A collapsing banana industry

Dependence, vulnerability, insecurity and uncertainty in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

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Masterthesis International Development Studies
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22-12-2017

Information

A collapsing banana industry: Dependence, vulnerability, insecurity and uncertainty in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

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Master International Development Studies
Sociology of Development and Change

Preface

After a really long time, my thesis is finally finished. There were many moments wherein I thought I could not do it. It was a long and hard process, and I learned a lot. Not only about doing research, but also about myself.

I had never done fieldwork abroad before. My previous research projects in my bachelor and my master consisted of qualitative research with data collected through a number of interviews. I recorded the interviews, transcribed them, linked the data to the theoretical framework and rounded it off with a conclusion and a discussion. Such a process is also not a piece of cake, however I had never imagined how difficult this master thesis research would be: to do fieldwork abroad, in a country I had never been before, with the idea of 'I will research the local population in an inductive way'. Sure, of course I thought it would be difficult, but I could not have imagined it would be the hardest thing I have ever done.

So in the end, I am really happy to be able to present this thesis and I am grateful for this opportunity to learn so much.

I would like to thank my supervisors Joost Jongerden and Gerard Verschoor, for regularly checking in with me whenever I hid myself and gave no sign of life, and for helping me shaping my thesis this way.

I would like to express gratitude to Joylyn and Lennox, my Vincentian hosts and neighbours who were really kind to me, helped me find my way on the island and introduced me to other people. I could always reach out to them. Of course I also want to thank all my informants. I want to thank my American volunteer friends, with a special thanks to Marcia and Joetta, who quickly became good friends. We shared many experiences, our life stories, vans and food. I am really grateful to have had these people around in the three months I lived there.

I owe a massive thank you to my family and friends who always had my back, listened to both my good stories and my frustrations, and simply were there for me. I could not have done this without their support.

Abstract

This thesis describes the collapse of the banana industry in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and its consequences for the Vincentian people. According to sources, the collapse of the banana industry was very important for the state of the current Vincentian society, so the major objective of this study was to find out how it affected the people living there. The empirical part of this study was conducted in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the fieldwork lasted three months. In these three months an inductive research was carried out, with a focus on observations, informal chatting and meetups, to see what was happening on the ground.

After the fieldwork phase, four main themes were distilled out of the data: vulnerability, dependence, insecurity and uncertainty. These themes play a key role in the research and are used throughout this thesis to interpret the findings. The four themes are explored by using theories of Zygmunt Bauman and Philip McMichael, to position the findings in a larger sociological debate. The empirical findings are presented in two chapters, where it becomes clear that the Vincentian people deal with limited opportunities because the former reliance on selling the bananas has vanished. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and its people were dependent on this banana trade and therefore vulnerable. The drawback of the preferential access, and the following collapse of the industry, led to insecurity and uncertainty for the Vincentians.

The research shows that because of the experienced insecurity and uncertainty and a lack of trust in the government, Vincentians take matters in their own hands and work around the limitations in many different ways. They try to minimize risks and limit their dependence and vulnerability.

Content

1. Introduction

For this master's thesis, I carried out a research around the topics of vulnerability, insecurity, dependence and uncertainty. These topics are interrelated and are examples of how people and countries can be related to each other and the difficulties that are entwined with dependency relations, such as colonialism and post-colonial trade agreements. The research has been carried out in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), an archipelago in the Caribbean. As a former colony of the United Kingdom and a current member of the Commonwealth, the country has experienced and still experiences deep dependence. The drawback of preferential access to the European Union market for bananas has marked a shift in the country in different ways. The fact that the country is very small and is situated in a hurricane-prone area makes the country also vulnerable in economic and ecological ways. In this thesis, I investigate the structures of vulnerability and dependence in SVG, and the resulting insecurity and uncertainty for the people living in the country.

St Vincent and the Grenadines consists of 32 islands, of which 9 are inhabited (WTO, 2014). The main and biggest island, Saint Vincent, is densely populated, volcanic, and agriculture is a main sector, whereas the other small islands, the Grenadines, have a small population and rely on tourism (Mills, 2001). The country is small and vulnerable, both naturally and economically. Natural hazards are common and have a big impact. Also, the climate change imposes big risks for SVG. The country is dependent on foreign investments, loans and remittances. The country also lacks capacity, as is often found in small islands. SVG is relatively poor. It once depended heavily on agriculture, but there has been a shift to more services, construction, and tourism. After a collapse of the banana industry, many people realized how much they relied on the banana industry and how vulnerable they were without any alternative income sources (Myers et al., 2011). Now many (young) men are in the illegal marijuana production, also as a safety net. Because it is illegal, it is difficult to estimate how many people are involved. In 2001, 85% of the youth between 10 and 14 years old reported they used marijuana (Myers et al., 2011). Growing marijuana is a lucrative business, as it is rewarded with quick cash. SVG is the largest marijuana producer in the Eastern Caribbean, and the marijuana is also exported.

Next to all the natural and economical risks and concerns, there are also social issues on SVG. There are high levels of unemployment, especially in rural areas. There is a lack of transparency in the government, corruption is common, and the government is not trusted blindly. There is a high gender inequality, according to reports. Men work often in the informal sector, such as the earlier mentioned marijuana business, and many women are responsible for the farming and the family. Cases of HIV/Aids, and of alcohol and substance abuse are known. Teenage pregnancies are common, as around 50 percent of the women report that they have had their first child before they were 19 years old (UNDP, 2017).

There is a lot going on in SVG, and many problems are stated by organizations as the UNDP. There is very little research on the social issues in SVG, so I decided to research social matters in this country.

To understand the situation and answer my research question, I have had intensive and close contact with the people I call my informants. I stayed for three months in SVG to gather the data for the thesis. The results of my research will add to the knowledge of the social issues on SVG that are often

reported, and my qualitative research, next to the existing quantitative studies, will contribute to a better understanding.

I gathered my data and I wrote it down in small stories to make sure it 'made sense'. After that, I distilled four themes: dependence, vulnerability, uncertainty and insecurity. These themes together form the red thread that runs through this thesis.

The thesis consists of eight chapters. In the next chapter, I provide a research context of St Vincent and the Grenadines and I also present the research question. In the methodology chapter I explain the methods I have used and the theory that informs these methods, and I elaborate on the ethical issues. A theoretical framework is presented next, with a focus on the theories of Zygmunt Bauman and Philip McMichael, and on the four themes. This theoretical framework is followed by two chapters wherein I present my data. I will conclude with a discussion wherein I position my data in the research context and within the theoretical debate I have set up, and of course a conclusion.

2. Context

In this chapter, I present the research context of St Vincent and the Grenadines. First, a geographical and demographic context is set up, so the place where my study took place becomes a bit more tangible. In the second part I reviewed existing literature and research about SVG. The main political, economic and social themes are indicated and explored. This will give direction to my own research: I elaborate on this in the final part of this chapter. There I also state the research question that guides my thesis and that will be answered in the conclusion.

2.1 Geographical and demographic context

St Vincent and the Grenadines is a country in the Caribbean Sea that consists of 32 islands. The country is part of the Windward islands, together with Dominica, Martinique, St Lucia and Grenada. St Vincent and the Grenadines is located west of Barbados. Nine islands of SVG are inhabited: St Vincent, Young Island, Bequia, Mustique, Canouan, Union Island, Mayreau, Petit St Vincent and Palm Island. St Vincent is by far the largest island: it is 344 km², all the Vincentian Grenadines together are 45.3 km² (The Commonwealth website, 2017). The capital of SVG is Kingstown, with a population of approximately 16500. Other main towns are Georgetown, Byera, Biabou and Chateaubelair, with respectively 1400, 1200, 900 and 630 inhabitants (The Commonwealth website, 2017). Port Elizabeth on Bequia is the largest town on the Grenadines, with a population of 770.

St Vincent is mainly mountainous, with one active volcano, the Soufrière. There are several waterfalls to see and nature hiking trails to walk. The roads on the island follow the hills and mountains, they are windy and steep. A big part of the island is really green and covered in lush tropical forest. Typical produce from St Vincent are amongst others breadfruit, mango, pineapple, limes, lemons, oranges, guavas and avocados. It rains regularly, and according to the official website of the government of SVG (2017), the average temperature is 27 degrees Celsius. The Grenadines are a lot drier and less green. The sand on the beaches in the Grenadines is white, as opposed to the volcanic grey sand beaches in St Vincent.

SVG is very vulnerable in terms of natural disasters and climate change. There is a hurricane season, which is officially from June to November. Dry season is between January and May, and the rainy season is from May or June to September. However, due to climate change the seasons are also changing, while they were relatively stable and reliable before. Droughts and floods are therefore common. Other environmental issues are the pollution of coasts and coastal waters because of yachts and industry.

The official language in SVG is English, a dialect is also often spoken. 85 per cent of the population is functionally literate according to the government (official government website, 2017). The largest part of the population is of African or mixed descent. There are Indian, European and Carib minorities (The Commonwealth website, 2017).

2.2 Political, economic and social context

SVG has been a British colony until 27 October 1979, now known as Independence Day. The country has remained a part of the Commonwealth, thus has Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. She is represented by a Governor-General, Sir Frederick Ballantyne. SVG is a Parliamentary democracy, and has adapted the British Westminster model. This implies that the leader of the party that wins the most seats in the House of Assembly (15 electable seats) becomes Prime Minister, and selects and

heads a cabinet. The other seats are secured by the opposition. Elections take place every five years. Since 2001 the Unity Labour Party (ULP) has won four elections in a row, with Ralph Gonsalves as Prime Minister. The New Democratic Party (NDP) is in opposition. There are other parties, such as the Green Party, but they have not obtained a seat so far. The latest elections took place on 9 December 2015, while I was in SVG for my fieldwork.

