When making peace is more difficult than making war

The reproduction of everyday peace in post-agreement Medellín, Colombia

Elsa van Zoest

4005678

Utrecht University

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Name of supervisor: Lauren Gould

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Cover image: pro-peace demonstrations in Bogotá, Colombia. Photograph by Diana Sanchez.

Abstract

In early December 2016, the Colombian Congress approved a revised peace deal between the government and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), officially bringing an end to fifty two years of conflict. While the peace agreement received international praise, it quickly became clear that perhaps the biggest challenge of all was still ahead. This thesis aims to understand how social practices of everyday peace are reproduced in a society where the population unexpectedly voted *against* the original peace agreement in a public referendum that took place on October 2, 2016. Through fieldwork conducted in Medellín, this thesis illustrates the undeniable gap between everyday reality and what peace could (and should) be like. By using the framework of structuration theory, it is argued that the war structure has not yet been broken. Rather, the discourse on peace and its institutionalization have proven to be inadequate and are contested by a discourse on war that is not only politically functional but also socially meaningful. As a result, a large majority of the people are not (yet) actively reproducing social practices of everyday peace. Scholars have pointed out that peace is most vulnerable in the short term, and the presidential elections of 2018 could seriously threaten the thorough implementation of the peace agreement. However, while 'peace' in itself has not yet been achieved, the country is one step closer to finally ending the violence that has characterized the country for so long. The war structure that exists within Colombia may not yet be broken, but cracks are beginning to show.

Key words: everyday peace, peacebuilding, post-conflict violence, Colombia, no war/no peace, structuration theory.

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List of Abbreviations

AUC	*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia
CFHBD	*Cese al Fuego y de Hostilidades Bilateral y Definitivo* Bilateral and definitive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities
DA	*Dejación de Armas* Laying down of arms
ELN	*Ejército de Liberación Nacional* National Liberation Army
EPL	*Ejército Popular de Liberación* People's Liberation Army
FARC	*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
MM&V	*Mecanismo de Monitoreo y Verifación* Mechanism of monitoring and verification
RRI	*Reforma Rural Integral* Integral rural reform

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'Ni guerra que nos asesine, ni paz que nos oprima'

'Not the war that kills us, nor the peace that oppresses us'

Introduction

The initial shock of the 'no' victory only lasted the night. The next day, and the entire following week, thousands of Colombians took the streets of all larger cities in the country in support of the peace process, demanding the government and the leftist rebels to resuscitate the deal after it was narrowly defeated. Contrary to most national and international news media polling, on October 2, 2016, Colombians voted 'no' to an agreement that would have ended fifty-two years of conflict with the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC). With a voter turnout under forty percent, the results were 50.21 per cent for 'no' to 49.79 per cent for 'yes' (Hayes 2017:1). Two months later, in early December 2016, the governing coalition of Juan Manuel Santos officially passed a revised peace agreement, bringing an end to four years of negotiations. However, it remains remarkable that a public referendum intended to legitimatize the peace process, might have done the exact opposite.

In most of the country the 'no' won by a razor-thin margin. However, in Medellín, Colombia's second largest city, it won with a comfortable 63 per cent. It would seem reasonable to expect that the possibility to end this decades-long violent struggle would mean a great deal to a country that has lost so much to that conflict. However, when it came down to it, countrywide less than 40 per cent of the population casted a vote, of which a small majority unexpectedly voted *against* the peace agreement. Therefore, this thesis seeks to uncover why structures and practices of everyday peace are not (yet) reproduced by local citizens in Medellín. Everyday peace is embedded in the belief that, for peace to be socially meaningful and sustainable, it needs the support of the majority of ordinary citizens. The empirical reality of peace beyond the absence of war has largely remained unexplored (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:389) but the risks of peace making and -building increases the insecurity and uncertainty of ordinary citizens who have the most to lose if war is renewed. In fact, the casualties of a 'failed peace' can be higher than the casualties of war (Stedman 1997:6).

In the case of Colombia, however, it were surprisingly these 'ordinary citizens' that turned against a peace agreement that could have ended decades of war. The purpose of this research, therefore, is to make a valuable contribution to the academic debate on public participation in peacebuilding processes. After all, in situations of insecurity, violence and conflict, it is ordinary people who mobilise and act to minimise risk, and to build structures and

practices of peace (Berents and McEvoy-Levy 2015:115). Through the use of structuration theory, it aims to understand how social practices of everyday peace are reproduced by local citizens in a society that, despite the signing of the peace agreement with the FARC, continues to be mired in insecurity, violence and chronic poverty. More specifically, this thesis, aims to contribute to our understanding of the reality of peace beyond the absence of war. Both structuration theory and the concept of everyday peace will be explained more in-depth in the theoretical chapter.

The failure of peace accords to bring about real and sustained change on a grassroots level is often ignored (Steenkamp 2011:360). For that reason, the social significance of this research is to give voice to a group of individuals who are not only often overlooked in analyses and discussions of peace(building), but who were also confronted with a peace agreement that a majority of the voters initially did not agree with. In doing so, the research responds to Brewer's (2010) call for a more human-focused approach to our accounts of peace and conflict.

The question it seeks to answer is:
How are social practices of everyday peace reproduced in the context of urban dissatisfaction in post-agreement Medellín, Colombia from October 2016 to May 2017?

The sub-questions are:

1a. How does the discourse constructed by the government aim to enforce peace?
1b. How is this discourse on peace contested by the opposition?

2a. How does the government aim to institutionalize peace through the implementation of the peace agreement?
2b. Which difficulties impede the implementation of the peace agreement?

3a. How do citizens in Medellín reproduce structures and practices of peace?
3b. Why do citizens in Medellín decide not to reproduce structures and practices of peace?

Methodology

In this section, I will elaborate on the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying this research and how this this has informed the research methods that were used to answer the research question. I will outline the research design and explain choices made regarding data

collection, methods and analysis. Last, I will address various challenges and limitations I encountered while doing field research and reflect on positionality.

Research Design

Given the explorative nature of my research puzzle, the research design is qualitative. While levels of violence are often measured through homicide rates, these statistics are not only unreliable due to under-reporting, they also fail to grasp the everyday reality of living in unsafe surroundings. Here, quantitative methodologies fail to capture how people *experience* violence while qualitative methodologies can give a voice to people's perception of violence (Doyle 2016:4). At the same time, however, it should be noted that qualitative data are not exact representations of life experiences, because of two reasons. First, data are the result of some sort of interaction between the participant and the researcher. Second, qualitative data depend "on the participants' ability to reflectively distinguish aspects of their own thoughts, ideas, observations and experiences and to effectively communicate what they perceive through language" (Boeije 2010:58).

Qualitative data will be used to align with the interpretivist epistemological stance: I aim to understand the local reality of peace beyond the absence of war from examining the interpretation of those involved within these conflict-affected societies. Scholars arguing from this interpretive epistemology claim that "we are to seek the *meaning* of action. Actions derive their meaning from shared ideas and rules of social life. The construction of meaning is historically and culturally specific, and as such can only be studied 'in context'" (Demmers 2017:17, emphasis added).

Ontologically, this thesis is positioned in the structurationist tradition. This view holds that structure and agency should not be viewed as oppositional but as mutually constitutive (Giddens 1984). Structuralism focuses on the power of structures and states that power is beyond the control of the individual. Individualism, by contrast, holds that social change is the result of action and interaction of individuals (Demmers 2017:17). Structuration theory moves beyond this structure-agency dichotomy by arguing that individuals are born into structures that both enable and constrain them. Individuals both produce structures and are produced by them. Importantly, "in historical processes, under the influence of repeated action, structures change" (Demmers 2017:128). Therefore, this tradition is in line with this research as it is embedded in the belief that individuals have the capacity to transform the existing war structure in Colombia. Related, this research aims to understand how citizens in Medellín challenge the hegemonic order and subsequently, why they decide (not) to do so.

Fieldwork for this research was carried out between the 6th of March and the 5th of May, 2017, in Medellín, Colombia. During this time, twenty-seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty local citizens and seven experts, such as journalists, academics, members of civil society organizations and NGO staff members who had valuable knowledge on the peace process in Colombia.[1] Interviews provide an opportunity for researchers "to learn about social life through the perspective, experience and language of those living it" (Boeije 2010:62). Through the use of semi-structured interviews, I have tried to increase the likelihood that all topics would be covered in each interview in more or less the same way. At the same time I have encouraged informants to share their own ideas and experiences to gain a better understanding of the complex reality that is everyday life in a conflict-affected society.

Participants for this research were found using two non-probability techniques, purposive sampling and snowball sampling. In purposive sampling, samples were drawn strategically from actors who were involved or have valuable knowledge about the peace process in Colombia. The snowball sample technique was used to complement the purposive sampling, by interviewing actors recommended from the purposive sample. This method is the 'most effective' in accessing hidden and/or hard to reach populations and can be "especially useful when the aim of the study is explorative, qualitative or descriptive" (Atkinson and Flint 2001). Additionally, participants were recruited through means of personal contacts, with the researcher travelling to conduct interviews when and where participants felt comfortable.

Importantly, the nature of the research and its purpose was explained in a style and language that was understandable for all participants in order to ensure that the participants were placed in a situation where they could decide, in full knowledge of any possible risks and benefits, whether they wanted to participate (Boeije 2010:45). While most expert interviews were conducted in English without any translation necessary, the large majority of interviews were conducted in Spanish. All translations were provided by the researcher. Moreover, all interviews and conversations referred to took place in Medellín, with the exception of one interview that took place at the field office of Peace Brigades International in Bogotá. Moreover, with the exception of the experts interviewed, all names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

The majority of the interviews were recorded and transcribed and, when necessary, translated. Three interviews, however, where conducted while walking through different parts of the city because informants either wanted to show me where they grew up or wanted to show me parts of the city that were possibly dangerous for me to visit by myself. Consequently, these

[1] See appendix A for an overview of the informants and the experts interviewed as part of this research.

interviews were not recorded but instead, I have constantly written down jot notes in order to record all data as accurately as possible. Taking notes not only enabled me to write down elaborated field notes later-on, but it also reminded my informants that research was occurring.

Additionally, field observations, informal conversations, document analysis of news reports and official documents, social media analysis, and extensive literature research were used to gain a better understanding of the peace process, and to validate and confirm data obtained from the interviews. In the preliminary phase of the research, document analysis and literature research were of valuable worth in helping me gain a better understanding of the violent conflict and following peace process in Colombia. Subsequently, a more general understanding of the theoretical framework was reached, enabling me to understand the Colombian peace process in a wider context of (local participation in) processes of peacebuilding. To answer the first sub-question on the contesting discourses, data from qualitative (expert) interviews was supplemented by document- and social media analysis. The second sub-question on the implementation of the peace agreement, in turn, was mainly answered by means of qualitative expert interviews and document analysis of news reports and official documents. Last, in answering the third sub-question on the reproduction of social practices of everyday peace, I draw upon field observations, informal conversations, qualitative (expert) interviews, and document- and social media analysis.

Subsequently, the data gathered in the field was systematically analysed and interpreted by means of coding. Coding is not only important for data management, it is also a way to explore and interpret the data. It plays a role in the reassembly of the data, so that the data are looked at from a new perspective and the research questions can be answered (Boeije 2010:119). Moreover, coding has helped me organise the raw data and identify key themes and recurring patterns. Using this method, I have identified the following main themes of my research:

- Distrust in governing institutions
- Everyday violence and insecurity
- Meaning of peace
- Threats to the peace agreement
- Voting behaviour (yes/no/no-vote)

I use the concepts identified within the analytical frame of everyday peace to *describe* what the empirical social reality in Medellín looks like. Thereafter, structuration theory enables me to explain *how* and *why* these social practices of everyday are reproduced. These analytic frames will be introduced in-depth in the next chapter.

Research limitations

Since limitations are inevitable in research, I would like to use this section to acknowledge various limitations of my research as presented in this thesis. As outlined in the previous section, the large majority of interviews were conducted in Spanish. While I had already conducted research in Spanish once before[2], doing research in a foreign language can prove to be challenging at times. For example, to some extent, it limits the spontaneity of the interview as my vocabulary in Spanish is more restricted to conflict and peace-related topics of conversation. Additionally, nuances may have gotten lost in the translation from Spanish to English. However, to prevent this I have made sure all Spanish interviews were recorded so that I could replay the interviews for clarification and to remember the exact words and phrases that were used by informants.

A second limitation of this research is that the sample is relatively limited which means these findings cannot be generalized based on this study alone. This particular research is based on a relatively small sample of Colombian citizens in Medellín and while I have attempted to talk to citizens of all different socio-economic layers of society it should be noted that Colombia, like every other country, consists of millions of different stories and experiences. Unfortunately, a more representative sample was beyond the scope of this research project due to time limitations. As a consequence, the findings presented in this thesis cannot be generated to all Colombians or even to all local citizens in Medellín.

Personal reflection

As a cultural 'outsider' in Medellín, I have made every effort to be aware of the implications of my own positionality. Being a young female student, some barriers of interaction were overcome by connecting with informants in a somewhat similar social position. Especially students from the University of Antioquia and people in my age-category were incredibly willing and even eager to help me. In fact, they were happy to introduce me to their friends, colleagues and housekeepers. While these experiences and interviews were invaluable for my research, it also made it difficult to find a 'bridge' towards older generations who may have had different experiences and perceptions in relation to the Colombian peace process. As a result, the majority of the informants of this research are in the age-category of 20-35, which may have led to a bias in voting behaviour. While I originally aimed to reach a more representative sample, ten out of twenty informants voted 'yes,' five voted 'no' and another five did not vote in the referendum at all.[3] This overrepresentation of 'yes' voters is closely related to my

[2] Research on perceptions of safety and violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché, Guatemala from March until May 2016 as part of my bachelor degree in cultural anthropology at Utrecht University.
[3] See appendix A

connection to the University of Antioquia and therefore, to my own social position as a young, female student.

Second, I think it is important to acknowledge an underlying assumption that is closely related to my personal morals and beliefs. Having followed the peace process through the eyes of a Colombian friend in Bogotá for months, prior to arriving in Medellin, I could simply not understand why a majority of the people had 'suddenly' turned against the peace agreement. My friend was devastated and therefore, so was I. It was not until I was settled in Medellín that I started to grasp the idea of people not voting against *peace*, but 'simply' voting against the terms of the peace agreement and, importantly, that this 'surprising' turn of events maybe was not all that surprising. My initial state of confusion and disbelief, however, may have unconsciously shaped my research.

