by the State in 1983 and which is covered by a Law that protects the assets of displaced persons; her land ended up in the hands of Agropecuaria Vélez Arango, when Covinoc lifted the mortgage. In turn, the businessmen Álvaro Ignacio Echeverría and Luis Esteban Echavarría began to buy (through their company Tierras de Promisión) and invited others to imitate them. (El Tiempo 2013, En la Mira).

[...] It’s mostly because of the debt; the debt forces us to sell the land; if we had no debt, that land would still be there [...] and like I said, we sold; the threats of Covinoc prompted us to do so, due to the lack of guidance [...]” (Historical Memory Group, 2010: 175).

* Administrative inefficiencies

Two types of inefficiencies were identified: On the one hand, the fact that the cadastre was not updated enabled paying prices for lands that, even though they were very low, were still above the appraisals available; on the other hand, the insufficient knowledge of the local operators responsible for managing the transactions.

* Use of the law

This mechanism refers to the fact that the buyers are better able to understand and manage the very complex laws related to the assignment of rural property rights in the country, as well as laws related to the protection of the assets and properties of the population displaced by the violence⁴⁰. For a more detailed analysis, see the report of the Superintendence of Notaries and Registry (2011), which describes a series of “tricks” that buyers use. Without fully agreeing with the form of labeling them, the actions indicate that the buyers had the capacity to use the aforementioned laws.

³⁹ In 2007, Incofer sold its past-due receivables to CISA, which in turn sold them to Convinoc, both private agencies (Historical Memory Group 2010: 168).

⁴⁰ These are measures taken by Municipal and Departmental Committees for Assistance to Populations Displaced by Violence, currently Committees of Transitional Justice, to protect a series of properties that were abandoned due to the violence from opportunistic transactions by third parties. There are two measures in effect for El Carmen de Bolívar and four for Turbo.

* Suffering the law

In contrast with the above mechanism, suffering the law refers to the lower capacity of the sellers to know about and use the highly complex laws related to the assignment of rural property rights in the country, in addition to laws related to the protection of assets and properties of the population displaced by the violence.

Part of the problem is that the people do not know what they are entitled to, which agencies to contact if they have debts, and additionally, in some cases, they sign documents in which they hand over possession over the lands, according to a report submitted by the Bolívar regional office of CNRR.” (Fundación Semana 2010, CNRR warns peasants)

In combination, these mechanisms reward the stronger party in the transaction, which is able to foresee the future benefits of its actions (circles of information), has mechanisms to mitigate the disadvantages and to make full use of the advantages associated with them (circles of power) and is able to use the laws in its favor (use of the law). As a result, the asymmetries in information create winners and losers in transactions that are strongly unequal.

3.3. Symmetric transactions.

Transactions of this type involve two parties who are in relatively equal conditions. Here, one of the parties becomes the owner de facto or by law of the property rights of the other party, as a result of an agreement made based on individual decisions regarding remaining in the territory, in the framework of the armed conflict.

[40]

SEQUENCE

They involve acquisitions and sales made by peasants over the long cycle of abandonment experienced by the municipality of El Carmen. They are transactions between peers and did not involve the use of force or differences of information between the parties. They may be understood to follow the following sequence: (i) the presence of direct or indirect threats by the armed actors prompts the land owner to sell it, (ii) a neighboring peasant or relative who is less risk averse or who perceives a lower risk from the threat, acquires it, (iii) a drop-by-drop transaction takes place that is ruled, in the essential parts, by customary rules.

ACTORS

The actors involved in transactions of this type are, on both sides, owners, under any legal arrangement, of the land, and from the region.

MECHANISMS

Transactions of this type involve a series of mechanisms that were already described and which in combination we will call “Customary”:

* Custom

Custom here refers to home-made rules, not necessarily in the framework of the ordinary legal code, but that form the basis for transactions between peers. These rules cover both what is exchanged in these deals, and the way the exchange is closed. Greater illustration of this point would require a specific investigation, but we can make some general statements here: On the one hand, the transactions do not seem to include the land, but the contents of the land, including its associated debts. For this reason, the quantification of the transaction is not based on the area of the property, but on the improvements that were made to it, which is why it may imply that the buyer takes on the debts acquired by the seller.