The economy of SVG is relatively undeveloped (The Commonwealth website, 2017), although the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2011) estimated SVG as an upper middle income country, with a gross national income per capita of 4210 US dollar in 2010. The economic base is very small, and SVG is heavily dependent on agriculture, making the country vulnerable. Bananas were sold to the European Union under preferential agreements until 2007. Since then, the tough competition on the world market has led to a situation wherein many small farmers moved out of banana production (The Commonwealth website, 2017). The drawback of the trade preferential agreements has had a big impact in terms of less income security and more unemployment. The government is steering to more diversification into manufacturing, tourism, call centres and offshore finance (Myers et al., 2011).

The country's official unemployment rate was 12 per cent in 2004, although unofficial estimates are higher: somewhere between 14 and 25 per cent (Myers et al., 2011). The economic website The Global Economy states that the unemployment rate has not been under 18 per cent since 1991 (see chart below). There is structural poverty.
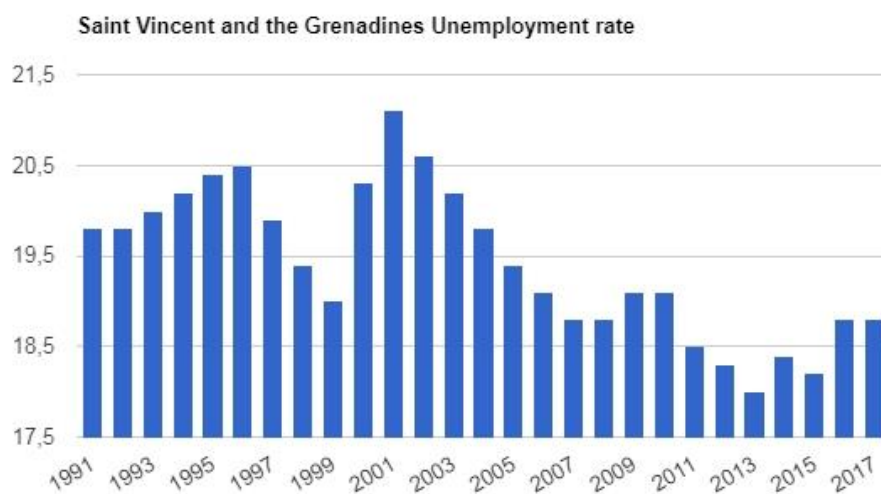
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, The World Bank

The Vincentian economy is small and open, with a focus on import (57,9% of GDP) and little export (27.1% of GDP), according to the Caribbean Development Bank (2014). SVG is highly dependent on import and experiences great vulnerability to external influences, such as fluctuating fuel and food prices, natural disasters, external capital flows and economic instabilities in economic partners, in general the United States, Canada and Europe.

The former reliance on the banana industry made the country vulnerable: preferential access to the European Union market proved to be key to social stability. The former regulated market made it possible that the small-scale banana farmers had a stable income for years (Myers et al., 2011). These small-scale farmers did not stand a chance against the larger Latin American banana plantations: because of the small scale, the bananas were more expensive to grow. Plantations have never really been a possibility in SVG, in particular because of the mountainous surface. The Vincentian bananas turned out to be uncompetitive, and this marked a decline in banana farming in SVG.

There has not been a lot of research done on social issues in SVG yet. There are some reports about certain issues, such as HIV/Aids and human rights practices. The Caribbean Development Bank (2014) mentions a score of 0.761 on the Human Development Index in 2010. According to the UNDP Human Development Reports, this score did not change much over the course of five years: SVG scored 0.722 on the Human Development Index in 2015, ranking as the 99th country. Countries with a similar score are Tunisia (0.725), Surinam (0.725), Dominican Republic (0.722), and Tonga (0.721). The Caribbean Development Bank (2014) stated that the social indicators in SVG are generally favourable and that SVG scores relatively high on human development. On the other hand, poverty, gender inequality and citizen insecurity are serious issues and not yet effectively addressed.

SVG is experiencing the early stages of an ageing population, which leads to a burden on the productive population (mainly their families) and on social assistance structures of the state. Poverty numbers have decreased in the last two decennia, however in 2007/2008 just over 50 per cent of the Vincentian population was either poor or living just over the poverty line, being at risk of falling into poverty (Caribbean Development Bank, 2014). The Bank makes clear that the level of vulnerability is therefore a reason to worry. They state that the people who are at the greatest risk to be poor or to fall into poverty are people living in rural communities, especially the banana farming people; people with large families; and people who are living in single parents households.

There is a relation between poverty and education: according to the Caribbean Development Bank (2014) the access to education by the poor should be improved. Transportation, books, uniforms and food should be more subsidized for the poorer households. For education in general there is the problem that the programme is not well-structured and there are not enough qualified science teachers. A significant part of the children does not pass primary education, and only 40 per cent of the students graduate from secondary education with enough knowledge of among other subjects English and mathematics (Caribbean Development Bank, 2014). Graduates do not have lots of opportunities and unemployment is high.

There is a noticeable rise in crime and violence in SVG, according to the Caribbean Development Bank (2014) and the United States Department of State (2017), although abuse and violence are often not reported. They negatively impact social and economic development. There is sometimes loss of life and more often there is loss of livelihoods. Violence, crime and abuse cause constraints to human development: physical insecurity is a problem, especially for the poor.

According to the Caribbean Development Bank (2014), the rise in crime also led to erosion of public trust in the government and foremost its institutions of law and order. Corruption is quite common and there is a lack of transparency in the government (United States Department of State, 2017). There exists an anti-corruption law, however it is not effectively implemented: at times officials

engage in corrupt practices without being punished. The government has stated that a national anticorruption agency is not needed (United States Department of State, 2017). Investment opportunities are lost, so the international competitiveness has decreased, impacting the Vincentian economy (Caribbean Development Bank, 2014).

One of the biggest concerns both the Caribbean Development Bank and the United States Department of State mention is gender inequality and gender-based violence. There is an Equal Pay Act since 1994, that should protect people from sex discrimination. There has been some progress in legislation and policies, however more improvement is needed (Caribbean Development Bank, 2014). Women officially have the same legal rights as men. However, they are often financial dependent on men, and they are often marginalized (United States Department of State, 2017). Women are underrepresented in politics. Girls and boys have the same access to primary and secondary school, but boys are often underperforming and there are less men than women attending post-secondary education. Women have taken up a double role: they take care of the household and more and more often they work to receive an income, despite the lack of sharing care responsibilities with men (Caribbean Development Bank, 2014). The Caribbean Development Bank states that men often experience a sense of male powerlessness because they cannot provide to their families. This is a contributing factor to gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence is common and a significant problem. Sexual harassment is not specifically prohibited, and enforcement of laws around sexual harassments are not effectively enforced according to local human rights groups and women's organizations (United States Department of State, 2017). The police often does not follow up on cases of domestic violence. Rape is illegal and the government generally enforces this law when victims come forward. However, it is common for violators to make payoffs to the victims in exchange for not pressing charges (United States Department of State, 2017). Gender-based violence and rape remain a serious problem, civil society groups agree. The crisis centre for survivors of domestic violence was not operational, according to reports. Discrimination of LGBTI persons is common, and there are no supporting laws.

There are some other serious human rights concerns, such as censorship. Freedom of speech and press is generally respected by the government, however voicing criticism on the government is not truly possible: critics fear libel charges (United States Department of State, 2017). Organizations concerned with freedom of speech think that critics are in this way silenced by the government. Protests against the government are also not accepted, even when peaceful: during the 2015 election season the police harassed the protesters and arrested several of them. The United States Department of State (2017) also mentions a report from the SVGHRA (St Vincent and the Grenadines Human Rights Association) that the police used excessive force.

There are some NGOs in SVG that try to improve human development. These NGOs are generally accepted by the government and they are often invited to meetings. However, the government does not really listen to the NGOs and they try to limit active participation of NGOs in these meetings (United States Department of State, 2017). A significant problem in the Vincentian society that has the attention of both NGOs and the government is child abuse. Neglect is common, like physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and incest. There are unfortunately no statistics on this problem, according to the United States Department of State.

2.3 Research context and research question

In the reports and research articles I have found, the collapse of the banana industry is always mentioned as an important occurrence with impact on the current state of the country. Myers et al. (2011) mention that the social stability in the country was affected by the collapse of the banana industry. Reports of the Caribbean Development Bank and the United States Department of State show that there are major concerns regarding human development and human rights practices.

After exploring these themes, I noticed that the several issues are addressed briefly in the reports and articles. There are some numbers and statistics, and there are for instance some statements about which human rights practices are worrisome and not well addressed in SVG. However, these reports were written by official authorities of the United Nations, the Caribbean Development Bank and the United States. Although these reports are clearly valuable sources of knowledge and help to gain insight in the Vincentian society, I could not help but wonder where the 'human perspective' and the 'local voice' were. Since it was my research objective to work inductively and really look what was happening on the ground, I was sure my research would contribute to the existing knowledge of St Vincent and the Grenadines, showing a little insight in how Vincentian people experience their own society. The research question that best suited my approach and that I will answer in the course of this thesis is therefore: **How are the Vincentian people affected by the collapse of the banana industry, and how do they cope with its consequences?**

3. Methodology

In this chapter I will explain the research objective, and the methods and approach I used conducting fieldwork. Over the course of the fieldwork, my research topic has changed. I made some changes because being in the place had led to new insights and a new perspective on (the relevance of) the research. In this chapter, I will also elaborate on these changes and my decisions. My ethical considerations are also discussed, and at the end of the chapter I will write about my experiences in the field and the limitations I came across.

3.1 Research objective and approach

Before I went to SVG and while writing my research proposal, I did not know what I could expect from this country and what research possibilities I would have. Therefore, I started my journey with a certain specified approach, as will be discussed in this section. This approach was key, and the topic could be changed if the topic I chose in the first place (teenage pregnancy) would be not relevant or difficult to research in that specific context. This was a good decision, since I had to change the topic and the research approach could remain the same.