Third, especially informants from lower socio-economic status were often somewhat intimidated by my position as 'researcher' who had come 'all the way' from the Netherlands. More than once, informants expressed a sense of uncertainty because they thought they would not be able to help me because they did not know all that much about politics or the peace process. Of course, I explained that I was highly interested in *all* perspectives, that there was no 'right' or 'wrong' when it came to their answers and that their opinion was as interesting and relevant to my research as any other. However, in contrast to critical university students who evidently had their opinion ready and were strongly aware of any recent developments in relation to the peace process, this was significantly less the case when it came to informants from lower socio-economic status. It is here that I was confronted with the so-called 'double hermeneutic' which holds that researchers within this tradition are trying to gain knowledge by making an *interpretation* of how actors *understand* their social world. But the way in which people construct meaning can be creative and therefore unpredictable (Demmers 2017:17) which is why it important to recognize that the researcher can have an influence on the creation of knowledge in the sense that "the interview process may stimulate the participant to reflect on or articulate ideas for the first time, or in a new way" (Curtis and Curtis 2011:48).

Chapter outline

This thesis aims to understand how social practices of everyday peace are reproduced after Colombian citizens were confronted with a 'peace' that a majority of the voters did not agree with, as became evident in the voting results of the referendum of October 2nd of 2016. To do so, it provides a case-study of Colombian men and women living in Medellín, where no less than 63 per cent of the voters casted a 'no' vote. To structure the different components of the research, this thesis is divided into two parts. The first part consists of two chapters, the theoretical framework and the historical context. In the theoretical framework, I will outline the

analytic frames and explain important concepts connected to processes of peacebuilding. Thereafter, in the historical context, I will provide an overview of relevant background information on the Colombian violent conflict and on the specific research location, being the city of Medellín.

In the second part of this thesis, the empirical data collected during a period of field research will be presented and linked to the theoretical framework. In chapter three, the political functionality of the prevailing war discourse and the counter-discourse on peace will be discussed. Thereafter, the content of the peace agreement will be outlined. Chapter four first focuses on the difficulties of peacebuilding 'in reality', before turning to the (lack of) social meaning of the contesting discourses in order to explain voting behaviour by means of resonance. In chapter five, the reality of 'peace' for local citizens in Medellín will be discussed. Moreover, three examples will be given of how citizens in Medellín have carefully started reproducing social practices of everyday peace, despite the fact that everyday life in Medellín is still characterized by violence and insecurity. Subsequently, in the concluding remarks, the most important theories will be iterated and linked to the empirical date, in order to come to a conclusion that answers the research question. Appendix A is divided into two parts. First, it includes a list of all informants, that provides relevant background information, and is listed in alphabetical order. Second, a list of all experts that were interviewed is included.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

This chapter is divided into two parts. First, the academic debate related to local participation in peacebuilding processes and post-conflict violence will be outlined. Instead of employing 'minimalist' or 'maximalist' indicators of peace, it is argued that it is essential to explore a more multidimensional picture of peace in order to understand the reality of peace beyond the absence of war. After all, the meaning of 'peace' in a society that (narrowly) *rejected* a peace agreement has largely remained unexplored. Accordingly, more research is needed to understand how everyday peace can be achieved on a local level after an official peace agreement has been signed. Second, I will introduce and explain the analytic frame that was used to inform the research puzzle and to study the empirical data.

1.1 Academic Debate

1.1.1 The local turn in peacebuilding

Public participation is widely regarded as "the elixir of western democracy" (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:72). Through participation comes legitimacy, and with legitimacy comes a discourse to justify a certain course of action. In recent years, 'local participation' and 'local ownership' have become prominent themes in relation to peacebuilding processes. Peace-building can be defined as "the process where in a post-war situation a (new) political system manifests through the interactions of state and societal actors" (Krampe 2016:55). The durability of peace is highly dependent on the legitimacy of the emerging post-war order, and subsequently, on society perceiving this post-war order as legitimate. As such, the aim of peace-building processes is to move post-war states and societies towards a self-sustaining peace, a situation where external support in no longer necessary. Interestingly, while scholars often discuss the legitimacy of external actors in academic work on peacebuilding, "it is ultimately internal legitimacy between the state and society that determines the stability of states" (Krampe 2016:55). However, people are often written out of the major decisions that surround war, peace and development – partly due to the media's need to compress thousands of individual experiences into a single narrative (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:72).

Popular participation, both voluntary and involuntary, is required in conflict as many conflicts involve the mass mobilisation of people whether through rallies, the formation of popular movements or recruitment into militant or militant support groups (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:75). Consequently, war and (violent) conflict become, in many cases, events involving large numbers of people either as participants or as active supports. War and conflict, then, may contrast sharply with the situation that prevails during peace negotiations. Frequently, the opportunities for popular participation in processes of peacebuilding are largely absent.

Populations that previously felt ‘involved’ in a war may find peace or peace negotiations a much less inclusive process (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:76).

Indeed, opportunities for public involvement in peace negotiations may be limited to public demonstrations to signify a desire for peace or an end to violence, a referendum on a peace accord or new constitution, or the election of a post-peace accord government. Given the circumstances, these opportunities may be valuable, yet they can be best described as one-off events rather than sustained processes that allow for continued and meaningful relationships between citizens and wider political processes. For many people, a peace process may be something that occurs somewhere else (in a capital city) or their only connection with it may be through the media. There may be few opportunities to affect what Harold Saunders calls “a public peace process,” in which the population can have substantive input (Saunders 1999 cited in Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:78). The pro-participation consensus is based on a belief that people can become stakeholders in projects and feel that as a result of their investment they have ownership in a process. As a result, locally ‘owned’ processes are more legitimate and more likely to succeed because it can cause the project to suit local needs and aspirations (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:78). There has, however, been criticism that many participatory schemes are superficial and less empowering than their advocates suggest.

Certain phases of development and peacebuilding processes may be more open to public participation than others. Necessarily, the stabilization phase might actively exclude people and concentrate power in the hands of a few. Yet, at some stage, all peacebuilding processes require legitimacy. The ways in which political leaders seek to build and maintain legitimacy are crucial. Many post-conflict societies have struggled to find a political process that sustains public interest and participation. High levels of voter turnout in elections may be replaced by more modest levels in the aftermath of violent conflict. In Guatemala, for example, voter turnout is low and declining. Poor social provision means that many potential voters do not see the relevance of the electoral system to their lives (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:80).

1.1.2 Post-conflict violence

Over several decades, scholars have shown that the durability of peace is highly dependent on the legitimacy of the emerging post-war order. This is because the legitimacy of state actors is a crucial aspect of the political stability of states (Krampe 2016:53). Scholars have pointed out that peace is most vulnerable in the short term and that the key to a lasting peace is to survive the first few years after the signing of the agreement. While the agreement is likely to strengthen over time, it is difficult to survive the short term and a high proportion of peace agreements collapse within the first few years (Reiter 2015:90). It should be noted, however, that the challenge of establishing a stable peace after civil conflict truly is a formidable one. Of the 105

countries that suffered a civil war between 1945 and 2013, fifty-nine countries experienced a relapse into violent conflict after peace had been established (Caplan and Hoeffler 2017:134). Often, (spoiler) violence is the reason for post-agreement collapse. Spoiling refers to "actions taken to disrupt, undermine, hinder or delay a peace process" (Reiter 2015:92) and this type of violence seems prevalent in most, if not all, post-conflict situations (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:138). However, while the majority of the work on spoiling assumes that spoilers pose a significant threat to the maintenance of peace, violence can also remind all actors involved of the costs of fighting and refocus energies on achieving peace. This way, spoiling can contribute to a stronger peace by forcing changes to the agreement or through the inclusion of new actors (Reiter 2015:91).

A focus on violence after peace accords or 'post-conflict' violence has recently emerged as a new niche of conflict research. Authors find that after war there is by no means peace, if peace is defined by the presence or absence of violence. Recent studies point out that some post-conflict societies face levels of violence that even exceed death statistics in times of violent conflict (Schuld 2013:61). The discourse on post-conflict violence is embedded in a wider body of literature discussing the grey-zone of 'no war, no peace' societies. According to Nordstrom, a time of 'no war, no peace' takes place when "military actions occur that in and of themselves would be called 'war' or 'low-intensity warfare', but are not labelled as such because they are hidden by a peace process no one wants to admit is failing" (2004:166). Instead, acts of war are referred to as 'police actions' or 'accidents' or they are simply not called anything at all. This helps to explain why "in some countries war keeps 'breaking out' time and time again. It is the same war, a war that never ended - except on paper" (Nordstrom 2004:170).

Despite a ceasefire or a peace agreement, societies may continue to be mired in insecurity, chronic poverty and the persistence of the factors that sparked the civil war in the first place (Mac Ginty 2010:145). It is often expected that the peace process will bring development in its various forms, including improved living standards, the transformation of political culture, and increased economic growth. Implicit in these expectations is the assumption that peace will bring about improved physical security for the population of the conflict-affected society. Yet, according to Steenkamp, "post-conflict societies globally, from Northern Island to El Salvador and Guatemala to South Africa, show that physical security does not automatically accompany a peace agreement" (2011:358).

When operationalising and empirically measuring how 'peaceful' post-civil war societies are, many scholars employ 'minimalist' or 'maximalist' indicators for peace. On the one hand, a 'minimalist' notion of peace simply implies the absence of war. A 'maximalist' notion of peace, on the other hand, implies the absence of different types of structural violence (Themnér and

Ohlson 2014:62). However, merely looking at the frequency of peace agreements that lead to the ending of large-scale violence does not tell us much about the *reality* or *quality* of peace beyond the absence of war. Despite this, the great majority of scholarly work within peace and conflict research is still predominantly concerned with explaining why peace sometimes fails and sometimes succeeds. Caplan and Hoeffler, for example, state that “all failed peaces are alike; every successful peace succeeds in its own way” (2017:136). Only more recently scholars have started to explore a more multidimensional picture of peace and its implications for our understanding of the local realities of these societies (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:368). After all, “reaching a peace deal is not the same as reaching peace” (Mac Ginty et al. 2007:1) and the current focus on the simplified dichotomy of ‘failed’ or ‘successful’ peace accords, therefore, fails to capture this complex reality. Additionally, this simplified dichotomy is unable to explain why some post-war societies appear to face greater obstacles than others in establishing a sustainable peace.

Recent years have seen increasing attention placed on the “everyday” and “the local” as a site for peacebuilding and resistance (Berents and McEvoy-Levy 2015:115). A focus on the everyday can recognise those who are often overlooked in analyses of peace and allows exploration of how the individual is able to negotiate around violence. Berents and McEvoy-Levy state that the space of the everyday is a political space, “where those who are most marginal and written out of formal political discourses, find collective meaning and organise in response to conflict, violence and exclusion” (2015:116). Moreover, in situations of insecurity and conflict, it is ordinary people who mobilise and act to minimise risk, and to build structures and practices of peace (Berents and McEvoy-Levy 2015:116).

Indeed, societal rebuilding and peace making start in the midst of war’s worst with ordinary people. What do people do when they have lost everything to a war that they were never armed to fight? Few turn to armed vengeance. Instead, Nordstrom notes that “most try to find safe farmlands, set up health care centres, open schools and find homes for children orphaned and dislocated by war. And they do this on their own, as individuals, without support from governing institutions” (2004;179). Importantly, “while some people might engage in these acts for profit and power, and some commit serious abuses while doing so, the key point is that most people do not. People stop war by creating peace” (Nordstrom 2004:179). Yet often these people are overlooked in discussions of peacebuilding (Berents and McEvoy-Levy 2015:115).

1.2 Analytic Frame

The space of the everyday is, thus, increasingly viewed as a site for peacebuilding and resistance. However, existing literature on peacebuilding is often based on the assumption that

ordinary people want to participate in processes of peacebuilding. So, what happens when a majority of the people does not agree with the peace agreement that has been achieved? In the case of Colombia, it were surprisingly these 'ordinary citizens' that turned against a peace agreement that could have ended five decades of war. Therefore, to understand how social practices of everyday peace are reproduced in a society that was confronted with a 'peace' agreement that a majority of the people voted *against*, two analytic frames will be used: structuration theory and 'everyday peace'. First, structuration theory enables me to explain *how* agents are able to modify structures of war through means of discourse, institutionalization and social practices. Subsequently, I draw upon 'everyday peace' to describe what the empirical social reality in Medellín looks like and *why* people do or do not participate in the reproduction of social practices of peace. The concepts that constitute the analytic framework of this research will be discussed in depth throughout the thesis. The aim of this section therefore, is to briefly introduce these concepts, define them and argue how they relate to each other.

1.2.1 Structuration theory

The relationship between human action and social structure is at the heart of social theory. Individualist, agency-based approaches emphasize that human beings and their organizations are "purposeful actors whose actions help reproduce or transform the society in which they live." In contrast, structure-based theories understand society as "made up of social relationships, which structure the interaction between these purposeful actors" (Wendt 1987 in Jabri 1996:76). However, in *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (1984) Anthony Giddens outlines his idea of the duality of structure. Structuration theory is concerned with the "conditions governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of systems" (Jabri 1996:4). In this view, structure and agency are seen as each constituting and complementing the other, meaning that the one cannot exist without the other. Individuals can act purposively, but they are not completely free to do so. Instead, social structures both enable and constrain us. "These social structures do not exist independently of us: we make them, and are made by them" (Demmers 2017:127). Individuals recreate through their actions the structures that in turn constrain those actions. Importantly, for Giddens, there is a creative aspect of human action: we have agency and therefore the capacity to modify structures. It is agents who bring structure into being and it is structure which produces the possibility of agency. Indeed, "in historical processes, under the influence of repeated action, structures change" (Demmers 2017:128).

According to Demmers, we are born into societies which are organized along certain rules of social life. These rules of social life can be viewed as what Giddens calls structures. Often, we are not aware of the rules of social life we live by. Instead, sometimes the rules that

tell us 'how to do' social life are so deeply embedded in time and space that we have come to see them as natural and self-evident (2017:128). Most people simply engage in their daily routines without really thinking about it. However, the rules of social life become manifest and visible to us in discourses and institutions: in stories about signification and legitimation, and in the tangible products of the institutionalization of these values and norms. Power is thus a key component of all social systems and some agents can draw on more resources than others as they seek to achieve desired outcomes (Demmers 2017:128-129).

Power "consists of the ability to make others inhabit your story of their reality" (Gourevitch 1998:48) and is constituted through discourse and is supported by symbolic and material resources. The power of media and governments, then, is largely based on their capacity to control the language in which people discuss societal problems. People need to make sense of the overwhelming complexity of life, and embrace and (re)construct modes of discourse and codes of conduct to do so (Demmers 2017:129). War and violent conflict are, for example, social phenomena emerging through, and constitutive of, social practices which have, through time and across space, rendered war an institutional form that is largely seen as an inevitable and at times acceptable form of human conduct (Jabri 1996:4). The idea of war as a routine and social phenomenon can help to explain why both decisionmakers and audiences can shift relatively easy into what Richardson (1948) calls a "war mood." This is the sudden and widespread support for what that takes hold of entire populations. For Jabri, the war mood car arise because the language of war draws upon deeply embedded discourses of moral legitimacy and superiority (Demmers 2017:131).