(...) I had a plot of land of 10 hectares, but I wasn't counting the land, but counting what was in the property. I have two hectares planted with yucca that is worth 300,000 pesos; the hut is worth 200,000, what I had there was worth 500, so OK, give me one million. Those were the kinds of arrangements that were made [...]. (Interview with Deisy Ortega and her daughter, El Carmen de Bolívar, March 21, 2014).

Also, the common way of formalizing the transactions is through purchase/sale contracts. Often the seller provides the buyer some documents to demonstrate ownership (an award resolution of INCORA or INCODER, for example), without any change in property ownership title taking place.

Property ownership around here is very irregular. Most of it is based on undocumented tradition, in which the sale is supported by statements from witnesses, which is the way it used to be arranged, and this culture continues up to the present” (Interview with Cecilia Torres, ORIP, May 6, 2014)

[41]

In combination, the types of land transactions in times of conflict, as derived from the analysis of the Case Studies of Turbo and El Carmen, can be summarized in the following typology:

Table 3.
Typology of land transactions

Type	Sequence	Actors	Mechanisms
0. Abandonment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Direct or indirect threat. 2. Protection of life. 3. De-peasantization. 	Armed groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Absence of protection/ presence of violence that threatens life and/or subsistence (environment). * Threat is stronger than attachment. * Configuration of alternatives.

Type		Sequence	Actors	Mechanisms
1. Asymmetric transactions	1.1. Derived from use of force	1. Abandonment. 2. Broker steps in. 3. Fraudulent transactions. 4. Legalization of the dispossession.	Armed groups, cattle ranchers, businesses, civil servants	* Alliances and coalitions * Privatization of security.
	1.2. Derived asymmetries in information	1. Abandonment 2. Reduction in conflict. 3. Interest of buyers. 4. Interest of sellers. 5. Mass transfer of ownership.	Buyers peasants	* Existence of "information circles" and "power circles" * Debts and economic downturn. * Administrative efficiencies. * Use of regulation. * Suffering of the regulation.
2. Symmetric transactions		1. Peasant seeks to sell land based on direct or indirect threats. 2. Peasant with different perception of purchase. 3. Transactions drop by drop ruled by tradition.	Peasants	* Absence of protection /presence of violence that threatens life and/or subsistence (environment). * Threat is stronger than attachment. * Configuration of alternatives. * Suffering of the regulation. * Customs.

[42]

Source: Prepared by the authors.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The comparative observation of the cases of Turbo and El Carmen de Bolívar supports a set of propositions:

P1. Abandonment is a necessary but not sufficient cause for appropriation (every appropriated property is an abandoned property, but not every abandoned property is appropriated). In the two observed cases, abandonment of the property occurred prior to its appropriation. However, there were differences in the sequences over time. In Turbo, the two phenomena occur quickly, whereas in the second case abandonment takes place over a long period. These differences are related to the specific types of transactions that take place in the region. In fact, the quick cycle of abandonment-appropriation seems to be associated to transactions involving violence, whereas the long cycle seems to be associated to transactions with asymmetric information. This indicates that passing from one phenomenon to the other is neither direct nor automatic; the use of force as a form of appropriation is the result of specific conditions close to the Hobbesian state of nature in which the armed actor can use and make the rules. On its part, the advantage of asymmetries takes place closer to market situations, in which the appropriating party uses the rule, but does not make it. This leads us to the next proposition.

P2. Each type of appropriation lies on a continuum that goes from violence to market. None of the types observed can be understood as a purely market-driven situation (let do, let pass) of supply and demand, or as purely a forceful dispossession situation (state of nature). All took place in environments with varying situations of violence. In this sense, both force and the market underlie the mechanisms that were identified in that they take place depending on the specific situations related to the actors involved and the type of domination exercised in the territory. In the case of Turbo, the first phenomenon has greater weight, whereas in El Carmen the second phenomenon has greater weight.

P3. Government regulations are the institutional spaces of the transactions. In all the cases, the actors involved used or suffered the regulation. Here, the government regulations acted as spaces for distribution that awarded a prize to the privileged. However, here we also observe particularities. In the case of Turbo, the regulations were also appropriated, and made, by the strong actors of the transactions. In the case of El Carmen, they were only used. A hypothesis that arises from this evidence is that the asymmetric transactions derived from the use of force are possible when the armed actor is itself an agent of the transactions. It may happen that violence and the market coexist uneasily, but this coexistence seems to add to one what is taken away from the other. In this way, the agents of one (armed groups) are different from the agents of the other (business investors).

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FOOTNOTES

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