In my education, my focus always has been on understanding. That is why I chose a qualitative research approach for my thesis. I have always been inspired by sociologists and anthropologists who are trying to understand the people they study. I decided to do an ethnographical research. I read about grounded theory, and I wanted to generate theory from the data I would find in the field.

For theoretical and methodological purposes, I started reading into Chicago School theory: I studied in particular symbolic interactionism. In the methodology of symbolic interactionism, it is important that one looks at the close-up of the action: what do people say, what do people do? This is the so-called "camcorder view" (Wallace & Wolf, 2006). In other words, a scientist must be where the action takes place, very close to the people he or she wants to study, to examine the empirical social world directly (Blumer, 1969). To understand the acts of people, it is necessary to see the world as these people see it. This requires the ability of a scientist to place oneself in the role of the other. Relevant observations are key, descriptive accounts are needed. A scientist should describe how others see certain objects, how they acted upon these objects in different situations, and how they talk about these objects in conversations (Blumer, 1969). After this, the descriptive accounts should be critically discussed by a group of well-informed participants in the world that is studied, so that conclusions are not based on individual accounts. It is also important for social scientists to be aware of their own knowledge, views, images, ideas: they must not interfere with the perspectives of the human beings studied (Blumer, 1969). Researchers must be aware that their perceptions can be really different.

To understand how people perceive and interpret and act on certain situations, it is important to take an inductive approach: an approach whereby the researcher does not have certain categories or theories in mind, but just looks at what actually happens "on the ground" (Wallace & Wolf, 2006). Blumer distinguishes two phases in the research on acting units. Firstly there is the phase of exploration, wherein the researcher becomes familiar with the world studied, and wherein he or she writes descriptive accounts of this world. Secondly, there is the inspection phase, with an intensive, focused examination of this world and the relations in it (Wallace & Wolf, 2006). In the exploration phase, certain sensitizing concepts come forward, and these concepts are further examined by the

researcher in the inspection phase. After the inspection phase, the concepts that are examined and came to a clear definition are the definitive concepts.

I incorporated this inductive approach in my research. I did not really look at specific theories, but I went into the field with little knowledge of the country and its people. To look at what was happening 'on the ground', I decided to talk to as many people as possible, without per se the intention of a full interview: I thought I could obtain a lot of knowledge by talking to others in a day-to-day setting. In practice, this meant that one day I had a conversation with a woman who worked in the café in Kingstown where I was having a coffee, and the next day I talked to one of the neighbours when I was walking in the surroundings of the place I stayed. I also observed a lot, and all the knowledge that I gathered by being 'on the ground' form the exploration phase and also the beginning of the inspection phase that Wallace and Wolf (2006) are talking about. A part of the inspection phase actually took place when I was already back in the Netherlands, where I wrote down some stories or narratives. When I analysed these stories, I saw some patterns, and I distilled the four main themes of vulnerability, dependence, insecurity and uncertainty.

I also read Becker's book 'Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it' (1998) before I went to the field. This book guided me also during my fieldwork. Becker writes about 'tricks' to improve social science research. He states that a research is always determined by imagery: the images or ideas one has about society, and the particular situation one studies. The trick is to make this imagery, this account, as accurate as possible. The stories or narratives that guide a research should make sense, and should be congruent with the facts (Becker, 1998). Becker describes several tricks for a researcher to think differently about the research, for instance "ask how instead of why", and to make a narrative more accurate.

These tricks were helpful during the gathering of the data and during the phase of data analysis, because it made me think differently about doing such a research. I had never been on fieldwork before, and the idea of 'studying something in a society while living there' was quite new and a bit vague to me. Sometimes I did not know how to approach this and how to write a narrative that was both a story that makes sense, and congruent with the facts. Becker's book also helped me looking at a larger scale. The concepts I recognized in my data are not really small-scale, easy-view and on a community level; they are relevant on a national scale, and I found it difficult to say something about SVG in general when I lived for only three months in one small village on the island. According to Becker, it is most important that the account makes sense and is constantly improved by the knowledge one gains. In that respect, I see my data and my narratives as the best I could have done in the time I was in the field. Of course, the account could be improved with new pieces of knowledge, but that process would be endless and the small scope of this research project limits this process, resulting in the account with its concepts that I present in this thesis.

The objective of my research was to gain understanding of the Vincentian society, seen with a 'camcorder view' and talking to many people to get their perspectives on their society. I wanted to generate knowledge and create concepts and categories from the data I found. After a few weeks being in the field, I noticed that I could not really use symbolic interactionism in practice. I found out my approach was more similar to Becker's: discovering new things and make a narrative about Vincentian social life, as accurate as possible. In the following sections I will discuss what that actually looked like in practice.

3.2 Data sources and methods

An inductive research approach requires specific methods. For an ethnographic research, it is important to live in the society one studies. So I lived in SVG for three months, experiencing this society and getting first-hand knowledge. I stayed in an apartment in Belmont, a neighbourhood between the two small villages of Rose Hall and Troumaca. Regurlarly, I walked to Rose Hall, the small village (around 1000 people) that was closest to the place where I was living. I often went to the school to visit a friend who was teaching there, the library that was set up by that friend, or I spent the afternoon at the local clinic, talking to the nurses about all kind of subjects. People were often curious about where I came from, and often asked me things about the Netherlands. They also often asked me when I would come back to SVG. I also regularly talked to my local contacts there and we talked a lot about SVG's politics and the situation in the country.

Almost every week I went to Kingstown, the capital of SVG, to go to the supermarket and have a drink or something. Most of the time I did not go alone, I was with my volunteer friend from Rose Hall or from Troumaca, and in town we often met up with people from all over the island. The place I lived in was quite isolated, so it was nice to be in town and be able to catch up with others. All the conversations I had with people and the trips I made contributed to my knowledge about SVG. I could say that the more people I met and the more talks I had, the more my account or narrative about SVG became 'colorized' with extra knowledge.

Every once in a while I had a dinner party, often with my local contacts, their friends and acquaintances, my volunteer friends from Troumaca and Rose Hall, and/or their friends. I was lucky I was surrounded by good cooks, so we had nice meals while we were talking all night, mostly about SVG. I gathered my data through these informal get-togethers. People knew that I came there to do research, and they were more than willing to share their ideas, perspectives, complaints, and wishes. During those get-togethers, I did not write notes, because that would definitely take away the informality. This meant that I had to remember all the conversations, which was hard sometimes when people were talking fast. I used my phone to make some notes quickly, so these notes could support my memory of the conversations.

3.3 Getting there: changes in the fieldwork, research direction and analysis

The research topic that I decided on before I went to SVG was teenage pregnancy. In my proposal I wrote that I wanted to research how teenage parents make sense of their situation. There was not a lot of research done on social issues, and teenage pregnancy appeared to be a topic in SVG, so I decided I would look into that. However, when I arrived in SVG I found out that it was more difficult than expected to do this research. I tried to find access via the nurses of the clinic, and they were very willing to help me, but they also had little time. Also, there were not many pregnant teenagers in the direct surroundings at that moment. With the informal approach I took, I considered it most important to really connect with my respondents and I was worrying that I did not have enough time to conduct the research I wanted to do. Besides, a couple of weeks after I arrived in SVG, I found out that a local student from the University of the West Indies had just recently conducted a research on teenage pregnancy. So in the light of this information and my own attempts, I decided I could not do this planned research. This was a difficult decision, since I knew I only had three months of fieldwork

and one month had already passed by. I made the decision anyway, since I knew that a different topic would be more relevant and also more achievable in the limited time.

As I said, I needed to really connect to my respondents. So I decided to do research on a group of people I already knew and spoke with since the beginning. I changed the topic into a more general idea of perspectives on the society of SVG. I decided that I would direct my research in a certain way while I was doing it. Therefore, I constantly looked at the data I already gathered, and decided which direction my research would be heading. The final informants of my research form a mixed group. It consists of locals, return migrants, foreign volunteers, and immigrants. I decided to talk about SVG as much as possible with everyone and find my precise research topic later on. I found out that everybody was so keen on sharing their perspective on SVG. People talked about the pros and cons of the island. For instance when there was a lot of negative talking about political decisions or the lack of infrastructure, most of the times a couple of minutes later they would praise the beautiful nature and the freedom they experienced while living in SVG.

There were many topics I talked about with my informants. This was really interesting, however it also complicated my research. I could not find one specific topic I wanted to write my research paper about. I kept on going in the same direction: just talking as much as possible about the country with everybody. The time flew by and before I knew I was back home again. I had lots of data, but not everything had been documented yet. My data gathering turned out to be a labyrinth with data on all kinds of subjects, but I thought the data was not really in-depth and sort of 'thin' in some areas. After several meetings with my supervisors, we decided that the best way to go was to write narratives, 'small stories', about what was going on and what I had experienced in SVG. This formed my data.

Out of these stories, I distilled four themes: these now form the topic of my research. Thus, the phases of research, analysis and writing were no clear-cut consecutive phases wherein it was clear what to do. It was a messy process wherein I constantly switched between the phases. This is not strange in an inductive research, but since it was my first time doing research inductively, I struggled for a while. In the end I found four concepts that make sense in the context of SVG. The concepts of dependence, vulnerability, insecurity and uncertainty together tell something about SVG: they connect things that happen on a global scale with things that happen on a local and personal scale.

3.4 Ethical considerations

With every research there are ethical concerns one should take into account. Bryman (2008) states there are four core ethical principles that should be taken care of while doing research. The first principle is the notion of 'do no harm' to your participants. This implies that the research carried out will not lead to disadvantages of any kind to the informants. It is therefore important for a researcher to secure the data and maintain confidentiality. When I talked with informants in SVG, I never talked about what information I got from a specific person. Sometimes, when I wanted to discuss a certain topic, I casually referred to that topic by saying vaguely that 'I sometimes hear from people that this and that happened' or I came up with a general statement ('Many people in the country seem to have this or that opinion'). I also kept a research diary on my computer that I kept private and secured this data in a personal cloud that was situated at home. This personal cloud was secured with a password and did not involve any third party as Google Drive or Dropbox. With these measures I tried to prevent any harm done to my informants.