However, to turn it around, since structure and agency are mutually constitutive, actors can act to change the war structure in which they operate. Since we have agency, we can emancipate ourselves from dominant rules of social life and create new discourses of peace, which in turn could serve to institutionalize a context of peace as a social continuity. According to Demmers (2017:133), there are many definitions of discourse but they all share the idea that discourses are stories about social reality. However, discourses are not mere words or descriptions. Instead, "they actively construct a version of things. They do not describe things, they *do* things" (Jabri 1996:95). These discourses of peace, established in the public arena, reject exclusionary discourses of 'us and them' dichotomies in favour of a tolerance of diversity and recognize a difference as a formative component of subjectivity (Jabri 1996:185). Put simply, as long as enough people participate in the discourse of peace, it will become an alternative structure that can legitimize decisions for peace. However, this seems to imply that a "hegemony of peace" needs to be not only *socially* meaningful but also *politically* functional (Demmers 2017:132; emphasis added).

The concept of resonance, as used by Benford and Snow, will be used to analyse the social meaningfulness of both discourses and its contested institutionalization. Resonance is relevant to the issue of the effectiveness of framings, thereby attending to the question of why some framings seem to be effective while others do not (2000:619). Importantly, while Benford and Snow use resonance especially to explain mobilization, here it will be used to explain the effectiveness of discourses to influence voting behaviour. Benford and Snow make a distinction between two sets of interacting factors that account for variation in degree of frame resonance: credibility of the proffered frame, and its relative salience. First, the credibility of any framing is a function of three factors: frame consistency, empirical credibility, and credibility of the frame articulators or claimsmakers. Frame consistency refers to the consistency between articulated beliefs, claims and actions. Inconsistency can manifest itself in terms of apparent contradictions (Benford and Snow 2000:620). Empirical credibility refers to the apparent fit between the framings and events of the world. Importantly, claims do not have to be factual or valid to be read as 'real' indicators of the diagnostic claims. The perceived credibility of frame articulators has to do with status and knowledge. The greater the status and/or perceived expertise of the frame articular, the more plausible and resonant the claims (Benford and Snow 2000:621).

Second, the resonance of a frame or discourse is affected by its salience to targets of mobilization. Again, three dimensions of salience have been identified: centrality, experiential commensurability, and narrative fidelity. Centrality refers to how central the beliefs, ideas, and values communicated through the frame are to the lives of those who are targeted for mobilization (Benford and Snow 2000:621). Experiential commensurability has to do with whether the frame resonates with the personal, everyday experiences of those who are targeted for mobilisation. Lastly, narrative fidelity refers to the extent to which a frame corresponds with the targets' culture (Benford and Snow 2000:622).

As stated before, resonance will be used to analyse the social meaningfulness of the discourse on war, as well as the discourse on peace and its institutionalization. But whose peace are we talking about?

1.2.2 Everyday Peace

Everyday peace is defined by Mac Ginty as "routinized practices used by individuals and collectives as they navigate their way through life in a deeply divided society that may suffer from ethnic or religious cleavages and be prone to episodic direct violence in addition to chronic or structural violence" (2014:549). Everyday peace, then, involves conflict avoidance and conflict-minimizing practices, but it can also go beyond so-called coping strategies to encompass more ambitious activities that can challenge the fixity of conflicts (Mac Ginty

2014:549). It is precisely this last aspect of everyday peace that this thesis focuses on. After all, according to Ring, "we cannot view this everyday life, this peaceful coexistence, as the static context or backdrop against which 'things' - like riots or violence - happen. Rather, peace itself is the product of a relentless creative labour" (2006:3). Indeed, as mentioned earlier, in situations of insecurity, violence, and conflict it is ordinary people who mobilise and act to minimise risk, and to build structures and practices of peace (Berents and McEvoy-Levy 2015:116).

Everyday peace connects with debates on resilience and the ability of individuals and communities to cope with stressful situations (Mac Ginty 2014:550). However, above all, everyday peace is a form of agency and, thus, suggest "not merely that something can be done to change things but that *we* can do something" (Gamson 1995:90). In the context of this case-study, this holds that ordinary citizens can partake in social practices of everyday peace and that, when enough people participate in these social practices, the war structure can transform into a structure of peace. Social practices, in turn, can be defined as "relatively stabilized forms of social activity" (Fairclough 2003:205). More broadly, social practices include "routinized ways in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood." Some kind of recurrence is often included in definitions of social practices. Therefore, it is important to note that, even though the FARC and the Colombian government have been engaged in negotiations since 2012, the public referendum took place more recently, on October 2, 2016. For that reason, *all* social practices that were aimed at the reproduction of everyday peace, and that my informants participated in, are included in this research. This holds, for example, that participation in a student-led demonstration as a 'one-time' thing, too, is seen as relevant to the research. Hence, because to the relative short time-frame, social practices that were aimed at 'transforming structures of war and violence' also include more 'sporadic' forms of social activity in this research.

Moreover, I argue that Colombia does not categorize as a divided society in terms of ethnicity or religion. Instead, I will tweak the analytic frame slightly from its original purpose, by applying everyday peace in the context of political conflict. Colombian (civil) society is deeply divided along political lines, as became particularly evident in the months leading up to the referendum. Going far beyond the political institutions and party politics, the entire civilian society has been divided, not only as 'supporters' or 'opponents' of the peace process, but also as part of a more general political polarization that is the result of decades of (political) violence.

Everyday peace enables the construction of bottom-up indicators, meaning that it can help us understand the lived reality of peace at a local level. As mentioned earlier, 'peace' is often simply understood as the ending of war. At a local level, however, the prospect of peace is often linked to better quality of life, increased security and more opportunities for work and

development (Berents 2014:362). Everyday peace is thus highly context-dependent and utilizes indicators that local people already use to determine if there is peace. After all, while a cessation of hostilities, of course, is a crucial aspect of building peace in any country, it is not sufficient to change the relationship of the population with violence. Instead, to bring about real and sustained change on a local level, peacebuilders first have to understand what peace truly means to local citizens. In other words, reaching 'peace' at an elite level is not enough to reach a sustainable and long-lasting peace that is embraced and supported by a majority of the people. Or, in the words of Finnström, "the silence of guns does not mean peace" (2008:12).

However, it should be noted that, because everyday peace enables the researcher to construct bottom-up indicators, this also means that clear indicators of how to systematically research everyday peace on a local level do not (yet) exist. In other words, because everyday peace is highly context-dependent, it is difficult to compare indicators of everyday peace to other case-studies. In some cases, for example, it might not even be possible to participate in practices of everyday peace due to (the threat of) direct violence (Mac Ginty 2014:553). Hence, this research hopes to contribute to the development of indicators to research everyday peace in an orderly and systematic manner that will enable comparison between different case-studies on a higher, theoretical level. Based on extensive literature review as outlined in this chapter, the following theoretically-informed research question has been formulated:

How are social practices of everyday peace reproduced in the context of urban dissatisfaction in post-agreement Medellín, Colombia from October 2016 to May 2017?

The sub-questions are:

1a. How does the discourse constructed by the government aim to enforce peace?

1b. How is this discourse on peace contested by the opposition?

2a. How does the government aim to institutionalize peace through the implementation of the peace agreement?

2b. Which difficulties impede the implementation of the peace agreement?

3a. How do citizens in Medellín reproduce structures and practices of peace?

3b. Why do citizens in Medellín decide not to reproduce structures and practices of peace?

Chapter 2: Historical Context

While Colombia is hailed as the longest standing democracy in Latin America, contemporary political history shows a legacy of violent conflict within Colombia's borders. For more than five decades Colombia has suffered a relentless and devastating war that has taken a greater toll than many major wars around the world (Maldonado 2017:1). The assassination of the liberal party's presidential candidate Jorge Eliezer Gaitán sparked not only a ten-hour riot in Bogotá that killed approximately 5000 people but also a decade of violence between the liberals and the conservatives that lasted until 1958. In these ten years of civil war, a time-period simply known as '*la violencia*', more than 300.000 Colombians lost their lives. During the political conflict, both sides armed themselves – which resulted in the formation of guerrilla groups on the side of the liberals and the emergence of paramilitary groups on the side of the conservatives. One of the peasant guerrillas who emerged from the liberal uprising was Pedro Antonio Marín – who later became one of the chief commanders of the FARC. To bring an end to the violence, both political parties agreed on a deal called 'the National Front.' As part of this deal, the two parties rotated the presidency over the next 16 years. But the arrangement did nothing to resolve the underlying land conflicts and violence continued in the countryside (Molano 2000:26). Out of the chaos of '*la violencia'*, the FARC arose (Sherman 2015:455).

The catalyst for armed struggle by the FARC was to challenge the Colombian government's economic and land reform program of the 1960s. In essence, "the Colombian government interpreted land tenure laws in a way that dispossessed hundreds of thousands of peasants from their lands, turning ownership rights over to agricultural industrialists" (Hayes 2017:2). Seeing that it would be impossible to resolve the economic grievances rooted in wealth and land ownership inequality using legal means, the opposition declared an armed rebellion (Hayes 2017:1). During the same period, other guerrilla forces such as the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the People's Liberation Army (EPL) were created (Molano 2000:26). Between 1970 and 1982 the FARC grew from having 500 members to a small army of 3000 people. The guerrillas were especially strong in remote areas where they often constituted the only authority. During this period, many students, intellectuals, workers and peasant leaders joined the guerrilla struggle (Molano 2000:26). Through acts of terrorism, targeted assassinations and kidnappings, the FARC became one of the strongest and most violent leftist guerrilla groups on the continent (Fisher and Meitus 2016:1).

Cocaine became a prominent commodity in Colombia in the 1980s as drug traffickers who previously dealt in marijuana transitioned to cocaine, which was easier to transport and

more financially lucrative. The FARC was initially opposed to the drug trafficking trade as they considered the illicit drug economy to be counterrevolutionary. However, as coca farming became more prevalent, the FARC renounced their opposition to illicit crops and became an active participant in the illicit drug economy. From the early 2000s on, the FARC derived approximately 48-60 per cent of its $350 million annual income from drug trafficking alone (Fisher and Meitus 2016:2). The FARC's military victories caused growing security concerns which helped sweep Álvaro Uribe into power in 2002 upon a platform promising to destroy the guerrilla movement. Uribe's policies, combined with military reforms, generated a wave of (military) successes against the FARC. A one-time war tax that raised around US$800 million gave the Colombian military the resources needed for a successful reformation.

While the guerrillas have never come close to overthrowing the government, they have sustained five decades of armed struggle and continued to elude the state's persistent offensives and far superior military capabilities. As a result, many citizens view the government as an equal perpetrator of violence and land dispossession, with little to offer in terms of stability and security. The conflict has resulted in over seven million internally displaced persons and over 220.000 lives lost, of which approximately 80 per cent civilians (Hayes 2017:3). During the internal conflict, three presidential candidates, one general attorney, one minister of justice, 200 judges, 175 city mayors and sixteen congressman have been murdered (Maldonado 2017:2) and over seven million internally displaced persons (Hayes 2017:3).

After over twenty failed attempts, on October 2, 2016, Colombian voters rejected a referendum on the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC that was the result of four years of negotiations in Havana, Cuba. Contrary to most international news media polling, the 'no' vote won by a tight margin. With a voter turnout under forty percent, the results were 50.21 per cent for 'no' to 49.79 per cent for 'yes' (Hayes 2017:1). In early December, 2016, the governing coalition of Juan Manuel Santos passed a revised peace agreement.

2.1 Case-study Medellín

With an estimated population of 2.5 million as of 2017, Medellín is the second-largest city in Colombia. It is the capital of the Antioquia department, located in the northwest of the country. According to reports by the National Centre for Historical Memory, Medellín is one of the twenty municipalities most affected by the Colombian armed conflict. Between 1940 and 1960, migration from rural areas intensified as victims from '*la violencia*' sought security in Medellín. The new migrants often arrived lacking resources to obtain housing, forcing them to illegally

occupy the hillsides and to live in slums and squatter settlements (Doyle 2016:5). Around the same time, flourishing guerrilla movements coincided with the emergence of gangs. By the end of the 1980s, criminal gangs discovered Peruvian coca paste and turned into giant cartels of which the most famous one was located in Medellín under Pablo Escobar. Consequently, for most of the period between 1985 and 2014, Medellín was the most violent city in the country, and one of the most violent in the world according to its homicide rate (Giraldo-Ramírez and Preciado-Restrepo 2015:1). In 1991 Medellín was portrayed as the "most dangerous city in the world" with over 6500 homicides that year. At the time, this level of urban violence was only exceeded in the world by Beirut, Lebanon, which was in a civil war (Doyle 2016:6). While the death of Pablo Escobar in 1993 did precede the fall of the Medellín cartel, the level of violence did not diminish. Instead, in 1994, the city was full of activity conducted by various violent actors (Giraldo-Ramírez and Preciado-Restrepo 2015:3). In the following years, high crime rates were caused by the emergence of gangs, drug cartels, urban militias, guerrillas and paramilitary forces.

2.1.1 Medellín: 'half a miracle'

More recently, however, the security situation in Medellín has drastically improved. In 2002, the newly elected president, Alvaro Uribe, adopted an approach of force against the left-wing guerrillas and an approach of negotiation with right-wing paramilitaries which was part of a new security policy that he called 'democratic security' (Doyle 2016:7). A series of state-led operations were carried out in Medellin's *comuna 13*with the goal of 'pacifying' it. Operation Orion resulted in mass disappearances, deaths, forced recruitments and a general shredding of the social infrastructure (Phillips-Amos 2016:101). Even though the operation was successful in chasing remaining FARC militia out of the city, the power vacuum was quickly filled by right-wing paramilitaries and by the end of 2002, approximately 70 per cent of the city was under the control of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC). A year later, in 2003, the government started negotiations with AUC combatants which led to a demobilization program that took place in Medellín. More than 850 combatants pledged to re-enter society as peaceful civilians and the program quickly gained national and international recognition as "an innovative model of intervention to deal with situations of complex violence" (Doyle 2016:7).

Around the same time, a newly elected mayor Sergio Fajardo increased public investment and extended public services to lower socio-economic neighbourhoods. These 'integral urban projects' brought together transport, education, health and security infrastructure. Moreover, these urban development policies included initiatives that integrated

the poorest and most violent hillside neighbourhoods into the city centre in the valley below. A cable car system, linked to the modern metro, moves tens of thousands of hillside residents each day. Architectural projects, including libraries and schools, have been built amid the improvised homes of poorer citizens to address the 'historical social debt' owed to these marginalized neighbourhoods (Doyle 2016:7). The building of the *biblioteca de españa*, for example, has been praised and awarded for its chosen location in Santo Domingo: to achieve optimal social impact, city planners decided to build the library in a neighbourhood that was highly affected by the violence of the 1980s. Additionally, the local government invested in cultural parks and public spaces. Participatory planning and budgeting programs aimed to bring the decision-making closer to civil society and enabled community kitchens and football parks to be built in the communities. Instead of being impartial or even ashamed about their housing situation, citizens started to develop a greater sense of communal belonging (Brodzinsky 2014).

This chapter has provided an overview of important background information on the violent history of Colombia and the security situation in Medellín. Now, turning to the empirical chapters of this thesis, it is important to emphasize that processes of peacebuilding are shaped by the context in which they are taking place. For example, as will become evident in the following chapters, the high number of failed peace attempts to achieve peace have severely influenced the most recent peace process, as well as the perceptions of citizens on peace. It becomes impossible, then, to understand what 'peace' means without including what caused war in the first place. Instead, the complexity of everyday peace can only be understood in relation to its broader context.

Chapter 3: Political Functionality

Discourses are stories about social reality. Instead of being mere words or descriptions, 'they actively construct a version of things. They do not describe things, they *do* things' (Jabri 1996:95). More specifically, although a classifying term such as 'terrorism' is the product of our imagination, this does not make them imaginary. People perceive certain classifications as real and consequently, they act upon them, which may have very real consequences. Moreover, discourses are politically functional, meaning that they are not necessarily true. Instead, they have to be socially meaningful to resonate. Therefore, this chapter discusses the political discourse on war, which has enabled the maintenance of a 'war structure' in Colombia for over half a century. Subsequently, the discourse of the yes-campaign will be presented. This discourse was established by president Santos and his governing coalition with the aim of convincing Colombian citizens about the importance of the peace process with the FARC and, subsequently, more broadly, to modify the existing war structure into a more peaceful structure. It should be noted, however, that various arguments that are drawn upon in these discourses are not necessarily a direct result of the most recent peace process. Instead, they (partly) rely on a way of speech that has been employed for a longer time. Thereafter, the political functionality of both discourses will be discussed, especially in light of power and the upcoming presidential elections. Lastly, the content of the peace agreement will be outlined.

3.1 No to Peace

'Of course we want peace – but at what cost?' – Caesar[4]

In 1983, the father of Alvaro Uribe was killed by the FARC in an attempted kidnapping. Ever since, Uribe has been a fierce opponent of negotiations with the guerrillas and his political career has been dedicated to defeating them through military victory. The discourse that was established by Uribe's political party, *Centro Democrático*, was therefore not only an important asset during his time in office, but also in the months leading up to the referendum. This discourse was built upon four main arguments.

First, the FARC was framed as the absolute enemy that was untrustworthy and could not be negotiated with. By saying that the FARC was trying to win time to increase their power and regroup, Uribe managed to create high levels of distrust in the country. Moreover, instead of speaking about a political conflict, Uribe and his followers constantly spoke about a terrorist threat. Therefore, the only way to end the violence was to annihilate the FARC through military victory. According to Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, associate professor at the Faculty of Law and

[4] Author's interview with Caesar, 18-03-17.

Social Sciences at *Universidad de Antioquia*, former president Uribe was very successful in the way he addressed the media and the way in which he talked to the people. During his presidency from 2002 to 2010, he created an image of himself as a leader who will 'save all people, provide security and give strength to the people.'[5] Consequently, to this day, Uribe remains one of the most powerful men in Colombia.

> Uribe, his followers and the media all repeated the same statements. They use the same language, [..] kept using the same images of the most difficult times of the war and they kept the anger alive during the time of the negotiations. It caused people to think: how can we negotiate with these people after what they did?[6]

This corresponds to the first dualism of what Jabri calls "the language of war." By referring to the FARC as terrorists, they are constructed as the enemy other, displaying a clear distinction between *us* and *them.* The self is associated with courage and civilization while the 'other' is represented as barbaric and diabolical (Jabri 1996:108).

Second, Uribe claimed that negotiating with the FARC meant handing over power to the guerrillas. Uribe created opposition to the peace process by shaping Santos' government as a *Castro-Chavista* threat for the country. In fact, Santos would be conspiring with the FARC to inflict this type of socialism on the country. Here, Jabri's second dualism between 'conformity' and 'dissent' becomes apparent. She argues that individuals and groups refusing to participate in the war effort are seen as traitors to their community (1996:108). Uribe not only called Santos a traitor on multiple occasions, he also shaped the idea that Santos had become a left-politician and that this political change was putting Colombia's future at risk. Reconciliation with the FARC would lead Colombia towards becoming the next Cuba or Venezuela.

Third, within the discourse opposing the peace process, Uribe and his followers continuously stated that it was unjust to grant demobilized FARC members an economic instalment that would be *higher* than the minimum wage. In other words, demobilized FARC members would be rewarded for killing and kidnapping while innocent, honest and hard-working Colombian people were left struggling to make ends meet. Therefore, instead of going to jail where they should be punished for their war crimes, as is in line with the master war criminal narrative, this peace agreement benefitted only the guerrillas through the prospect of

[5] Author's interview with Gabriel Ignacio Gomez,31-03-17.
[6] Author's interview with Gabriel Ignacio Gomez,31-03-17.

economic instalment and political participation. According to Uribe, voting 'yes' to peace would mean accepting impunity, which would in turn only set an example for more violence. The 'no' campaign unexpectedly found an ally in Human Rights Watch, who remained a fierce critic of the accord, as both actors wanted to send human-rights violators to prison more than they wanted to end the war (Grandin 2016). Uribe even hinted that he would leave his senate seat before accepting that former guerrillas might soon sit next to him in parliament saying: "my soul is not prepared to debate with criminals" (Brodzinsky 2016).

Fourth and final, Uribe and his campaign team argued that the peace agreement threatened the traditional, patriarchal society. The agreement would undermine Colombian values of society, for example, through the inclusion of minorities, the addressing of gender-based violence and the encouraging of political participation of women and LGBT groups in the transition to peace (Krystalli and Theidon 2016). The 'no' campaign was able to mobilize homophobia and fear of expanded LGBT rights by linking their cause to a wider debate on new gender education materials for high schools produced by Colombia's ministry of education. Recently, Colombia's constitutional court ruled in favour of gay marriage and the highly publicized suicide of a gay high school student led to a court ruling outlawing discrimination against gay students. Consequently, Uribe frequently spoke of the need to defend the 'traditional family' and booklets promoting the 'no' vote featured language about gender ideology. Colombia would be in danger as the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC would lead to the Marxist group's 'takeover' and the destruction of traditional family values. The church therefore played an important role in the weeks leading up to the referendum, urging millions of Evangelicals and Catholics to vote 'no' as a way to defend the family and uphold an unreserved opposition to the gender ideology.

3.2 Yes to Peace

'We are making history. We really needed this' – Camila[7]

At the same time, president Santos and his governing coalition established a counter-discourse to promote peace and encourage people to vote 'yes' in the referendum of October 2nd, 2016. After four years of negotiations in Havana, Cuba the aim was to end fifty-two years of conflict. The discourse in the yes-campaign promoting peace was based on three main arguments.

First, the government took a moral approach by simply stating that voting yes, and thus ending the longest war in the western hemisphere, was the right thing to do. A peace agreement with the FARC would not only mean that no more innocent lives would be lost to the war, but

[7] Author's interview with Camila, 14-03-17.

also that people would finally be able to get closure and leave the past behind. In other words, the 'yes' vote was marketed as a vote for peace, implying that a 'no' vote would be a vote *against* peace. While his opponents argued that it was 'immoral' to negotiate with 'terrorists', Santos argued that it would be immoral *not* to talk to them if there was even the slightest chance of ending the war that had taken so many innocent lives already. Peace, then, was not just a possibility, but a necessity (Orozco 2017).

Second, Santos highlighted the importance of the peace process for the economic development of Colombia. Or, in the words of Hannah, a human rights observer at Peace Brigades International, 'it has been no secret that that is what this peace deal is all about. Santos has said it from the beginning, the idea is to pave the way so that international companies can come in and provide development for Colombia.'[8] Importantly, this aspect of the peace agreement thus mainly focuses on the development of rural areas in order to close the (social) gap with urban areas. According to Mimi Yagoub, journalist and researcher for InSight Crime[9], 'the deal was designed to develop rural areas and lift more people out of poverty.'[10] But it does not stop there, by investing in food security and agricultural development, Santos argued that Colombia would soon be able to help battle hunger *beyond* its national borders. Due to the violent conflict, the country has not been able to efficiently make use of its resources and reach its full potential. With a peace agreement in place, Colombia would finally be able to make the most of their resources and reserves and become a supplier of food.

Third and last, Santos and his government portrayed the peace agreement with the FARC as the final opportunity to achieve peace by saying that this was the first, last and *only* deal that would be offered to the Colombian citizens. According to Juan, 'Santos had said that if the 'no' would win, we would go back to war. The guerrilla commanders would go back to the jungle and more innocent civilians would die.'[11] While Santos was very aware that many people were concerned and even dissatisfied with the lack of prison-sentences, he argued that this was the only way to achieve peace. For that reason, the negotiating team in Havana aimed to achieve 'as much justice as possible' while still achieving peace. Because, in the end, all that mattered was finally ending five decades of war (Orozco 2017).

3.3 Ongoing Power Struggle

[8] Author's interview with Hannah, 05-05-17

[9] InSight Crime is a foundation dedicated to the study of the principal threat to national- and citizen security in the Americas: organized crime.

[10] Author's interview with Mimi Yagoub, 17-03-17.

[11] Author's interview with Juan, 6-03-17.

Interestingly, Santos was minister of defence in Uribe's government and was elected president under the political platform of Uribe. While having run for election promising to continue Uribe's 'democratic security' policy, as was outlined in the previous chapter, Santos announced in his inaugural speech on the 7th of August, 2010, that he was open to dialogue with armed illegal groups, provided that they would lay down their weapons (BBC 2010). However, when the first exploratory meetings between the Colombian government and the FARC took place, it happened in secret.

Once elected, Santos thus shifted from far-right to a more pragmatic, centre-right program. According to Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, this explains why Uribe 'declared war' on the peace negotiations from the very beginning. In fact, he led a "two-folded opposition: to the government, and to the peace process."[12] Therefore, Uribe was not only trying to impede the negotiations in Havana, but at the same time he was also committed to hindering any other political decision that was made by Santos and his governing coalition. In fact, Uribe argued that Santos "was a traitor who was elected under the platform of democratic security but abandoned it, disappointing the people and not honouring his commitments."[13]

With presidential elections coming up in 2018, both president Santos and former president Uribe are shortly expected to announce their presidential candidates, as neither of them are allowed to run for a third-term in office. It is well known that Uribe's 'two-folded' opposition was partially aimed at increasing the chance of his candidate to win the upcoming elections. President Santos, alternatively, was bound on achieving peace before the end of his term in order to protect his reputation and credibility. However, as stated in the previous chapter, at some stage, all peacebuilding processes require legitimacy. Through public participation comes legitimacy, and with legitimacy comes a discourse to justify a particular course of action (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:72). While the public referendum could have been an exceptional opportunity to legitimize the Colombian peace process, the unexpected 'no' victory caused his plan to backfire. Indeed, after the unexpected result, Santos saw no other option than to include Uribe in the negotiation team. According to Najet, this decision has had far-reaching consequences: 'in the end, Uribe won. Santos needed him, so he is out now, it killed [his political career]. At least he has a Nobel Price.'[14]

Correspondingly, his decision to pass the revised agreement through congress straight-away, instead of allowing a second public referendum, was received with mixed reactions. In

[12] Author's interview with Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, 31-03-17.
[13] Author's interview with Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, 31-03-17.
[14] Author's interview with Najet, 28-04-17.

fact, it led many people to believe that Santos did not value the opinion of the people. Sandra, for example, stated that 'Santos asked for our opinion, but did not listen.'[15] Similarly, Astrid said that 'we were expecting a second referendum. Why do you ask the people, if you are not going to take our opinion into account? It was a foolish decision.'[16] Others, however, were more positive about his decision. Alejandra, for example, credited Santos for being 'one of the only presidents who has tried to solve our problems through other means.'[17] Juan, in turn, said to be relieved that there was not going to be a second referendum, saying that 'if we did, we probably would have lost again.'[18] Lastly, Luis added that a second referendum was not necessary 'because the people have spoken and their protests have been heard. The rest is a matter for the government, of course with the inclusion of the victims because they are the only ones who could legitimately oppose the agreement.'[19] Generally speaking, however, Santos' reputation appears to be damaged. Other than being 'forced' to include Uribe in the peace talks, the peace negotiations have also taken longer than expected and many deadlines were missed in the process. Additionally, violent conflict continued while the talks were happening, displaying "a clear lack of commitment to negotiation by both sides" (Hayes 2017:3) which caused trust in the peace process, and in president Santos, to erode.

However, to many people, it seems that the FARC and the government have come too far to back out now. Najet, for example, argued that 'no one can touch the peace deal now, there are too many international and national engagements [..] with a million cameras pointed at Colombia, the pressure is too high to pull back.'[20] However, others argued that the upcoming presidential elections are delaying a proper and efficient implementation of the peace agreement. Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, for example, pointed out that:

> They [congress] are falling behind. They are just finishing some of the bills that were supposed to be ready [..] we are moving to a difficult phase in the political arena, next year there will be presidential elections. Now, the coalition that is supporting the government is breaking down.[21]

[15] Author's interview with Sandra, 03-04-17.
[16] Author's interview with Astrid, 17-04-17.
[17] Author's interview with Alejandra, 30-03-17.
[18] Author's interview with Juan, 21-03-17.
[19] Author's interview with Luis, 28-04-17.
[20] Author's interview with Najet, 28-04-17.
[21] Author's interview with Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, 31-03-17.

It is not surprising then, that Santos is trying to legally shield the peace agreement from the next president. According to Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, 'they are trying to shield the process in order to avoid that the following government might affect it.'[22] Importantly, peace is most vulnerable in the short term. The key to lasting peace is to survive the first few years after the signing of the agreement (Reiter 2015:92), and with the presidential elections coming up, this might prove to be the biggest challenge of all. Hannah called it 'a huge worry. If someone wins who is really not pro-peace agreement, a lot could fall flat on its face.'[23]

3.4 Peace on Paper

So far, this chapter has described the main arguments that lay at the foundation of the discourse on war and the discourse on peace. Thereafter, the political functionality of the contesting discourses has been discussed. The remainder of this chapter is used to describe the content of the peace agreement that was the result of four years of negotiations. Importantly, the idea of peace is manifested in discourses and, subsequently, institutionalized through the approval of twenty seven bills, enabling the effective and efficient implementation of the peace agreement. The implementation of this peace agreement is thus aimed at creating an environment in which peace can flourish and take root. Discussing the entire agreement is beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, drawing upon a summary of the peace agreement as published online by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (2016), the seven most important aspects of the implementation will be presented in this section.