The second core ethical principle according to Bryman (2008) is the notion of informed consent. This means that the respondents of the research should be totally informed about the research and they should have the possibility to refuse participation. My research was not a covered one, so I told everybody that I was a researcher, and I told them what my research was about. In the beginning I told them I would do a research on teenage pregnancy, and after I decided to change my topic, I kept everybody updated that I would take a broader perspective on the island of SVG. However, I found it difficult to talk about my research and reach informed consent with literally everybody, because some people I met were not really informants, yet they played a role in my research as being part of the context. Bryman (2008) also nuances this principle: he argues that in ethnographic research one meets a wide spectrum of people and that totally informed consent is not practicable in some situations. I experienced this too in my field research. However, my research was almost always a topic of conversation, and this way I tried to keep all my informants informed and I asked them if they were willing to participate.

The third ethical concern is related to the notion of informed consent and doing no harm: it is the notion of privacy. People have the right to privacy, and a researcher should respect the boundaries of his or her informants. It is possible that people do not want to talk about a certain sensitive topic. I thought that in my research, politics would be a sensitive topic. It turned out to be quite the opposite: everybody openly talked about their political preferences and their opinion of the government policy. However, I think the privacy aspect is important and this had led to my choice to keep my informants anonymous. I want to respect my informants' privacy in a polarized and politicized society. Since I talked about it with my local hosts Joylyn and Lennox regularly, I knew they gave permission to mention their first names.

Deception is the final ethical concern, and this one does not really apply to my research. Even when my research topic was 'teenage pregnancy' I made it clear to my informants that the context of SVG was also important for my research and that I would be looking into several aspects of life in SVG. I deliberately chose to be open about this, so everyone was informed about my intentions as a researcher.

By keeping the four core ethical principles in mind, I tried to limit the impact of my research to my informants. I trust that I have done enough to ensure that no harm was being done.

3.5 Experiences in the field

In this part, I will write a bit more about my experience of being in the field for three months. As I said, I did not know what to expect from this country. Of course I had read some articles and I had talked to a fellow student who also went there. Still, it is always different when one experiences something first-hand. As the Vincentian society is very different from other countries I had been before, I experienced a bit of a culture shock. I was not really prepared for the isolation and the altitude, and the heat was definitely something I had to get used to when I left the Netherlands in November. I experienced some regular sickness and some homesickness, and overall had some difficulties with adjusting to the country. I tried to work around the limitations I came across.

Limitations that were influencing my time there, next to the isolation and the mountainous environment, had to do with my identity as a female researcher. For instance, I was told not to walk alone outside after dark, which was around 6 pm. I was not used to lack a certain freedom of

movement. I never felt really unsafe, but again I was living in an isolated place, so I kept the warnings in mind and made sure I was home before it got dark.

Another limitation was getting around. Transport on SVG is not regulated by the government. There are formal taxis, they are really expensive and I was told they sometimes charge you double the amount because 'they have to drive back to Kingstown too'. I never used a formal taxi in the three months I was there. I sometimes arranged an informal taxi. In the first weekend I was in SVG, me and my local contact person Joylyn were invited to go to a local rugby game. One of the American volunteers played rugby in a local team of youngsters, and the other volunteers came to watch; one of them invited us. Joylyn and one of the volunteers arranged an informal taxi to go to Petit Bordel, a small village north of Troumaca, where the rugby game took place. A man who lives in Rose Hall, has his own shop and next to that he drives people around if they call him or make an appointment in advance. That day he gave me his number so I could call him whenever I needed a driver.

Sometimes when I would go to Kingstown to get some groceries I could get a ride from Joylyn and Lennox. However, I generally used the most common way of transport in SVG: I travelled by vans. These small buses are normally suitable for 12 persons including the driver. Nevertheless, the van conductors (the often young guys who take care of the money) use pads and cushions to create extra seats, so that the van suddenly has the capacity to accommodate at least 20 persons. The conductor made sure the van was always jam-packed and always tried to put more people in the van. In a tropical climate, with an average temperature of 30 degrees Celsius, sitting so close together one could barely breathe is not very comfortable. The windows were always open but you could only feel the wind if you were seated next to the window. During the ride, you had to brace yourself if you did not wish to bother your neighbours with an arm or a leg, as there were some very sharp turns. Often there were children put in laps and also bags and baskets with groceries were packed in the van. Once there was someone who brought a mop and a can of paint onto the van. At one point the can fell over, and as a result paint was flowing over the floor. This was no problem, the van conductor grabbed some paper tissues and quickly cleaned the surface for a bit, so we could go on. It also happened that young children, sometimes as young as 6 or 7 years old, came into the van unaccompanied to go to their school in another village.

These vans have no official schedule and they are not operated by the government or a certain company. You can never be sure if the van is going. I learned from my volunteer friend in Rose Hall how to deal with this, since we often went to Kingstown together on Saturdays. There are some standard van times but these are not carved in stone. For instance, she told me that there would be a van around 6.15 leaving Rose Hall. There are no bus stops along the way (only in the villages) and I lived between Rose Hall and Troumaca. The best thing to do was leaving my apartment around 6.10 so I would be at the Belmont gap around 6.15. I would just continue walking down to Troumaca, and when a van would pass I would raise my hand and the van might stop if there was a seat available. If the van did not pass me I would wait at the Troumaca bus stop. However, there were more people waiting there so the chances to have a seat were lower over there (even with the extra seats and the overpowering wish of the van conductor to jam-pack the van). The 6.15 Saturday morning van often worked out fine and so I arrived in Kingstown somewhere between 7.15 and 7.30. Very loud soca and reggae music, beautiful views of the island, and the game of me and my friend guessing how many people would be packed in this van today often made the time fly. To get out of the van you just had to say loudly 'bus stop please' and the van would stop at that point.

To get into a van to get back from Kingstown to Troumaca/Rose Hall was more complicated though. At the bus station there were often many people waiting. There is no schedule, so it always was uncertain if and when a van would arrive to go up north again. Sometimes I had to wait for more than two hours to get a van back. More often the waiting time was around an hour. Next to the time issue, all the vans stop at different places. So there are limited vans that go all the way north. Vans to Layou or Barrouallie are more common than vans going to Chateaubelair. I had to ask if they would go to 'Chateau'. After a while I could recognize some of the number plates on the vans, which was more convenient because by the time I could ask and was able to understand that the van actually would go to Chateau the van was already jam-packed since many people were waiting. When a van came into the bus station area, many people were rushing to the van to secure a seat for themselves. This often led to another hour of waiting. Sometimes me and my friend tried to skip this waiting area by walking to the hospital, which is the last stop before a van, coming from the Leeward side, arrives at the bus station. We would try to get in there, so we would be already in the van and did not have to fight for a place when the van arrived at the station. Some bus drivers did not want to pick us up there unfortunately, but often it worked.

The main limitation that influenced my research however, was time. I thought beforehand that three months would be sufficient to carry out a research. I did not have any experience with fieldwork abroad before. I found out that three months might be sufficient when you have a structured plan. With my inductive research approach, three months seemed rather short. I think I have gathered some interesting data, but when I came home the data also looked really fragmented and rather thin in some areas. As mentioned in the previous section, in the end I could work around it, but it was not easy.

4. Theoretical framework

In this chapter I will discuss the themes that arose during the analysis of the data I gathered in St Vincent and the Grenadines. The themes are interrelated, and together they make up the red thread through this thesis. In this chapter the theories of Zygmunt Bauman and Philip McMichael are used to constitute a debate wherein these themes are key elements. The data I gathered will be placed in this debate in the discussion chapter at the end of the thesis. There I will position my own experiences within the sociological debate around the main topics I distilled: vulnerability, dependence, uncertainty, and insecurity.

First, I will give a brief outline of the general lines of thought of McMichael and Bauman. McMichael is a historical sociologist who looks at world systemic processes and the political economical dimension of things. Bauman is also a sociologist, and he tends to philosophical thinking. There are some similarities and some differences in the way they approach society, modernity and other social topics. Their approaches will be discussed and compared in the first two sections of this chapter. In the next sections I will specifically look at how Bauman and McMichael talk and write about the themes I mentioned before: dependence, vulnerability, insecurity and uncertainty. At the end I will bring the chapter to a close by summarizing the main points that form the theoretical framework for this thesis, and I will compare the perspectives of Bauman and McMichael.

4.1 Philip McMichael and the two projects of development and globalization

McMichael has written the book "Development and social change: A global perspective" as an introduction to the topic of development, that has global roots and is contested (Hytrek, 2008). In the book, he describes the phases of development and globalization as steered and planned political processes (McMichael, 2004). He distinguishes The Development Project (1940s up until the 1970s) and the Globalization Project (1970s up until now). The phase of the Development Project is intrinsically linked to the colonial past, according to McMichael. The idea of development started in the colonial era, when the colonies all over the world were plundered to advance the European industrialization. The populations of the colonies were 'subject' of development: a new rational order was supposed to be installed, with a special focus on punctuality and regularity (McMichael, 2004). Development was equated with the concept of modernity. Modernity was meant as a process of progress, and everything that was not 'modern' or that was traditional was seen as 'backward'. To overcome this backwardness, intervening was deemed necessary by the Europeans. This feeling of superiority also lies in the concept of 'the white man's burden': the idea that Europeans had to 'civilize' and 'bring modernity' to the populations of their colonies, because they knew better.

There were two main ingredients that starred in the Development Project: nation-states (the political dimension) and economic growth according to a universal standard (the economic dimension). In the process of decolonization, nation-states were constituted, and the sovereignty of these states was a key element to it (McMichael, 2004). In this way, development was framed in national terms, although the 'objective' of development was clearly in the Euro-American line of progress. The former colonies now formed the 'Third World', and these countries kept being dependent on the 'First World' for financial support and certain technologies. Emphasis was placed on the export of raw materials and agricultural goods, so increasing yields was the way to go. In this manner, the former colonies became part of an international framework with certain normative, legal and financial relationships (McMichael, 2004). The United Nations took care of the overall framework:

providing foreign aid, promoting international trade, paying attention to stability in currency exchange, and making sure technology transfer would happen.

This international multilateralism is called the Bretton Woods System (McMichael, 2004). The agencies that functioned in this Bretton Woods System (amongst others The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) supplied funds to stimulate new production, they tried to raise living standards in other countries through development projects, they stabilized national finances and they encouraged international trade (McMichael, 2004). The World Bank provided large-scale loans, and they moved funds to regions were the purchasing power was low. In this way, these regions were encouraged to buy more products from First World countries. McMichael (2004) argues that the Bretton Woods System has a First World bias: the priorities were clearly in favour of First World countries, and in this way these countries held control over the Third World countries.

By the 1980's, there was already a shift to globalization noticeable. Because of industrialization in the Third World, the production was increasingly focussed on staple foods, as it was easier to grow larger quantities of one certain crop than to grow more varieties. Therefore, Third World countries became less and less self-sufficient. McMichael (2004) mentions the idea of the 'Global Supermarket': First World countries imported all kinds of food from the Third World countries, therefore inclining their food security, at the expense of the Third World countries' self-sufficiency. In the Third World countries this led to a greater dependence and reliance on their exports. At the same time, the international development discourse changed from the two pillars nationalism and economic growth to the participation in the world market. This marked the shift from the Development Project to the Globalization Project. The core idea of the Globalization Project was that the Third World countries should look internationally for their development stimulus. Participation in the world market became the new Holy Grail of development.

Another development in the 1980's also contributed to the shift to the Globalization Project. The global recession led to a debt crisis, mainly for Latin American countries (McMichael, 2004). In reaction to this occurrence, the indebted Third World countries had to adjust their policies according to the international institutions. Their public spending had to be reduced drastically, the wages declined and many state enterprises were privatized. As a consequence, poverty rates climbed. McMichael calls this an example of global governance: nation-states had to adopt certain policies and rules, that favour global circuits of capital, goods and currency. The Third World countries, since they gave up their self-sufficiency and focussed on the export of produce, were tied to the world market. As a side-effect, coalitions were formed of people who were experts in national planning and who agreed with these global governance ideas, and the World Bank gave greatest weight to their input. According to McMichael, other citizens lost input into their own government, which led to shadow economies and societies.

The core principle of the Development Project, economic nationalism, was now seen as limiting and was dismantled in the process of setting up the Globalization Project. A neoclassical economic discourse became common: liberalization, transnational trade and application of market principles were the way to go (McMichael, 2004). State shrinking was the option to counter the debt crisis. The social goals of national development, as clear as they were in the Development Project, became downgraded. Free trade, which means less barriers and less domestic prize supports, was seen as the

solution. It was claimed that free trade would stabilize commodity markets, however according to McMichael it never was guaranteed that farmers in the Third World would survive.

In 1995, the WTO decided in the GATT (General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade) Uruguay Round that governments should interfere as little as possible in the conduct of trade (McMichael, 2004). This meant that trade protections, farm subsidies and government intervention were heavily reduced. This was better for equal chances for several countries, however some countries with trade preferences were victimized by this decision. By that time, the farms that actually could still receive some subsidies, were mostly the larger farms. The smaller farms were neglected and they became very vulnerable. Commercial farming on the one hand and industrialization on the other hand marginalized rural communities and made many small farmers redundant.

In one of the final chapters, McMichael (2004) looks at the consequences of the Globalization Project. He argues that development is a process that is often realized though the intensification of inequalities, despite its stated intentions. The intended liberalization in the Globalization Project led to destabilization of several countries. Cash cropping and mainly producing staple foods made Third World countries less self-sufficient and therefore more vulnerable. A consequence was structural unemployment in many countries, especially after the debt crisis and the GATT Uruguay Round. Therefore, informal activity became more and more common instead of having stable jobs. Neoliberalism also often led to legitimacy crises: national sovereignty has been eroded by global governance, and many citizens lost faith in their government, according to McMichael. He writes about the state shrinking after the debt crisis: governments were supposed to cut their budgets, and so they did less for the people who needed it the most. McMichael calls this erosion of the social contract. A social contract encompasses the protection of civil rights and social services such as healthcare, education and welfare systems.

McMichael also reflects on development as a whole, and how the Development Project has left some legacies. One of them is the idea that the Western model of doing things (development, farming, trade, et cetera) has been favoured over all the alternatives. Certain choices in history grew out of power relations. Colonialism has left its mark on the world dynamics. The European idea of progress and organisation has been central to most developmental ideas. Capitalism and its focus on constant accumulation of wealth is nowadays still the most common economic model. McMichael gives two explanations, related to colonialism and post-colonialism, why the Western world and the Third World grew into the current power dynamics. For the First World, the Third World always was too valuable, in an economic way, to let go. Raw materials, staple foods, a consuming market: the Third World was always necessary to contribute to the First World's progress. On the other hand, for the Third World, the First World has always been a source of aid and legitimacy. Independence in post-colonial times was intertwined with a membership of the United Nations, that standardized the meaning of development based on their own ideas.

McMichael also sees that economic power and rationality has been favoured over other ecological conceptions of social organization. There is a focus on economic output and productivity, and people are regularly only seen as economic units with their measurable activity (work hours, work output). He also argues that as a result of the current power relations, the world faces an uncertain future and that development as a concept is in serious question. Global environmental degradation is also a

large threat and contributes to this uncertain future. Furthermore, McMichael warns for increasing inequality.

McMichael wrote this book mainly to show that development is rooted globally and is contested (Hytrek, 2008). He questions development and uses case studies to support his thesis. His global, political and historical approach characterizes the book (Mondal, 2009). McMichael tries to understand current power relations and dynamics by looking at historical processes of integration and disintegration, inclusion and exclusion. He emphasizes the instability and conflict that has come with these processes and political decisions, and the deep dependence of the Third World. Mondal (2009) mentions that McMichael looks at the web of global commodity, labour and production chains, and how this web affects the social fabric of societies.

4.2 Zygmunt Bauman: liquid modernity, fear, uncertainty and utopia

Bauman has written many interesting books about his view on modern society. One of his main concepts is the liquidity of current modern times, as opposed to solidity of modern times in the past. One of the key aspects of liquid modernity is the focus on change: nothing stays the same and actually, nothing **can** stay the same. Bauman also calls this notion of constant change 'fluidity'. Everything is happening and changing really fast, and things are not as 'set' as they used to be. Bauman has written about his concerns about these liquid modern times in many books, for instance in 'Liquid life' (2005).

Fluidity or liquidity is the state current societies are in. Bauman compares the past with the status quo. He argues that flexibility is the catchword of our times. Flexibility means that everything is temporary (Bauman, 2005). Everything changes really fast, and there is no way to slow down the process or change its course. There is a lack of control and the future is uncertain, and that is frightening. Because of this inability to influence these processes of change, people tend to focus on things they believe they can control (Bauman, 2005). In this way, people try to minimize risks. People believe that is the only way to control things, since there is an uncertain future coming. They seek targets to control, to "unload the surplus of fear". Bauman argues that fears are self-perpetuating and self-reinforcing, so more fear leads to more controlling measures, which induces more fear, and so on.

In a written conversation with Jacobsen and Tester (2007), Bauman also mentions the shift to more individualism: he wrote that there used to be a discourse of shared improvement. Now the discourse is more about individual survival. Individual survival means that people will have to make an effort to stay in the race. In other words, if people are not able to make that effort, they cannot keep up and will be excluded. The fear of exclusion is one of the key elements in Bauman's view on modern times.

Bauman is also known for giving attention to the 'victims' of a liquid modern society. Victims of liquid modernity are the people who cannot keep up with the constant change. The people who become redundant or superfluous because of unemployment for example. The people who cannot consume in a way that is currently expected. Bauman argues that liquidity in a society is foremost a recipe for living in uncertainty. People consume and try to keep up with the pace, because they are afraid of falling off the wagon and being left behind (Bauman, 2005). People are being left behind when they are 'flawed' or 'failed' consumers: they cannot consume enough and therefore they become

redundant. They have nothing to offer and are failing to keep up. In a consumer-oriented economy, there is a focus on disposal. Bauman argues in his book 'Wasted lives' (2004) that everything and everyone that has no function in this consumer-oriented economy, is often seen and treated as waste. Waste is something you dispose of because it is useless and not needed. Bauman writes about the increasing number of 'wasted lives' since the transition from solid to liquid modernity. He writes about these victims of liquid modernity, such as the poor, the marginalized, the refugees; in other words, the people who cannot keep up with the larger group of consumers. Dawson (2012) argues that Bauman brings suffering back into the picture and into people's concerns.

Because of his emphasis on fear, uncertainty and other negative aspects of current times, Bauman may come across as a pessimist. However, he does not see himself as either a pessimist or an optimist. Rather, he identifies himself with the concepts of 'hope' and 'utopia' (Davis, 2011). Bauman hopes that the inequalities and injustices are not here to stay: he sees that things could be better. This is a form of an active utopia. There could be more stability, equality and sustainability in the world according to Bauman (Davis, 2011). In this way, Bauman is critical on the present and hopeful for the future at the same time: there is too much inequality, injustice and suffering, but it could be different because human beings can remake the world. Davis (2011) argues that Bauman provides a compass, and that he sees a direction in which people can meet challenges to human social life. Here the concept of morality is introduced. An utopia is never morally-neutral, an utopia is an ideal that people can strive to. Bauman's utopia shows collective justice and a social state. This means that there should and could be a society that is humane and just for everyone, where there are common solutions found to cure shared social problems, because collectively there can be much more achieved (Davis, 2011).