First, the purpose of the agreement on the bilateral and definitive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities (*Cese al Fuego y de Hostilidades Bilateral y Definitvo)* - CFHBD) and laying down of arms (*Dejación de Armas* - DA) is to ensure the final termination of hostilities between the state security, law enforcement authorities and the FARC. Crucially, the fulfilment of the CFHBD agreement will enable the creation of the conditions necessary for the implementation of the final agreement and the laying down of arms, as well as to prepare the country for the reincorporation of the FARC into civilian life. The monitoring and verification mechanism (*Mecanismo de Monitoreo y Verifación* - MM&V) is performed by the government, the United Nations and the FARC. The purpose of MM&V is to follow-up compliance with the agreement on CFHBD and DA, and to provide solutions to the different factors that may endanger the success of the bilateral and definitive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and the laying down of arms (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2016:14).

[22] Author's interview with Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, 31-03-17.
[23] Author's interview with Hannah, 05-05-17.

Second, upon conclusion of the laying down of arms, the political party or movement that emerges from the transition of the FARC into legal political life, will have its legal status recognized, following its compliance with all necessary legal requirements except for the requisite minimum voting threshold. Instead, the political party will be guaranteed five seats in court and five seats in congress during the elections of 2018 and 2022, and more if Colombians decide so through the voting-system. In order to facilitate its transition, the political party will receive an annual allowance for operational expenses, between its registration date and July 19, 2026 (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2016:14).

Third, the process of economic and social reincorporation includes the preparation of a socio-economic census of the members of the FARC, and the identification of prospective socially-productive programmes and projects, including environmental protection and humanitarian demining projects. Furthermore, it includes a one-off financial support package to start an individual or collective socially-productive project, a conditional monthly basic-wage (equivalent to 90 per cent of the minimum salary in force for 2 years), access to the social security system, education, housing, culture, sports and recreation, psycho-social care and family reunification programmes (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2016:19-20). Moreover, the reintegration of former FARC members into civilian life is aimed at strengthening the social fabric across the country, and promoting coexistence and reconciliation (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2016:18).

Fourth, the agreement aims to provide protection and security to all Colombians. More specifically, the government will put in place measures for social collectives, social and human rights movements and organizations across the country. In addition, the government offers guarantees for the exercise of politics for all political movements and parties, especially those in opposition, the political movement that emerges from the transition of the FARC into legal political activity, and the members of the FARC in the process of reincorporating into civilian life. Furthermore, the agreement is focused on the fight against those responsible for homicides and massacres, attacks against human rights advocates, social movements and political movements. This includes the criminal organisations that have been labelled as successors of paramilitarism and their support networks, and on the prosecution of criminal conduct that threatens the implementation of the agreements and the construction of peace (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2016:20-21).

Fifth, the 'Comprehensive Rural Reform' (*Reforma Rural Integral* - RRI) seeks to lay down the foundation for the transformation of rural Colombia in order to create the conditions to ensure the health and well-being of the rural population and, in doing so, contribute to

guarantee non-repetition of the conflict and to the construction of stable and long-lasting peace. It aims to strengthen the state's presence across the country, integrate the various regions, close the gap between rural and urban areas, improve the agricultural industry, protect the environment and ensure that accessibility to food is progressively realized. Furthermore, the RRI will be undertaken nation-wide. That is to say, it will cover all of the country's rural areas although its implementation will be prioritized in the zones most affected by the violent conflict, areas with higher levels of poverty, institutional weakness and areas with higher presence of crops made for illicit use and of other illegal economies (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2016:5).

Sixth, related to the previous point, with the agreement, the Colombian government and the FARC state their commitment to finding a definitive solution to the problem of illicit drugs. To do so, they will for example, put in place substitution and non-replanting agreements. In these agreements, rural people commit to crop substitution, non-replanting and to not engaging in any activity related to drug trafficking. In return, the government will commit to undertake a public consultation process and put in place an Immediate Response Plan (*Plan de Atención Inmediata*) of food assistance, for growers, collectors and sharecroppers, with rapid implementation measures for the community in general. Moreover, specific legal alternatives will be arranged for small growers of illicit crops. At the same time, the government acknowledges the need to address the use of illicit drugs as a matter of public health and announces to intensify the fight against criminal organisations engaged in drug trafficking (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2016:24-26).

Seventh and last, national plans will be implemented, with the goals of completely eradicating extreme poverty, further reducing rural poverty and overall inequality within ten years. This will be pursued, for example, through the reconstruction of the rural road network, the expansion of the coverage and quality of power and internet services in rural areas and the restoration and expansion of irrigation and drainage infrastructure. As for social development, plans will be undertaken to improve healthcare, education, housing, and drinking water services, with the aim to improve opportunities for rural people (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2016:8). Moreover, citizen (political) participation in matters of public interest will be promoted through the creation of mechanisms for dialogue between the government, communities and enterprises. This is related to the goal of outlawing violence as a method of political action. Finally, a special fund was created to distribute 3 million hectares of land to rural people without land, or with insufficient land. Priority will be given to rural women and displaced persons (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2016:6-7).

Chapter 4: Social Meaning

The previous chapter ended with a section on the seven most important aspects of the implementation, or, 'peace on paper.' However, it should be noted that, while the peace agreement received international praise, implementing a peace agreement in reality is incredibly complex. This chapter, therefore, will start with a section on 'peace in reality' which discusses various problems that have arisen since the signing of the peace agreement and that could, if not resolved in the short-term, undermine the successful institutionalization of the peace discourse. Thereafter, it will be explained why more than 60 per cent of the people decided not to cast a vote in the referendum, and why a small majority of those who *did* vote, surprisingly voted against the agreement. In order to do so, it will be argued that the discourse on war matches with a higher degree of resonance.

4.1 Peace in reality

After the unexpected no-victory, both the Colombian government and the FARC returned to Havana, Cuba for negotiations. Instead of 'going back to war', as Santos had warned earlier, both parties respected the ceasefire and remained committed to achieving peace. Less than two months later, this resulted in a 'renegotiated' agreement. In reality, however, most people acknowledge that little was changed in comparison to the original agreement. Juan, for example, stated that 'it is the same agreement, only ten pages longer.'[24] After the peace agreement was officially passed through congress in early December 2016, five decades of conflict came to an end. However, while the peace agreement received international praise and many people celebrated the historic day, it quickly became clear that perhaps the biggest challenge of all was still ahead. According to Najet, 'the implementation of a peace agreement in *theory* is very different from *practice*. It is only logical that new issues have surfaced, it is impossible to think of everything while negotiating in Havana.'[25]

As setback after setback further complicates the already complex peace process, distrust in the compliance of the FARC and the capabilities of the government has increased. Many Colombians have gotten used to living in times of conflict, and do not even remember what it means to live in a country that is at peace. With a peace deal to end the longest running civil war in the western hemisphere, millions hoped for a new, peaceful Colombia. But after six

[24] Author's interview with Juan, 21-03-17.
[25] Author's interview with Najet, 28-04-17.

months, the 'new' Colombia looks a lot like the old one (Muse 2017). This is illustrated by means of three, main issues: government incapability, the war on drugs and safety concerns.

4.1.1 Government incapability

The FARC should have been demobilized by December 31st of 2016 but a month later, by the end of January 2017, not *one* of the 26 transition zones was finished. Mimi Yagoub, journalist and researcher for InSight Crime, was able to visit one of them: 'it is just dirt and literally nothing else. They are months behind and they only have six months to be there. It is a big let-down on part of the government.'[26] Around the same time that FARC-leader Rodrigo Londoño was providing updates and photos on twitter to show how ill-prepared transition zones were at the time, president Santos said the ongoing demobilization was "going well." Transition zone manager Carlos Cordoba pointed at the remoteness of the locations as a primary factor for the delays. The Foundation for Peace and Reconciliation warned that 'there is a certain uncertainty that results in desertions and mistrust among the guerrilla troops' (Maas 2017). After all, if the government is already struggling to build transition zones in remote locations, what does that signal for the decidedly more complicated process that follows: the reintegration of FARC members into civilian society?

Following the FARCs demobilization, the Colombian military was supposed to take over control over guerrilla territory and start imposing state law instead of 'guerrilla law' to strengthen the state's presence across the country. However, in many parts of the country, the army is yet to be seen. Because many of these areas are rich in raw materials, it should not have come as a surprise that these abandoned lands would become prime locations for illegal activities and, consequently, that other illegitimate parties would (violently) try to take over control now that they were not under guerrilla nor under government control. Once again, innocent people are caught in the crossfire. For that reason, it is not surprising that people in rural areas at times are afraid to see the FARC leave. In fact, Mimi Yagoub highlighted that 'in some areas, local communities are still trying to report incidents to the FARC but they [the guerrilla] cannot get involved anymore.'[27] After having been abandoned by the state for so long, the FARC has been the only formal authority they often remember having. But it is not just that, it was the FARC who first brought some sort of infrastructure and economic stability to these areas, even if it was connected to (the enabling of) the drugs trade. Additionally, Mimi Yagoub pointed out that:

[26] Author's interview with Mimi Yagoub, 17-03-17.
[27] Author's interview with Mimi Yagoub, 17-03-17.

> Everything that is happening with the demobilization has a direct impact on the lives and deaths of people in rural communities that can be unsafe because of other groups moving in. It is not just petty crimes that will increase, there is the immediate threat of paramilitaries taking over. [..] Not to say the FARC has not often been the victimizing force, but in some communities they feel like.. if one groups leaves, whatever comes next could be worse.[28]

Above, multiple reasons were mentioned that could explain why citizens living in rural departments would vote 'no' or would not vote at all, including distrust in the government after being 'abandoned' for so long. However, in contrast to Colombian cities, the departments most affected by war with the FARC decisively voted 'yes' in the referendum, in many cases by margins surpassing two-thirds of the vote (Hayes 2017:5). Despite a possible fear of deterioration, in the end, the people directly affected by the violence favoured peace over justice.

4.1.2 The war on drugs

Coca cultivations have undeniably played an immense role in the fuelling of the conflict. Not just the FARC, but all (non-state) actors involved have resorted to the drugs business to fuel their ideology at one point or another. Therefore, while the Colombian government and the FARC state in the peace agreement that they will commit to finding a definitive solution to the problem of illicit drugs, they hardly acknowledge the immensity of the problem. Especially now that the army has failed to adequately take over abandoned FARC territories, rural communities have fallen into the hands of organized criminal groups which makes it even harder for the Colombian state to implement drug substitution as well as to come in with rural development projects.

Additionally, against a background of previous failed substitution programs and peace attempts, it is highly unlikely that farmers are simply going to trust that they can rely on the government. Instead, as Mimi Yagoub pointed out:

> The longer it takes, the more public confidence in the peace deal will erode. And if it is eroded this early on, [the farmers] are going to trust the government

[28] Author's interview with Mimi Yagoub, 17-03-17.

> even less, to provide them with what they really need [..] So it will continue, they will keep growing coca until the government is there giving them the alternative they need.[29]

For now, the prospects of realistic agricultural equivalents looks dim as the ones chosen by the government, like coco, are reportedly already overproduced within the country's borders and take up to five years to actually produce food. Therefore, because the substitution-program is voluntary, it seems doubtful that farmers will agree to switch the lucrative coca crops for overproduced agricultural 'equivalents' anytime soon.

At the same time, the Colombian government is planning on eradicating 50 per cent of the country's coca cultivations. In 2016 this proved to be more difficult than expected, for example because farmers and their families have to be banned from their land first, as it is considered to be too harmful for people's health.[30] In 2017, however, they are planning to double last year's efforts.

4.1.3 Safety concerns

Despite the informal ceasefire that had been in place for months before the official signing of the peace agreement, the FARC was reluctant to lay down their weapons because they feared a repetition of the mass killing of leftist politicians that cost thousands of lives after a failed peace attempt in 1985. Consequently, even though the FARC is now in the process of handing over their weapons – the past is present in the guerrillas' minds. The FARC reportedly joined the peace talks because they had been hit hard by Colombian security forces. Not only several guerrilla leaders were killed in battle, the number of active fighters had also started to decrease sharply. Now, it seems FARC members have good reason to be concerned. *Aguilas Negras*, a (neo)paramilitary group, has threatened that they are ready to kill any demobilized FARC member that decides to come back to the city of Medellín (Alsema 2017a). Not long after, two demobilized FARC members as well as their families were assassinated, in a timespan of just ten days, in the southwest of Colombia. Both homicide victims were pardoned members of the FARC's militias who – unlike the guerrillas – are taking part in the peace process from home instead of from the transition zones that are supervised by the United Nations (Alsema 2017a). In other words, while the government is supposed to provide protection and security to 'all

[29] Author's interview with Mimi Yagoub, 17-03-17.
[30] Author's interview with Richard, 16-03-17.

Colombians,' members of the FARC that are in the process of reintegrating into civilian life are fearing for their lives. After all, who is going to protect them once they leave the camps?

Trust in the government and their capability to carry out this peace deal is further eroded through the series of assassinations of social- and community leaders. In the words of Hannah: 'bit by bit, the FARC is wondering.. what have we gotten ourselves into?'[31] The series of assassinations show that the violent conflict in Colombia comprises much more than 'just' the FARC and the Colombian state. At least 23 social leaders were killed in the first three months of peace – the first murder taking place on the very first day of peace. On the second of March, Alicia Lopez, a community leader and farmer's rights defender, was shot dead in plain daylight in Medellín. Some of the victims of the post-conflict assassinations are believed to have been killed because of their involvement in the execution of the peace deal with the FARC (Galanova 2017). Interestingly, Daniela (19) said that:

> According to the government there are no paramilitaries but these social leaders are not dying from natural causes. They are murdered, it is undeniable. The AUC was supposed to demobilize in 2006, but the problem still exists and the violence still continues. Paramilitaries are invisible, but extremely dangerous.[32]

And it is not just the (neo)paramilitary groups that social- and community leaders have to look out for. For example, the ELN has recently killed indigenous leaders who protested against illegal gold mining. Until now, however, the government has not proven to be able to respond in an efficient, suitable manner. In fact, according to Hannah, the police has 'helped' threatened social- and community leaders by giving them a bullet proof vest and a phone or panic button: 'you press the button, and then what? They are in the middle of nowhere, miles and miles away from anywhere.' Later-on, she argued that it crucial to find out *why* they are being threatened. 'A protective measure is attacking impunity. These high levels of impunity show that you can attack someone and you will never end up in prison. That increases the risk that it will happen.'[33]

Importantly, the political aspect of the peace process could be threatened by the re-emergence of paramilitaries and organized crime groups in the countryside. Mimi Yagoub emphasized that:

[31] Author's interview with Hannah, 05-05-17.
[32] Author's interview with Daniela, 20-04-17
[33] Author's interview with Hannah, 05-05-17.

> The FARC is criticizing the government for not upholding their end of the deal, for not being able to implement the accord on the demobilization zones. They are delegitimizing the government, but also the deal holding it all together. The FARC's confidence in the peace deal and its implementation is getting eroded, by the killing of the left-wing leaders, by the fact that the camps are nowhere near ready for them to be living in for six months...[34]

4.1.4 Not everyone wants peace

For some people, the delays and 'unexpected' difficulties are all too convenient. Paramilitaries and organized crime groups have utilized the slow and inefficient moving in of the Colombian army by taking over former FARC territories, which also means that large parts of all important drug-routes in the country are still under the control of violent non-state actors. After a series of assassinations of social- and community leaders, the FARC is starting to question whether the government is capable of carrying out the peace deal at all. Moreover, rumours have surfaced of Colombia's military trying to bribe demobilizing FARC members to leave the transit zones and sell their weapons. If proven true, it would be a major attempt to sabotage the ongoing peace process and in particular the transitional justice system that seeks to determine the amount of human rights violations, committed both by the guerrillas and by the state. The inhumane circumstances in many of the demobilization camps were reportedly used to convince FARC members to demobilize 'outside' the peace process under more luxurious circumstances (Alsema 2017b). Threats directed at demobilizing FARC members undermine a successful reintegration and causes trust in the (capabilities of the) government to erode.

Whether the rumours are true or not, one thing is certain: there are people in Colombia who are benefiting from a prolonged violent conflict and, consequently, who are devoted to the upholding of the war-structure that has been in place for decades. Despite various attempts to undermine the peace process, it appears that the government and the FARC have come too far to back out now. Right now, 'anything is possible, except for going back.'[35]

4.2 Expecting the Unexpected

So far, this chapter has outlined the challenging implementation of the peace agreement, showing that there still is a long way to go before a structure of peace can actually be upheld. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will discuss the social meaningfulness of the contesting

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[34] Author's interview with Mimi Yagoub, 17-03-17.

[35] Author's interview with Najet, 28-04-17.

discourses and the institutionalization of the discourse on peace. However, in doing so, it is necessary to take a small step 'back.' To gain a true understanding of why not even 40 per cent of the Colombians casted a vote in the referendum, and why a small majority of the voters surprisingly voted against the agreement, it is vital to discuss voting behaviour. Additionally, discussing voting behaviour allows one to explain how it is possible that the discourse of war resonated with more people than the discourse of peace and subsequently, what consequences the challenging implementation of the peace agreement has for the prevailing levels of distrust.

4.2.1 Distrust and detachment

While many analysts have attempted to explain the unexpected outcome of the referendum, few are trying to understand the issue of why people simply did not show up to vote in large numbers. Importantly, while the voter turn-out was not drastically different from the last presidential elections in 2014, it remains shocking that not even 40 per cent of the Colombian population casted a vote regarding what was arguably the most important referendum in the country's history. Gabriel Ignacio explained that:

> There is some level of detachment from the political arena. People sometimes do not take part because they feel that it will not make a difference [..] that feeling has prevailed for a long time here, there is a history of exclusion. Especially during the 20th century, people did not know how to extort their rights and how to make a difference. I think that maybe they were distrustful, that they were convinced it would not make a difference. It was the main political decision of the century for us, but people were not aware of it.[36]

In line with this, Jehovah-witnesses Caro and Liliana deliberately decided not to use their right to vote. Liliana explained that 'we are not created to direct or govern ourselves. Of course we want things to be better and we want peace, but the government has been a disaster. It seems they do not have what it takes.'[37] Later-on, Caro added 'politicians constantly make promises and then nothing happens. It is like letting a toddler be in charge of kindergarten.. it does not work.'[38] The same level of distrust is reflected in Astrid's words: 'politicians do what they want with someone else's money, so I do not think my vote adds up. If I would ever vote, I would

[36] Author's interview with Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, 31-03-17.
[37] Author's interview with Liliana, 28-04-17.
[38] Author's interview with Caro, 28-04-17.

vote blank.'[39] One the one hand this can be linked to Mac Ginty and Williams (2009:80), who argue that poor social provision means that many potential voters do not see the relevance of the electoral system to their lives. However, on the other hand, it also shows inconsistency in terms of perceived contradictions among framings and tactical actions, which, according to Benford and Snow, could partially explain variation in the degree of resonance (2000:620). In other words, the 'tradition' of politicians making empty promises could have caused the majority of Colombians to detach themselves from politics. More generally, this could mean that, in terms of social meaningfulness, both discourses, then, do not mean all that much to those people who decided simply *not* to vote. Above all, Santos and Uribe are, within this particular group of not-voters, evidently viewed as politicians that are most-likely either not able or not willing to carry out their promises: a sense of "whatever it is that they are promoting, it will not benefit us, ordinary people" (Jackson 2016).

Correspondingly, many informants appointed corruption as Colombia's most pressing issue. In fact, not one informant said to trust Colombian politicians. Juliana, for example, stated that 'their salaries are very high but they barely work. Most of the time, they steal.' Juan added that he finds the political situation in the country so upsetting that it makes him want to leave the country.[40] These high levels of distrust are furthermore illustrated through Astrid's words:

> Truth is, we cannot stop believing that there are politicians who have good intentions for the country. But there are more corrupt ones than good ones [..] I think many people who voted for him [Santos] are very sorry. He really has the country turned upside down.[41]

Liliana added that 'politicians constantly make promises and then nothing happens. It should work for the people, but it does not.'[42] In other words, informants perceive there to be significant contradictions between their promises and their actions. Both Santos and Uribe, of course, claim to be committed to protecting and improving the country. But, after decades of empty promises, it appears to be easier to detach from the political arena than to expect a change, and be disappointed again.

[39] Author's interview with Astrid, 17-04-17.
[40] Author's interview with Juan, 06-03-17.
[41] Author's interview with Astrid, 17-04-17
[42] Author's interview with Liliana, 28-04-17.

It should be noted, however, that while distrust might be one of the most important factors explaining the low turnout, it is certainly not the only factor. Sandra, for example, works as a housekeeper and was unable to take enough time off work to make it to the polling station, but she said to have voted 'yes' if she had been able to.[43] Contrastingly, Juliana did not vote because she was in the United States at the time of the referendum: 'I think I would have voted no, they should have renegotiated the terms. Now the deal only benefits them [the FARC].'[44] Moreover, various informants mentioned the inaccessibility to vote in rural areas as a possible reason for the low turnout.[45]

4.2.2 The power of Uribe

As outlined in the theoretical chapter, discourses are not necessarily based on the truth. Instead, they have to be socially meaningful for people to resonate with the proffered frames and/or claims. Why, then, did the war discourse resonate with a small majority of the voters?

The discourse of Uribe directly responds to everyday insecurities especially of, but not limited to, individuals living in urban areas. It is not surprising, then, that many 'yes'-voters linked the surprising 'no' victory to the lack of education in Colombia as the continuing violence has caused many people to flee the countryside and seek security in the cities. However, these migrants often arrive lacking resources to obtain housing (Doyle 2016:5) and with no options for free education, the part of the population in Medellín that is poor and uneducated, has sharply increased over the years. Interestingly, four out of five informants who voted 'no' indeed were uneducated and/or working low-end jobs at the time of the interviews. Wilderson, who works as a night guard, for example, stated that 'FARC members are terrorists. This peace deal is ridiculous, it forces offenders and victims to live together side by side.'[46] Yeni, in turn, said that 'we should not want this kind of peace. We should not negotiate with bad people like the FARC [..] they are bad people, and when we will have peace, they will not change.'[47] Here, there is a clear connection with the framing of the FARC as an 'untrustworthy enemy.' Moreover, for example by stating that demobilized FARC members would receive a monthly instalment *higher* than minimum wage, the discourse became resonant with the personal, everyday experiences of many people struggling to sustain livelihoods. According to Benford and Snow this increases the salience of the discourse (2000:621). While the 'benefits'

[43] Author's interview with Sandra, 03-04-17.
[44] Author's interview with Juliana, 17-04-17.
[45] I.e. Alejandra, Camila, José and Juan.
[46] Author's interview with Wilderson, 05-03-17.
[47] Author's interview with Yeni, 03-04-17.

of peace, as drawn upon by Santos in the discourse on peace, remained somewhat abstract and distant from everyday life, former president Uribe managed to make people aware of all sorts of risks that would accompany the agreement, and more importantly, that would (negatively) affect the everyday life of many individuals.

Moreover, Astrid voted against the agreement because she did not agree that 'an illegal armed group is going to rule our country. Although they supposedly have good ideals, they are not comparable in the way in which they defend what they think and stand for.'[48] Her boyfriend, Donnis, voted against the peace agreement because 'voting yes would have been to hand over the country to the FARC.'[49] In various interviews, informants repeated this sentiment of the FARC 'taking over' the country, or Santos 'handing over' the country to the FARC. With ten seats in total, the FARC will hardly be able to change the country – let alone take over the country - through its political participation, unless their party obtains the votes that would merit increased representation. As Gabriel Ignacio Gomez acknowledged, 'it [the debate] was not the place for rational arguments, it was a place for emotions. It was a time of propaganda: propaganda against propaganda, not reason.'[50]

Subsequently, it becomes evident that Uribe and his political party not only managed to make others inhabit his story of *their* reality, but also that his power is largely based on his capacity to control the language in which people discuss societal problems (Demmers 2017:129). To a great extent, people have embraced this "language of war" that embraces exclusionary discourses of 'us and them' (Jabri 1996:185) to make sense of the overwhelming complexity of life. Donnis, for example, mentioned that 'nowadays guerrillas, who have done so much to the country, have more possibilities in terms of employment and education than normal, innocent citizens.'[51] More vulnerable to financial insecurity, it is perhaps not surprising that these informants were more susceptible to Uribe's arguments.

Santos, on the other hand, was largely unable to make others inhabit his story of their reality. It is not unlikely that, partly because of the international praise and the news media polling, he thought it was a 'done deal' long before the referendum even took place. He possibly underestimated the opinion of the people and how much they were willing to accept a peace agreement that was not beneficial to a lot of people. Subsequently, it was not Santos, nor his political party, that was at the forefront of educating Colombian citizens on the peace

[48] Author's interview with Astrid, 17-04-17.
[49] Author's interview with Donnis, 20-04-17.
[50] Author's interview with Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, 31-03-17.
[51] Author's interview with Donnis, 20-04-17.

agreement. Instead, it was public and private universities that took on that role. However, because a large majority in Colombia simply does not have access to (higher) education, to many people the peace agreement remained largely incomprehensible. Various informants who *did* go to university, admitted to have struggled with understanding the agreement. Alejandra, for example, said that 'the government has to educate the people in an understandable way. For me, it was difficult and I went to university.'[52]

Importantly, when people do not truly (try to) understand what the agreement entails, they are more likely to be influenced by what they hear in the streets and read through social media. While the information was 'out there', people did not (have time to) read it. Consequently, inflated claims of FARC benefits and the impending dangers spread through social media without any means to counter them.

In itself, however, this cannot explain why people overwhelmingly voted against the peace agreement in Antioquia's capital city. While Medellín was by no means the only place in the country where the 'no' won, the difference between 'yes' and 'no' voters was significantly bigger here. It appears that the ongoing violence has not only divided the country in terms of politics, but also along geographical lines. Santos, on the one hand, draws his support from the departments in Colombia most affected by the violence. Almost every department that Santos and the *Unidad Nacional* party won in the presidential elections of 2014, voted in favour of the peace agreement on October 2nd, 2016. Importantly, the departments most affected by war with the FARC, which might have seemed most likely to vote against a peace deal that offered such benefits over justice, decisively voted in favour of the deal, in many cases by margins surpassing two-thirds of the vote (Hayes 2017:5).

On the other hand, the 'no' won in areas where Uribe and his political party have their support. The department of Antioquia is without doubt one of these 'territories'. Being born in Medellín, Uribe is not only a fellow '*paisa*',[53] but Medellín is also where Uribe's political career took off. In 1994, Uribe was elected governor of his home department of Antioquia. During his three-year term in office, he solidified the public persona that was to characterise him during his campaign for presidency in 2002 (Dugas 2003:1123). The 'iron-fist' method was controversial, but also successful in chasing the guerrilla out of Medellín. The image of Uribe

[52] Author's interview with Alejandra, 30-03-17.

[53] *Paisa* is the word used to describe a person from a region in the northwest of Colombia, including the department of Antioquia where Medellín is located.

as the leader who would ‘save all people, provide security and give strength to the people’[54], as Gabriel Ignacio Gomez explained in the previous chapter, never faded and he remains one of the most influential people in Antioquia today.

Subsequently, in the words of Richard, ‘the peace agreement was originally rejected because a large majority of the people was following Uribe. He is from here.’[55] This continuing confidence that citizens in Medellín have in Uribe, however, is remarkable in light of the many scandals surrounding him. Juan exclaimed that:

> There are *at least* three-hundred criminal investigations under his name. He has been accused of having paramilitary ties, and some of his closest allies have been convicted of collusion with the paramilitary and criminal organization, including the Medellín cartel.’

Later-on, he called it ‘a secret that everyone knows that Uribe is at the head of the paramilitary groups.’[56] Despite the scandals, Uribe’s image has hardly been affected. Instead, many people view him as a strong leader. This resembles the idea of Benford and Snow, who argue that the greater the status and/or perceived expertise of the speaker, the more plausible and resonant the claims (2000:621).

This chapter has discussed various matters that could, if not addressed in the short-term, delay and/or hinder the proper institutionalization of the peace discourse, including the fact that many people simply do not find the peace process to be socially meaningful. However, as stated in the introduction, it seems reasonable to expect that the possibility to end this decades-long violent struggle would mean a great deal to a country that has lost so much to that conflict. But when it came down to it, a small majority voted unexpectedly *against* the peace agreement. Is this truly surprising?