Bauman writes in his conversation with Jacobsen & Tester (2007) that civilization is a trade-off. Some values are sacrificed for the sake of others. In other words, the values that are deemed more important, are actively chosen by people. Therefore, if people made other choices, societies could be shaped differently. To make these other choices, there should be a sense of what actually makes a 'good' society, hence an utopia. Bauman argues that human agency is in morality (Dawson, 2012). He believes in human potentiality. He believes that in solid modernity, the stage before liquid modernity, the general idea was that people are in itself immoral, and that the state is in itself moral and should 'make' people moral. Bauman thinks that in liquid modernity, the state does not morally guide, on the one hand because lots of things are left to the market instead of guided by governments. On the other hand, the trend of individualization leads to more emphasis on people's own moral actions. Bauman is very approving of the reassertion of individual morality in liquid modernity. He argues that this is a time of choices, and that it is good that people take responsibility for their choices (Dawson, 2012).

4.3 Dependence and vulnerability: McMichael and Bauman

The four main themes I distilled from my data are uncertainty, insecurity, dependence and vulnerability. In the work of Bauman and McMichael, I recognized these themes, although some of them are not explicitly mentioned. First, I will explore the themes dependence and vulnerability, and in the next section I will move on to uncertainty and insecurity.

Dependence and vulnerability are related themes, therefore I explore them together in this chapter as well as in the next chapters. The Cambridge Dictionary defines dependence as follows: 'the situation in which you need something or someone all the time, especially in order to continue existing or operating'. A dependency is therefore according to the same dictionary 'a country that is supported and governed by another country'. Vulnerability is the 'ability to be easily physically, emotionally, or mentally hurt, influenced, or attacked'. Often, dependence implies a certain amount of vulnerability. A simple example: when country A is dependent on country B, for instance in terms of the import of energy, country A is vulnerable to a certain extent, because country B can decide to not deliver anymore, therefore influencing country A and leaving country A in a difficult position. In a certain way, there are many relations wherein people are dependent on others, and therefore vulnerable. For example citizens who are dependent on the policies of their government, are vulnerable if there is no work and if the government does not provide a social security system.

Dependence and vulnerability are common themes in McMichael's work. His argument revolves around the notion that Third World countries have experienced deep dependence and vulnerability ever since colonization, through decolonization and during the projects of development and globalization. First World countries found Third World countries too valuable to let go, for raw material and staple foods as well as for the consumption market. Third World countries received aid and technology. They increased production, often in monocultures, so they became less self-sufficient. These countries became more and more tied to the world market. In this way, they became increasingly vulnerable in terms of food security. Also, they became increasingly dependent on the world market, Bretton Woods System institutions as the UN and the World Bank, and the First World countries. This dependence and vulnerability became extra apparent after the debt crisis and the GATT Uruguay Round wherein it was decided to limit trade preferences and state subsidies, as described earlier. Poverty rates climbed and unemployment increased. When global governance increased, national sovereignty decreased, causing internal struggles in Third World countries, such as a loss of faith in the government and legitimacy issues.

Bauman's approach of vulnerability is foremost visible in how he focusses on the marginalized, the poor, and the excluded. He brings suffering back into people's concerns. He argues that since the quality of a bridge is measured by the quality of the weakest part of that bridge, a society should be measured by the quality of life of the weakest people. There are many people who are vulnerable, and are actually dependent on state support. When the state does not provide this support, the vulnerability of these people is exposed: they are unemployed, they cannot keep up with the larger group of consumers, and therefore become redundant.

4.4 Uncertainty and insecurity: McMichael and Bauman

Uncertainty is one the key issues in Bauman's work: uncertainty comes hand in hand with the current phase of liquid modernity, as described above. I also recognize insecurity in his writings, especially when he talks about unemployment, redundancy and uncertainty. McMichael talks about uncertainty and insecurity mainly as a consequence of global policies.

Uncertainty and insecurity are easy to mix up, at the first sight they might seem similar. I used the Cambridge Dictionary again to give some clarity on this matter. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, uncertainty is 'a situation in which something is not known, or something that is not known or certain'. Insecurity is 'a feeling of not being fixed or safe'. The adjective 'insecure' has the following meaning: '(of objects or situations) not safe or protected'. Thus, a noticeable difference is that uncertainty is a situation, whereas insecurity is a feeling. When things are uncertain, so not everything is certain and known, there can be no anticipation from the person himself. Insecurity is the feeling that things that should be fixed or protected are actually not. This fixing or protecting can be done by people themselves, but it can also be done by others, such as the government. Insecurity therefore can be the feeling that the government does not do enough to protect the citizens.

Bauman also makes this distinction in his analysis of liquid modernity. He uses uncertainty in a general way, whereas he links insecurity with unemployment, the tendency of many employers to ask loyalty but not return this favour, and the failure of state protection. In Wasted Lives, he describes the policy of the former company Enron. Every year, they fired 15 percent of their employees, and they gave 30 percent a warning to perform better. No matter how well the company as a whole performed, there would always be a bottom 15 percent. This of course led to feeling insecure, since everyone was at risk and not at all protected, every single year. It also led to a permanent state of uncertainty, as it was not certain who would be fired, who would get a warning and who was safe. Bauman argues that liquid modernity and its focus on disposal and consumption automatically implies uncertainty. Furthermore, the companies and the governments who fail to protect the people, are making people feel insecure.

McMichael also writes about insecurity and uncertainty, but he mainly mentions these themes as consequences of global policies. His main argument is that development and globalization are planned, political projects, that often have intensified inequalities, despite the stated intentions. The liberalization, destabilization and the debt crisis in Third World countries led to rising structural unemployment and increased uncertainty. State shrinking and the erosion of the social contract led to insecurity: the state needed to cut their budgets and therefore could do less for the people who needed protection the most. McMichael also mentions an uncertain future, because of the established power relations and environmental degradation.

<u>4.5 Bauman and McMichael in debate</u>

As described above, there are both similarities and differences in the themes Bauman and McMichael write about, and in the way they describe things. I see the theories of McMichael and Bauman not as sheer contradictory. They provide merely different, complementary perspectives. The largest differences seem to be in the scale of their approach, their ideas about the uncertain future that awaits us, their perspective on (global) processes, and the difference in opinion who the victims of globalization and modernity are. I will now elaborate on these differences.

Firstly, McMichael sees things from a historical global perspective, as one seemingly seamless story with clear causes and effects. Everything he tells fits in the grand narrative of development and globalization, with some supporting cases in his book. His view on the First World and Third World seems quite binary: a country either belongs to the First World and profits from the Bretton Woods System, or belongs to the Third World and is therefore dependent on the First World countries.

As opposed to McMichael's an all-encompassing global theory stance, Bauman writes more about individuals who live in a liquid modern society. His narratives can apply to any country. He talks a lot about fear and uncertainty that individuals experience while they are living in society. Bauman does not try to fit everything in one all-encompassing theory, rather he questions current trends in society and sees opportunities how the world could be improved. Something that can be deduced from his work, is that he thinks that the liquidity of society inevitably leads to uncertainty, and that uncertainty is not a good thing. Bauman talks nostalgically about earlier times, when things were more certain and fixed. One of the few things he values in liquid modernity is the reassertion of individual morality, because in his view, this is where human agency lies.

Bauman and McMichael agree that there is an uncertain future. However, the way they approach this uncertain future differs in my opinion. McMichael focusses on the history and the status quo of societies, and how this affects this unknown, uncertain future. He looks at the causes of this uncertain future (amongst others: globalization and the natural degradation that comes with it), instead of looking forward. Bauman does look forward. He provides a moral compass and a sense of hope. He thinks that societies could be different, better even, when other choices are made. This utopian thinking is characteristic for Bauman.

McMichael writes about every process as thought out and planned beforehand, as if everything is politically based. These steered and planned processes have shaped the world as it is now, according to McMichael. In the meanwhile, Bauman tells what is wrong in society now and what could be better. McMichael sees large structures of dependence and vulnerability and these concepts are important in his analysis. Bauman, on the other hand, writes more about the individual experience of this vulnerability and the insecurity that come with liquid modernity and certain choices of the government. He argues that there is always a trade-off in societies: some values are deemed more important than others, and these values are actively chosen.

Bauman and McMichael are both not very pleased with the ubiquitous market forces and they make it very clear that the market is anything but a Holy Grail. McMichael is also very clear about who is to 'blame' for the negative aspects of the current situation in the world. He argues that the First World countries have reinforced the global inequalities by the decisions First World countries have made. He narrates his book with a focus on the typical dichotomy between First World countries and Third World countries, and he argues that the First World countries caused a lot of trouble in the Third

World countries. On the other hand, there is Bauman. He does not blame anyone for the existence of liquid modernity and its negative consequences. He talks about processes like individualization, fear and exclusion as if they are invisible forces. They are, in his perspective, self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating processes that have no clear, defined cause. There are people who benefit from these processes, such as the former company Enron, but they did not start these processes. Individuals are subject to them, and they have to respond to it. Bauman's focus on individuals and their individual morality makes room for choices that could break with the status quo: he provides hope.

Alongside McMichael's global perspective and his clear ideas about who is to blame for the current status of the world, he also has a clear idea about who the victims are. Since the First World countries are the causers, it makes sense that the Third World countries are the victims in his perspective: they have been dependent on the First World countries for centuries or decades and have been vulnerable because this dependence ever since. He also mentions the victims within these countries: the people who lost their faith in the government and needed social assistance the most. McMichael argues that in many Third World countries there is an erosion of the social contract between their government and their inhabitants: the government does not provide what is deemed necessary.

Bauman also talks about an erosion of the social contract between governments and inhabitants of countries. However, he does not limit this to Third World countries. Bauman thinks that this is happening everywhere, hence he sees victims everywhere. Individuals are victims of liquid modernity, because the constant change requires keeping up to the pace of the society. Everyone who cannot keep up with the pace and the constant change of liquid modernity is a victim and stays behind.