Simply put, it is not. Already long before the referendum, the majority of the population had detached themselves from politics. For example, while some people spoke of a ‘historically low’ voter turn-out, it really was not drastically different from the last presidential elections in 2014. Distrust in politicians is certainly not ‘a new thing’ in Colombia. A small majority of the people who *did* vote, however, was influenced by the discourse on war which resulted in a

[54] Author’s interview with Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, 31-03-17.
[55] Author’s interview with Richard, 16-03-17.
[56] Author’s interview with Juan, 06-03-17.

victory for the ‘no’ vote. But that was not the end of it. Two months later, a revised peace agreement was passed through congress and ‘peace’ was achieved. Nonetheless, in the following months, problems starting piling up: the government was unprepared to even build the transition zones, the ‘war on drugs’ proved to be far from over, and demobilizing FARC members were left fearing for their lives, which caused trust in the government to erode even further. Importantly, this does not only threaten the peace process, but it also reinforces the idea that politicians should not be trusted. Even though ‘the people’ voted no, they were confronted with a peace agreement they did not agree with. To make matters even worse, the government now appears to be incapable to fulfil their promises – once again. What happens next could very well be more people ‘detaching’ themselves from politics, and the voter turn-out for the upcoming presidential elections dropping even lower.

Chapter 5: Everyday Peace in Medellín

So far the discursive approach to peace and war and the difficult institutionalization of the peace agreement have been discussed. To actually 'break through' the existing war structure, however, it comes down to ordinary people embracing and reproducing these social practices of peace. After all, as long as enough people participate in the discourse of peace, it will become an alternative structure that can legitimize decisions for peace (Demmers 2017:132). But to what extent have the discourse of peace and its institutionalization encouraged citizens in Medellín to reproduce social practices of everyday peace? First, the meaning of 'peace' and the continuing insecurity and violence in Medellín will be discussed. Thereafter, the importance of citizen support and the different manners in which citizens can support the peace process will be outlined. Lastly, the stories of three informants who are already actively reproducing structures of peace will be presented.

5.1 Meaning of peace

In the theoretical chapter, it was argued that everyday peace can help us understand the lived reality of peace at a local level. Instead of merely viewing peace as 'the ending of war', it recognizes peace as being highly context-dependent (Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010:368). What, then, does 'peace' mean to the citizens of Medellín? For Juliana, peace means 'improvement of our society: less violence and more money for education.'[57] Daniela said that 'there is peace, when people are no longer killed for no reason.'[58] Or, lastly, in the words of Gabriela:

> There is no peace, because there are other violent groups. There is no peace, because there are no opportunities. There is no peace, because the economy is terrible.[59]

These accounts of 'peace' are all in line with Berents, who argues that, at a local level, the prospect of peace is often linked to a better quality of life, increased security and more opportunities for work and development (2014:362). Therefore, for most informants, peace is a dream that still feels 'out of reach.' This is closely linked to the fact that, despite the promising messages the government is sending out into the world, as was briefly touched upon in chapter

[57] Author's interview with Juliana, 17-04-17.
[58] Author's interview with Daniela, 20-04-17.
[59] Author's interview with Gabriela, 22-03-17.

two, everyday reality in Medellín does not quite yet meet the stories. Regardless of the incredible reduction earlier, the homicide rates have gone up again. According to Camila, there are 'many reasons to kill in Medellín.' Having worked in *comuna 13*, a neighbourhood in San Javier in the western part of Medellín that has long had the reputation of being the most violent neighbourhood of Medellín, she said that 'young people are often killed for two reasons: because they are in a gang, or because they are not.'[60] Gabriela grew up in this part of the city and said that:

> In some neighbourhoods, militias have control over the territory and everyone living there. Sometimes the police does not even go in because they focus on the areas where tourists are. In San Javier, the higher up the mountain you go, the more dangerous it becomes: there are less people in the streets, no police. But violence here is never in the news, it is a silent war.[61]

In the first two months of 2017, already over a hundred people were killed in Medellín. However, as Gabriela noted, these stories often do not reach the newspaper. Instead, 'funeral homes, hospitals and people in the government are all lowering murder statistics. Just so that it appears as if Medellín is a safer city.'[62] Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that instead of talking about 'a real change or transformation', two informants highlighted the importance of the moral message that the peace agreement is sending out, not only to Colombians but to people everywhere in the world. According to Pablo, 'peace with the FARC has not changed anything for the people living here. More importantly is the moral message: the agreement marks the ending of the fighting, it is a chance for a better future.'[63] Correspondingly, Daniela mentioned that:

> The conflict has been going on for so long, there will not be an endpoint [..] it is a message: yes, there are alternatives. For generations we have lived in times of war. We read about it in the newspapers every day, it becomes normal. But in twenty years, life can be different.[64]

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[60] Author's interview with Camila, 14-03-17.
[61] Author's interview with Gabriela, 22-03-17.
[62] Author's interview with Richard, 16-03-17.
[63] Author's interview with Pablo, 28-03-17.
[64] Author's interview with Daniela, 20-04-17.

Although these informants have experienced a life-long war, their words display hope for a better future. For that reason, Pablo and Daniela can be viewed as good examples of citizens who have embraced the discourse on peace.

5.2 No war, no peace

The violent conflict with the FARC took place relatively far away from Medellín. For that reason, life in the city has remained largely the same. The common expectation is that the peace process will deliver development in its various forms (Steenkamp 2011:358). However, despite a peace agreement, a society may continue to be mired in insecurity, chronic poverty and the persistence of factors that sparked and sustained the civil (Mac Ginty 2010:145). Correspondingly, not one of my informants was of the impression that the peace agreement had changed their everyday life. In the words of Juan:

> Nothing has changed. People continue with their lives whether the agreement is there or not, you have to make a living. The man who sells avocados on the streets still has to get up at 4 a.m., buy his avocados and go downtown to sell them until 7 p.m. He is going to make barely any money whether the agreement is there or not.[65]

Against a background of multiple failed peace attempts, it appears that people simply find it hard to believe that this time it will be different. This is related to Mac Ginty and William's stance on public participation. Indeed, opportunities for public involvement can be best described as 'one-off' events rather than sustained processes that allow for continued and meaningful relationships between citizens and wider political processes (2009:78). Hannah, however, pointed out that 'the FARC does not represent the Colombian people, the government does not represent the Colombian people.' For that reason, she argued that if there had been more participation, or if people had felt that they had a voice 'then they could have taken ownership of it more.'[66] Importantly, locally owned processes are perceived to be more legitimate and more likely to succeed because "local constituencies will be able to mould them to suit local needs and aspiration" (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:78).

Importantly, as discussed in the previous chapter, many informants are of opinion that the peace agreement does not correspond to their everyday reality. Instead, they are confronted

[65] Author's interview with Juan, 21-03-17.
[66] Author's interview with Hannah, 05-05-17.

with organized crime and gang activity and after decades of conflict, violence has become normalized. Due to the presence of so many different violent actors, many informants are sceptical about the peace agreement and incidents of armed conflict continue to affect the country even during the implementation of the peace agreement (Institute for Economics and Peace 2017:37). Subsequently, Gabriela asked me: 'yes to peace.. no to peace.. what does it matter? We do not want to go back to the days of explosions in the city but we are not at peace.'[67] Luis, in turn, said 'I am reasonably optimistic. I believe that [the peace process] will achieve the definitive cessation of hostilities with the FARC and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of its members. But I do not believe that peace itself will be achieved.'[68] Or, in the words of Sandra:

> In reality, I do not think there is going to be peace as such. The war will be lessened, but it will not end. The FARC will demobilize and surrender their weapons, and they can start a new life. But there are other groups that are going to continue this war, that is something we cannot deny.' At the same time, however, she chooses to focus on the bright side: "why not be happy? Maybe the war diminishes and we will be a step closer to peace."[69]

The notion of being one step 'closer' to peace or having one peace 'more' than they had before is shared amongst almost all informants. While they all recognized it is a step in the right direction, not one informant believed that peace has been achieved in Colombia – a side of the story that is often overlooked in international media reports. Several informants, however, did highlight various benefits of the ending of the conflict. Both Juliana and Juan, for instance, emphasized that the government has spent countless *pesos* on the conflict and will now finally be able to invest in healthcare and education.[70] In other words, now that the conflict with the FARC has come to an end, it is time to invest in a better future for Colombia.

5.3 Concerns

While all informants expressed a general sense of optimism about being one step 'closer' to peace, at the same time they indicated to be concerned about different aspects of the peace

[67] Author's interview with Gabriela, 22-03-17.
[68] Author's interview with Luis, 28-04-17.
[69] Author's interview with Sandra, 03-04-17.
[70] Author's interview with Juliana, 17-04-17, and Juan, 06-03-17.

process. The main concerns that became apparent, regard the reintegration of former FARC members into civil society and the lack of solutions for the root-causes of the conflict.

Firstly, various informants pointed out that the reintegration of the demobilized FARC members could prove to be the most difficult part of the peace process. Yeni, for example, stated that 'if people recognize [demobilized FARC members], they will be afraid, or.. in an act or rage, they might attack them.'[71] Correspondingly, Gabriela said that 'the demobilization and reintegration of former FARC members will be difficult and possibly unsuccessful. If it is difficult for them to find a job, they will easily resort to stealing and killing. It is an easy way to make money.'[72] She was not the only one foreseeing a problem with the reintegration of demobilized FARC members into the job market. In fact, some informants were of opinion that the government is responsible for the provision of jobs to ensure and enable a reintegration process as uncomplicated as possible.

National media reported that this imaginable struggle to find a well-paying job could cause former FARC members to join street gangs. It should be noted, however, that the high presence of paramilitaries in Medellín makes it unlikely that former FARC members will be able to join any organized crime group in the city, even if they wanted to. Until today, paramilitaries are the ones ruling some of the neighbourhoods and almost all street gangs are allied either to *Urabeños* or to *Oficina de Envigado*. It is doubtful, yet not impossible, that they are willing to risk the mutual truce that has contributed immensely to the recent reduction of violence in Medellín. A more realistic issue, however, would be that FARC dissidents will either form splinter-groups or that they will join other, already existing guerrilla groups, such as the ELN.

Secondly, a concern related to the peace agreement not properly addressing the root-causes of the violent conflict was repeatedly mentioned. Some informants reasoned in good faith that the peace deal was very well thought out, simply because they had been working on it for so long. However, especially higher-educated informants expressed criticism. Luis, for example, said:

> We should not fool ourselves. The peace agreement between the government and the FARC is an 'agreement among elites' [..] We should not fool ourselves because building a stable and long-lasting peace is a difficult and long process

[71] Author's interview with Yeni, 03-04-17.
[72] Author's interview with Gabriela, 22-03-17.

> for which there is still a long way to go. First, it is an accord only between two actors of the conflict, but many actors remain. Second, there is no solution to solve root-causes of the armed conflict, like the political and social exclusion of many sectors of society.[73]

In other words, it is unlikely that the conflict can be overcome without an agreement that includes *all* actors involved in the violent conflict. In line with this, Liliana pointed out that 'we want peace, but all we know is war. The government is using guns to achieve peace. Even if they want peace, they are not doing it in the right way. They are not teaching peace, they are teaching war.'[74] Her friend Caro added that 'the problems of mankind in this society are so deep.. this peace process is just a superficial way to solve problems. It is only a momentary change, a bandage for an enormous wound: it won't work, it won't hold.'[75]

5.4 Citizen support

Despite the concerns and the undeniable gap between 'peace' and everyday reality in Medellín, some informants have carefully started reproducing these social practices of peace.[76] However, for now this appears to be the exception to the rule. Citizen support is generally considered to be important for the chance of the peace agreement to succeed. When asked *how* citizens can contribute to long-lasting peace, five informants pointed-out the importance of first understanding what the agreement truly entails before starting dialogue and eventually educating others.[77] As outlined in chapter three, the co-existence of two contesting discourses have led to confusion about the exact contents of the agreement as barely anyone has read the entire document. Additionally, Juliana emphasized the importance of forgiveness. Having lost her father to the conflict seven years ago, she understands exactly why so many people have a difficult time forgiving former FARC members 'for all the pain they have caused.' Despite the tragic loss, she argued that 'many people are not capable of forgiveness but we have to find it

[73] Author's interview with Luis, 28-04-17.
[74] Author's interview with Liliana, 28-04-17.
[75] Author's interview with Caro, 28-04-17.
[76] Importantly, while this chapter focuses on the reproduction of social practices of everyday peace by informants, it should be noted that various experts, such as Dr. John Zuluaga and Associate Professor Gabriel Ignacio Gomez, are also actively reproducing these practices of everyday peace by teaching their students (and allowing critical discussions) about the peace process, and specifically the aspect of transitional justice.
[77] I.e.: Alejandra, Camila, Daniela, Juliana and Luis.

in our hearts, even when we do not fully agree with the agreement. If we want a better future for our children, we will have to find a way to forgive.'[78]

Moreover, various informants emphasized the importance of enabling a smooth reintegration by welcoming and accepting former FARC members into their universities and workplaces. Sandra stated that:

> There will be many people looking for a job, they cannot live on nothing. So they will look for a job and when they go, people will tell them: you are a guerrilla, a drug trafficker, a thug.. and that is no way to support the peace process.[79]

Overall, informants see various complications that will have to be overcome before peace can truly be achieved.

5.5 Reproducing peace

Importantly, while all informants acknowledged the importance of citizens supporting the peace process for its chances to succeed, only Daniela spoke of experiencing a sense of *responsibility* to do something about it. For that reason, she went out into the streets prior to the referendum to start a dialogue and educate others about the peace agreement. Instead of thinking in terms of 'friends and enemies', she argued that former guerrillas should be viewed simply as Colombians. 'The success of this peace process, depends on the government, on the FARC, and on us.'[80] Not surprisingly, then, she also participated in various demonstrations following the public referendum. To her surprise, 'some people responded by saying: they are killing people in the countryside. What does that have to do with me?' In other words, while the war should concern everyone, the fact that the immense majority of the victims live in rural areas, have given rise to "an attitude that, if not passive, is indifferent to their fate" (Historical Memory Group 2016:20). Correspondingly, Daniela said that 'we encountered many different perspectives. Some [people] were very emotional, but if you have not lost anyone to the war.. they react differently.'[81]

[78] Author's interview with Juliana, 17-04-17.
[79] Author's interview with Sandra, 03-04-17.
[80] Author's interview with Daniela, 20-04-17.
[81] Author's interview with Daniela, 20-04-17.