5. Dependence and vulnerability

In this chapter and the next, I will present my data. These chapters contain the data that I analysed, and during that analysing phase I distilled four concepts, as previously explained. In this chapter, I look at the concepts of dependence and vulnerability, and how I saw these concepts in the Vincentian society. In the next chapter, insecurity and uncertainty are the main themes. I will describe experiences I have had while I was in SVG, and I will tell about the stories I heard from people living there.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, vulnerability and dependence are two concepts that are related. Being dependent on another thing, person, or country makes you vulnerable, because somehow the other has more say in some matters and other's decisions have influence on your situation. Dependence and vulnerability can be seen on many levels. I saw dependence and vulnerability in SVG on a global scale and on a national scale. I will discuss this in this chapter. In the next chapter I will discuss that this dependence and vulnerability have led to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, and how people deal with these feelings they experience.

5.1 Dependence and vulnerability on a global scale

SVG was, as mentioned before, a British colony until 27 October 1979. Then it became part of the Commonwealth. During colonial times, SVG was dependent on the UK. People told me that in these times, some things were better arranged. For instance, they told me that in that time there was a public transport service by boat. These ferries had a certain schedule and were always on time. People now do not understand why they stopped the service. They even (although reluctantly) told me that some things were better in colonial times. Lennox even said that SVG should not be independent; he said that the Windward Antilles or Eastern Caribbean should function under one government. Joylyn also spoke about a cooperation between the neighbouring islands. She proposes a model that is similar to the European Union, so the countries could work together and could be less vulnerable, especially economically. This idea is not welcomed by the Vincentian government, though. Joylyn is not a native Vincentian, she is from Guyana and she studied and worked in Europe before she moved to SVG. Therefore, her ideas about a more integrated model of the Caribbean islands are rejected as 'foreign ideas'.

Until 2007, there was a EU trade preference on bananas from the Caribbean islands. SVG really benefitted from these trade arrangements. I was being told that almost everybody used to have a couple of banana trees since this trade preference led to a guaranteed income. Families were relying on this income, and it made it possible that many children could go abroad when they were approximately 18 years old. The Vincentian families are large: Lennox told me that in his youth, many families had more than ten children. It really seemed like everybody on SVG is related in some way. Every time I went somewhere with Lennox and Joylyn, they pointed at people in the streets and they told me that person was a cousin (or first cousin or second cousin) of Lennox. It did not matter if we were in Rose Hall, in Kingstown or somewhere in between, we always met a relative.

The return migrants lived in Canada, the US, the UK, the Netherlands, France or any other country where they could study and/or work. Some of them returned to SVG later in life, I regularly talked to some of them. Every time I talked to them they were worrying about SVG. They have memories of

SVG being a better place to live than it is now. They loved to tell stories about how things used to be and how much the country has changed.

When the trade preference position was lost, the banana industry collapsed. There was no guarantee and no fixed price. The former reliance of the people on the banana industry led to insecurity and people felt vulnerable. There was a lack of alternative income sources, which led to unemployment and poverty. Before, almost everybody earned some money with growing bananas, even if there were just a couple of banana trees on your land, it was guaranteed to deliver some income. Almost everybody sent their children abroad to maximize their education and job opportunities. With this income disappearing, choices were limited. I have been told that this change was very noticeable in society. People told me the country is not as safe as it used to be. They feel the need to be more careful with their houses and belongings, and everyone warned me about going out at night. When two of my friends in Belmont and Rose Hall invited me to join them to the Christmas party of the school in Rose Hall, we did not walk back home even when we were with three. The partner of the woman in Belmont picked us up by car.

Another way wherein SVG as a country is dependent, is financially. At all the sights, such as the Dark View Falls, Black Point Tunnel or the Owia Salt Ponds, there are enormous signs that say that these sights are sponsored by either the European Union or Taiwan. The EU and Taiwan invest in these places, and these places would probably be not maintained anymore if they withdrew their support.

5.2 Dependence and vulnerability on a national scale

The dependence and vulnerability on a national scale can be divided into two main areas. One is political dependence and powerlessness: because of polarization and the political system almost half of the population does not have any say in the policies and they feel powerless. The second area comprises the dependence and vulnerability regarding the infrastructure, centralization and facilities on the island. So the dependence can be mainly seen in a political way, while the vulnerability of the Vincentians is more obvious in terms of living circumstances and natural conditions. I will further elaborate on this now.

5.2.1. Political dependence

With the decolonization, a national government was established. The political system of SVG is adopted from the UK: the Westminster system. It is a two-party system, wherein the Labour party (ULP) and the Democrat party (NDP) compete with each other. There is a third party, the Green Party, however this party is very small and does not get enough votes to pass the election threshold. Thus in general there are two parties, and elections are held every five years. When I was in SVG, there were elections (December 9, 2015). The Labour party won these elections, for the fourth time in a row. In the whole country it was very noticeable that elections were coming. There were numerous rallies and campaigns when I was there, and when I spoke to people they immediately made it clear which party had their preference. Houses and streets were painted either red (Labour) or yellow (Democrats) and flags were hanging everywhere.

The night I arrived in SVG, I was picked up from the airport by Joylyn and by a brother of Lennox. After the long journey I was exhausted but I was very awake, especially when suddenly the car was in the middle of a NDP 'show': loud music came out of a car, with the catchy lyrics "Get ridda dehm!"

(get rid of them), and a big group of people dressed in yellow clothes were dancing on the road around the car. It surely was a vibrant encounter with SVG for me.

The ULP had been in government for 15 years already. The NDP was determined to win, they wanted to see change. The two-party system made the whole country very polarized, is what I noticed. I sensed there was a lot of hostility between supporters of the parties. It was noticeable on the streets because of the paintings and flags everywhere, and it was also noticeable when I talked to people, because they brought the subject up. The voters and their reasons to vote for a certain party can be placed in two categories: people who voted ULP because of their approval of the policy of the last 15 years, and people who voted NDP because of their disapproval of the ULP policy. I have not heard a ULP supporter criticising the policies and plans of the ULP, nor a NDP supporter finding faults with the plans of the NDP.

I mainly talked to NDP supporters, also indicated as 'the opposition party'. They aspired change: they did not agree with the policy of the ULP and after fifteen years of being in opposition they had the feeling they could win. The result was eight seats for the ULP and seven seats for the NDP. Right after the elections there were rumours of fraud and one seat was being contested. However, without any further inquiry the leader of the ULP had already been sworn in and they will be in the government for the coming years. The ULP is also often accused for nepotism and I was told (by NDP supporters) they do not have a vision and are only in the government to fill their pockets. The very few ULP supporters I talked to were really happy with the government and its policy. One of the girls that goes to the high school in Troumaca told me that the government bought laptops to use at school, and she said Ralph Gonsalves (the leader of the ULP) takes good care of the schools and the country. ULP supporters are in general content with how the country is governed and have no complaints. They are pleased with the new airport that was being built. I was also told that many Vincentian people who live overseas vote for ULP, because of this new airport. It would make it easier for them to visit their country of origin.

In one of the last weeks, Joylyn and I went to a cooking contest at a secondary school in Barrouaillie. Lennox had dropped us off at the school, and after we looked around the school for a bit we decided to walk around the village. Joylyn thought about visiting an acquaintance, so when we were done walking we went to the house of that acquaintance. She welcomed us warmly with tea and biscuits and we sat there for two hours or so. We talked a lot and she came to the same conclusion over and over again: politics is everywhere! She said that things are not well-arranged, there are not enough jobs and when people want to set up something, just like she wanted to set up a business in sustainable clothing production, the government does nothing to support these initiatives. Joylyn agreed with this, and as she is also finding ways to set up sustainable initiatives they decided to keep in touch about this so they might help each other out. They concluded that this is the way things are done in SVG, since the government does not support them.

There were many people who wanted change in the country, however with the established system and the polarized situation in the country, many people are not being heard and are being set aside by the government. The return migrants I often talked to really wanted change in the country. They have lived abroad and experienced other cultures and ways of living. They also have the idea that 'the development' has gone 'backwards' and that things used to be better in the past. On the one hand there are these nostalgic feelings, on the other hand they also have adopted British and Dutch

habits and standards. They think certain ways of doing things are outdated and could be much more convenient. For instance, we talked about online banking. Everybody has access to internet, yet people have to go to Kingstown to pay bills (housing, electricity et cetera).

The return migrants have, alongside ideas to ban these nuisances, clear ideas how the country should be governed and how matters could be improved. They try to propose these ideas and they want to share their knowledge and perspective about things as internet connection, country governance, cooperation with the other Windward islands. They also expect certain things from the government, such as road maintenance. However, they told me the government does not listen to them at all. Return migrants are apparently often called arrogant because they would like to do things in a new, different way. Others can respond as if a new approach or new ideas is an insult to the traditional manner. They say 'we have always done things this way'. For instance, one of the return migrants, who was in the IT business in the Netherlands tried to work in the IT business in SVG. His ideas about digital networks were neglected because these were 'foreign ideas' and therefore 'not applicable in SVG'.

5.2.2 Infrastructure, centralization and services
There is centralization that is key in SVG: everything is concentrated in Kingstown, and the south/east coast. This makes the rest of the island more vulnerable. In terms of transport, it means that the more north one lives, the more difficult it is to reach town. Supermarkets are only in the central area, the same applies to gas stations. Paying bills also must happen in Kingstown, because there is no internet banking system. There is something called payroll day: schools close that day because the teachers have to go to Kingstown to arrange financial matters. There are health clinics in every village, but there is only one real hospital, situated in Kingstown.