Daniela was not the only informant actively participating in the discourse of peace. Camila, for example, works at a local research institute called *Casa de las Estrategias* that aims to achieve social transformation through cultural change. Through a city-wide campaign under the name of '*No Copio*'[82], Camila and her colleagues are trying to de-normalize and de-justify homicides and shift guilt and blame from the victim towards the victimizer. Too often, young people are blamed for their own murder for 'knowing the wrong people' or for assumedly 'being in the wrong place.' The *No Copio*-campaign tries to create awareness and community while sending out the message that homicides are not normal and can never be justified. Simultaneously, Camila and her *Casa de las Estrategias*-colleagues were working on a protocol to help and protect young people who are afraid that they will be killed. Interestingly, when they started writing down stories through the help of close friends and relatives, their studies revealed that nine out of twelve recent murder-victims in Medellín knew they would be killed on the basis of (graphic) warnings, but they were afraid or had no money to get help and thus felt alone in their problems. The police are often unable to help due to a lack of resources, but also because street gangs control different neighbourhoods in the city. For that reason, *Casa de las Estrategias* is building a new model in which these young people are 'removed' from their everyday situation and brought to a safe location until it is safe to return home.[83]

Lastly, Katalina has been part of the movement '*Generación Paz'*[84], or 'Generation Peace', since it was founded in Medellín in February of 2016. It is an editorial and artistic project, with the objective of creating an independent communication medium to inform Colombian society about the progress of the peace process in a profound and humane way. Bringing together journalists, photographers, artists and citizens, they are driven by processes of disinformation regarding the peace agreement and the predominant indifference of people in urban areas. By the means of making available an alternative news source, *Generación Paz* aims to inform and create awareness on the complex national reality and, subsequently, to contribute to a peaceful Colombia.[85]

Amidst ongoing violence, naturally, it can be difficult to be optimistic. However, as Nordstrom acknowledges, "people stop war by creating peace" (2004:179) and that is exactly what becomes evident here. Without support from governing institutions, it are individuals like

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[82] '*No copio'* can be roughly translated to 'we are not with you'
[83] Author's interview with Camila, 14-03-17.
[84] See www.generacionpaz.co
[85] Author's interview with Katalina, 18-04-17.

Daniela, Camila and Katalina, who commit to building peace – not for profit of power, but because they simply want to contribute to a more peaceful society.

The Colombians have one peace agreement ‘more’ than they had a year ago. Three informants have carefully started reproducing social practices of everyday peace that could, eventually, when enough people participate, transform the prevailing war structure into a structure of peace. For now, however, it appears that the war structure is still intact. After five decades of violence, perhaps it is not surprising that it will take more than a few months for the war structure to be broken and replaced by structure of peace. It should be kept in mind that many people in Medellín have never lived in a country that is at peace and will therefore need time to adjust. In the words of Hannah, ‘peace is never a quick fix [..] there will be new problems and crises’[86] but at least Colombia has taken the first step.

[86] Author’s interview with Hannah, 05-05-17.

Conclusion

While world leaders watch the developments in Colombia with careful optimism, people's understanding of the peace deal and its implications is limited and expectations of what peace in Colombia could be like are low. In this research it has become evident that "reaching a peace deal is not the same as reaching peace" (Mac Ginty et al. 2007:1). However, the current focus on the dichotomy of 'failed' or 'successful' peace accords, fails to capture the complex reality of peace *beyond* the absence of war. This research, therefore, has aimed to contribute to a more multidimensional understanding of peace. In doing so, it aimed to give voice to a group of individuals who are not only often overlooked in analyses and discussions of peace(building), but who were also confronted with a peace agreement that a majority of the voters initially did not agree with. Hence, this research responds to Brewer's (2010) call for a more human-focused approach to our accounts of peace and conflict. The theoretically-informed research question that this thesis has answered is as follows:

How are social practices of everyday peace reproduced in the context of urban dissatisfaction in post-agreement Medellín, Colombia from October 2016 to May 2017?

In chapter three it was found that the discourse on war and the counter-discourse on peace, as well as its institutionalization through the implementation of the peace agreement, are politically functional in light of the upcoming presidential elections of 2018. President Santos, on the one hand, was bound on achieving peace before the end of his term in order to protect his reputation and credibility, something that would increase the chance of the next president representing his political party. Former president Uribe, on the other hand, led a 'two-folded opposition' which holds that he not only opposed the governing coalition, but also the peace process. Interestingly, while Santos drew upon arguments of moral justness and economic opportunities, Uribe took a different approach by highlighting possible threats and dangers that could accompany the peace agreement.

Moreover, Santos tried to legitimize the peace process through means of a public referendum. The unexpected 'no' victory, however, severely damaged his reputation and credibility. Not only was he obligated to include Uribe in the renegotiations in Havana, his decision to pass the revised agreement straight through congress was not well received by a large part of the population. Additionally, because the negotiations took longer than expected, many deadlines were missed, and the violence continued, it seems that Santos' career in politics

will soon be over. It is not surprising, then, that he is trying to protect the peace agreement by legally shielding it from the next president.

In chapter four the difficult implementation of the peace agreement was outlined. Moreover, it aimed to explain why more than 60 per cent of the people decided not to cast a vote in the referendum, and why a small majority of those who *did* vote, surprisingly voted against the agreement. It was argued that the discourse on war, led by Uribe, matches with a higher degree of resonance because of two main reasons. Firstly, the discourse on war became resonant with the personal, everyday experiences of many people struggling to sustain livelihoods. In contrast, the 'benefits' of peace, as drawn upon by Santos in the discourse on peace, remained somewhat abstract and distant from everyday life (Benford and Snow 2000:621). Subsequently, it became evident that Uribe was able to make many people inhabit his story of their reality. According to Demmers, the power of media and governments is largely based on their capacity to control the language in which people discuss societal problems (2017:129). Indeed, several informants, for example, spoke about 'terrorists' that were untrustworthy and should not be negotiated with. Secondly, because of previous (military) successes and the effective 'iron-fist' policy in Medellín, Uribe managed to hold on to his reputation as strong, '*paisa'* leader that could rid the country of the FARC through military victory.

However, while the discourse on war, then, had more social meaning for a small majority of the voters, it should be noted that an even bigger group, partly as a consequence of corruption and distrust, decided simply to not vote at all. In other words, while the discourse on war resonated with many people – it appears that a majority of all Colombians found both discourses to be socially meaningless.

Chapter five found that, while some informants have carefully started reproducing practices of everyday peace, for now, it remains rather limited. All informants, however, acknowledged the importance of citizen support to increase the chance of the peace process succeeding. To be able to contribute to a long-lasting peace, citizens first have to truly understand what the agreement entails. Thereafter, they can engage in dialogue and educate others. Additionally, informants said that ordinary citizens can support the peace process by welcoming and accepting former FARC members into their universities and workplaces to enable a smooth reintegration-phase.

Although several informants have embraced the discourse on peace, only three informants are actively reproducing social practices of everyday peace through participation in

demonstrations, committing to de-normalize homicides, and through the creation of an independent communication medium that aims to inform Colombian citizens about the progress of the peace process in a profound and humane way. The majority of informants, however, have not (yet) started to reproduce social practices of everyday peace because of two main reasons. First, according to the informants, everyday reality does not meet the expectation of what peace should be like. In fact, not one informant believed that peace in itself had been achieved. Second, various informants stated that the peace agreement does not properly address the root-causes. This is reflected in the words of Caro, who said that 'this peace process is just a superficial way to solve problems. It is only a momentary change, a bandage for an enormous wound: it won't work, it won't hold.'[87] After all, the FARC was not the only violent actor involved in the violent conflict. Importantly, if citizens in Medellín do not truly believe that this time, peace *will* be realised, it is unlikely that they will participate in the reproduction of social practices of everyday peace.

While reproducing the discourse on peace does not equal reproducing social practices of everyday peace, it should be viewed as the first step in doing so. After all, in the words of Hannah, 'peace is never a quick fix.'[88] In the case of Colombia, it is no different and the challenge of establishing a stable peace after civil conflict is always a formidable one (Caplan and Hoeffler 2017:134). The violent conflict with the FARC has terrorized (parts of) the country for over five decades. Subsequently, to 'break through' the war structure that has been in place for half a century, more time is needed. After all, many people residing in Medellín have never lived a single day in a country that is at peace. As a result, even though a peace agreement with the FARC has been signed, everyday life is still characterized by violence and insecurity. Therefore, for 'peace' to abide in Colombian society, root-causes of the conflict, especially drug trafficking and land distribution, have to be addressed more in-depth. Indeed, as long as street gangs, paramilitaries and other organized crime groups have control over certain parts of the country, peace will continue to be a dream that feels just out of reach.

In fact, the peace structure that Santos and his governing coalition tried to establish already started to 'crumble' at the very beginning: through a discourse that did not reach large parts of the population and through an inefficient implementation of the agreement that was not as well thought-out as could have been after four years of negotiations. Indeed, the discourse on peace was undermined by the prevailing discourse on war and it was not Santos, but former

[87] Author's interview with Caro, 28-04-17.
[88] Author's interview with Hannah, 05-05-17.

president Uribe, who was able to control the language in which ordinary people discussed the peace process. Additionally, while the implementation of the peace agreement was aimed at creating an environment in which peace could flourish and take root, it quickly became clear that 'peace on paper' and 'peace in reality' are two very different things. Subsequently, the legitimacy of the peace process was undermined by all the delays and unexpected difficulties. In summary, with the first two aspects that were supposed to create and enable a structure of peace severely falling short, it is not surprising that a significant amount of the informants are not actively reproducing social practices of everyday peace.

Indeed, to answer the research question, in chapter five it was found that three informants actively reproduce social practices of everyday peace through participation in demonstrations, committing to de-normalize homicides, and through the creation of an independent communication medium. The large majority of informants are, thus, not (yet) participating in the reproduction of everyday peace. Not only does 'peace' simply not match the reality of their everyday life in the city of Medellín, but due to the fact that the peace process has not been open to public participation, citizens in Medellín have never really been able to 'take ownership' of the peace process. While locally owned processes are perceived to be more legitimate and more likely to succeed (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:78), it became evident that ordinary citizens have played a very limited role in the peace process. In fact, while Santos tried to legitimize the peace process through means of a public referendum, his decision to pass the revised agreement directly through congress after the unexpected 'no' victory, has done the exact opposite.

The durability of peace is highly dependent on the legitimacy of the emerging post-war order. In fact, scholars have pointed out that peace is most vulnerable in the short-term and a high proportion of peace agreements collapse within the first few years (Reiter 2015:90). The key to a sustainable and lasting peace, then, is to survive the first few years after which the agreement is likely to strengthen over time. Subsequently, how likely is it that the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC will hold?

The presidential elections of 2018 might prove to be the biggest challenge of all. After a terrorist attack in Bogotá on 17th of June, 2017, that killed three people, former president Uribe said that that if his political party *Centro Democrático* wins the upcoming elections, the peace agreement will be modified (Alsema 2017c). At the time of writing it remains unclear whether it would be legally possible to alter the signed agreement, as the peace process is overseen by the United Nations. However, the fact that president Santos is trying to legally shield the peace agreement from the next president proves that he, too, is unsure of what Uribe

is capable of. Subsequently, whether or not the peace agreement will survive the first few years largely depends on the next president and his or her commitment to the peace process.

To end on a more positive note, Colombia has 'one more peace' and 'one actor with guns less' than it had a year ago. If nothing else, it is a promise for a better future. While 'peace' in itself has not yet been achieved, the country is one step closer to finally ending the violence that has characterized the country for so long. While the war structure has not yet been broken, cracks are beginning to show. Over time the discourse on peace will reach more people, and if the next president will commit to the efficient implementation of the peace agreement, the structure of peace can slowly be reinforced. Of course, more challenges will arise and the reintegration of demobilized FARC members into society can only succeed if all actors involved, including ordinary citizens, work together. After fifty years of violence, it would be easier to continue making war, than to drastically challenge the hegemonic order and start making peace. But, as Nordstrom acknowledges, "people stop war by creating peace" (2004:179). Colombia has taken the first step, and now ordinary citizens can help transform the prevailing war structure into a structure of peace. After all, 'we have to be optimistic, even if we do not believe [in a good outcome]. Faith moves mountains.'[89]

Recommendations for future research

As was explained in the methodology section, various limitations could have influenced the outcome of this research. Most importantly, the sample of this research was relatively limited and while it consists of citizens of many different socio-economic layers of society it could be interesting to include the 'extremes': the exceptionally rich as well as the many homeless people living in streets of Medellín. A more representative sample could possibly also enable the findings to be generalized to a larger group of people, but would most-likely require a longer time period within which to conduct the research. Moreover, to supplement to this research, it would be interesting, although possibly dangerous due to the presence of other violent actors, to look at the reproduction of everyday peace in the territories that were formerly held by FARC. Lastly, it is possible, although not guaranteed, that in five or ten years everyday reality will match more closely to ideas of 'peace' as more and more people will hopefully start reproducing social practices of everyday peace over time. For that reason, this research on the reproduction of everyday peace in Medellín could be repeated in a few years to add to the perspective presented in this thesis.

[89] Author's interview with Donnis, 20-04-17.

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Appendix A – Overview Interviews

A.1 Informants

	Name	Age	Date of the interview	Occupation	Vote in Referendum
1	Alejandra	29	30-03-17	Industrial designer	Yes
2	Astrid	28	12-04-17	Housekeeper	-
3	Caesar	30	18-03-17	Taxi driver	No
4	Caro	33	28-06-17	Jehovah witness	-
5	Camila	24	14-03-17	Staff member *Casa de las Estrategias*	Yes
6	Daniela	20	20-04-17	Student philosophy	Yes
7	Diego	42	16-04-17	Taxi driver	No
8	Donnis	33	20-04-17	Mechanic	No
9	Elisa	28	30-03-17	Restaurant owner	Yes
10	Gabriela	31	22-03-17	Teacher primary school	Yes
11	José	29	20-04-17	Student	Yes
12	Juan	33	21-03-17	Tour guide	Yes
13	Juliana	23	17-04-17	Student international business	-
14	Katalina	32	18-04-17	Co-founder *Generación Paz*	Yes
15	Liliana	30	28-04-17	Lawyer and Jehovah witness	-
16	Luis	23	28-04-17	Student	Yes
17	Pablo	29	28-03-17	Engineer	Yes
18	Sandra	24	03-04-17	Housekeeper	-
19	Wilderson	31	05-03-17	Night guard	No
20	Yeni	22	03-04-17	Housekeeper	No

A.2 Experts in the Field

	Name	Nationality	Date of interview	Institute/organization
1	Gabriel Ignacio Gomez	Colombia	31-03-17	University of Antioquia
2	Gabriel Ruiz Romero	Colombia	17-03-17	University of Medellín
3	Hannah	United Kingdom	05-05-17	Peace Brigades International
4	John Zuluaga	Colombia	23-03-17	University of Antioquia
5	Mimi Yagoub	United Kingdom	17-03-17	Journalist and researcher InSight Crime
6	Najet	France	28-04-17	Journalist
7	Richard	United Kingdom	16-03-17	Journalist Colombia Reports