Aside from this inconvenience in accessibility, the return migrants told me over and over that the healthcare in this hospital is 'atrocious'. They told me jokingly there is a reason why the cemetery is located directly behind the hospital. They also argued that the terrible healthcare is one of the major reasons why many people who might want to return to SVG after living abroad for years, nonetheless make the choice to not live on the island. They would feel too vulnerable. Some people who moved back to SVG are actually spending most of their time in Canada/Europe/the US, especially when there is a health aspect involved. They will not risk anything and fly to the country where they have lived before.

The centralization in SVG makes things difficult. Besides, the roads are often not well maintained. Sometimes (often in election times I have been told) there is some work done on the road, causing nuisance since on most routes there is only one road. Most of the road work is done near the capital Kingstown. On the map on page 13 it is easy to see that there is at most places just one road that lingers along the coastline. Villages and towns are mostly situated on the seashores, but some are situated further inland, reachable by the small white roads as indicated on the map. Only in the south eastern part of the island there is another bigger road, crossing the area of Mesopotamia, more often called Mespo valley. It is also easy to see that the roads do not connect in the north. So if you live on the Leeward side of the island like I did, and you want to go to Owia to visit the beautiful salt ponds over there, you have to go via Kingstown. The road ends at Richmond beach at the western coast (the Leeward side of the island) and at the eastern/northern coast (the Windward side) it practically ends in Owia. The Leeward side is more mountainous at the coast and the road is

therefore very winding, while the Windward side is more flat near the coastline and so the road is easier accessible and it takes less time to travel.

The centralization would not be so bad if the roads were well maintained, and if other conditions were better as well. For instance, it rained really heavily a couple of times when I was in SVG. On these days, it was dangerous to go to Kingstown because of landslides. Along most roads there are mountain sides or hill sides. On the mountain sides there are trees and there is lot of elephant grass, a tropical grass that grows everywhere. On the hill sides there is either elephant grass or a small piece of farmland. These mountain and hill sides are often really steep, and the soil is quite loose. When it rains heavily, the soil can flow down to the roads, making it dangerous to walk or drive there. Sometimes a bigger rock fell down and blocked the roads for a while. Since there is practically one road going around the island, people can find themselves trapped in a place and cannot reach their house or cannot reach Kingstown to take care of business. This makes the Vincentian people vulnerable in terms of weather and road conditions.

In terms of reaching the island of SVG, there is some nuisance as well. LIAT, the airline, has monopoly and therefore people cannot choose another company and must rely on LIAT. The access to SVG by air is slightly difficult. For years, there was one airport on St Vincent, ET Joshua Airport. This airport is only suitable for small planes, and LIAT is the airline that has a monopoly on SVG. Visitors from Europe, the UK and the US have to fly to Barbados, Grenada or St Lucia first to get a connection with LIAT to SVG. Thus flying with LIAT is the only option to get to SVG, and this makes people very dependent. LIAT is not cheap and very unreliable.

Everybody knows and tells jokes about LIAT (the one I heard most often was: LIAT, Leaving Island Any Time) and everyone has multiple terrible stories to tell about lost luggage, hours of delay without any information, cancelled flights and terrifying changes in the flight route. For instance, when a visitor of one of my volunteer friends came from the US, she had booked a flight from Washington to St Lucia with a bigger airline, and then a flight from St Lucia to St Vincent with LIAT. In the end, she flew from Washington DC to St Lucia, where she found out that her LIAT flight was cancelled. LIAT kept her waiting for hours, then they put her on a flight to Grenada where she had a layover for another night and the next day she could finally get on a plane to SVG.

This story is no exception, I have heard dozens of stories like this. I myself had -luckily enough- no problems. I flew from Amsterdam to London, then to Barbados, and then with LIAT to SVG. I had a delay of a couple of hours for the LIAT flight, yet in the end me and my luggage arrived safe and sound. LIAT was a constant recurring topic of conversation. When someone from outside the Caribbean would come to SVG, the first questions always were 'what was your flying route?', 'how many hours delay did you have?', 'did your luggage arrive?', 'did you get any information while you were waiting?', 'did they pay?', followed by a story from personal experience with LIAT and complaints about its monopoly.

On February 14, 2017, a second and bigger airport opened on SVG: the Argyle International Airport. This new airport originally was planned to open in 2011, and the completion deadline was missed every year since. The new airport is one of the big projects of the ULP, the Labour party. It is big enough so that larger aircrafts can land there. One of the main goals to construct a new airport was to attract more tourists. It would also give more opportunities to return migrants. For instance, one of the return migrants has returned from Canada and lives in SVG since a couple of years. However

her children and grandchildren are still living in Canada, so she wants to go back as often as possible. A direct connection from Canada to SVG and vice versa would save her a lot of hassle: no more stopovers at St Lucia, Barbados or Grenada.

A lot of money has gone to the construction of the Argyle Airport. Not everyone I talked to was happy with the new airport. On the one hand there is this disapproval probably because it is a ULP project, so the NDP supporters are automatically sceptical. On the other hand there was dissatisfaction because of the great expenses that were made while it was not clear what would be the advantage of the new airport. For instance, it is still not known if there are other airlines that will make the connection to SVG. For the time being, LIAT will still be the only option, although these planes will now land at the Argyle airport instead of ET Joshua. When I was in Barbados after the three months of fieldwork I talked to a Vincentian man on the balcony of the guesthouse I was staying. We were talking about SVG and he told me about the terrible state of the health care over there. He himself had had malaria and he was happy he was in Barbados at that time. He said 'in SVG they would have let me die'. He was very sceptical about the new airport. He argued: what large airline will land in a country that has no decent health care? What about the airline staff? That would not be responsible. He was sure that no other airline would want to land on SVG due to the low standards.

The taxi driver I talked to a couple of times was sceptical about the new airport for another reason. When I asked him what he thought of the airport, he argued that in the beginning maybe there would be more tourists coming to SVG out of curiosity. However, he said, if the facilities and the roads for instance are not improved, there will be no sustainable increase in tourism. He thinks that SVG is not really suitable for tourists at the moment. This man has worked and lived in Canada and when he came back he worked in the Buccament Bay resort for a couple of years. He sees a lot of potential in the country, especially in the tourist sector, however he thinks a lot of development is needed for that. He argued that tourists demand certain facilities and affordable accommodation, and that SVG cannot live up to that standard now. The tourist sector needs investments, while a big part of the government budget is meant for the development of the new airport.

Another option that would be interesting in terms of mobility would be the exploitation of inter-island ferries that would connect St Vincent with St Lucia and Barbados. The ferries that are now operating between the main island of St Vincent and the other islands, the Grenadines, are working well. There are schedules, the ferries leave and arrive at the times that are in the schedules, is what I have experienced. Everybody on the island knows that the ferries work well. However, for some reason the government blocks the connection to other countries. From where I lived (up north), I could see the Pitons, the characteristic mountains of St Lucia: the islands are this close to each other. However, it was explained to me that if I wanted to visit St Lucia, I would be required to book a plane ticket to St Lucia, and the round trip prices start at €160,- with, obviously, LIAT. I also would have to travel to the airport, so I would need a van to Kingstown, and then another one to the airport. The people in Rose Hall I talked to were often wondering why there is no ferry between St Vincent and St Lucia, for instance from Chateaubelair. This would work perfectly if it was operated in the same way as the ferries between St Vincent and the Grenadines, and it would everyone a lot of money and hassle. There would be some other benefits, for instance in terms of trade and cooperation, since St Lucia is a bit more prosperous than SVG.

So, there are some ideas how to limit the dependence and vulnerability of the Vincentians. They come from the Vincentians themselves, from the return migrants or sometimes from people who are originally from another country. However, all the Vincentians are dependent on their government. I often heard complaints that the government was doing nothing for the people and are not listening to new ideas. If the government does not want to carry out a plan, the rest of the inhabitants cannot do anything about it, except for voting differently in the next elections. People I talked to regularly were sick and tired of being this dependent.

6. Insecurity and uncertainty

Insecurity and uncertainty are two other concepts I saw in the Vincentian society. One of the main reasons people feel insecure, is because of the collapse of the banana industry and the following high unemployment rate. Growing bananas on a small scale became not profitable anymore, and large farming estates are not easy to realize, because of the very mountainous environment. There was and is a lack of alternative income sources, so people became poorer in general. Less people can send their children abroad to study or work now. Another reason to feel insecure, is the idea of many people that the government neglects to arrange certain things, such as good infrastructure and decent healthcare. Many people live with the idea that things could be better in SVG. The uncertainty that there might be no jobs or no good future for their children also contributes to the feeling of insecurity.

The country's state of uncertainty can be already partly seen in the previous chapter. People feel powerless and dependent in their political situation. They feel vulnerable because either weather conditions or political decisions can limit their mobility and opportunities. Rising crime rates contribute to a feeling of insecurity: Vincentians cannot live as carefree as they once did, as one of my informants told me.

I also saw and heard stories about people who try to work around the dependence so they can feel less vulnerable and feel less insecure. For instance, I heard stories about people making sure they are abroad when they give birth. They go to the US, Canada or Barbados before their due date. In this way, the child gets an extra passport and an extra nationality. These people want to maximize opportunities regarding citizenship, studying, working et cetera. Some people have more than one job, for instance the taxi driver I was in touch with. He also had a small shop, that closed when he had to drive someone.

Of course, there are also people who love living in SVG so much, that they are happy to do whatever it takes to stay in the country. On one day, I went to Mespo valley (in the south east of the island) with Joylyn. We visited a woman who lived there at a farm, she is from Vincentian and Belgian descent. There were all kinds of animals in and around the house. She was making the national dish of saltfish and breadfruit while we were talking about SVG. She said she loved SVG and that she never wants to leave the island. However, she also said there is no way she could make enough money in SVG to maintain herself, thus it is not possible to stay in SVG. She has the habit of going to Belgium, work there for half a year or a year, and then she comes back to SVG to live in the place where she feels most at home. When I asked what she loved so much about SVG, she said there is total freedom: "You can do anything and come away with it!" and freedom in who you want to be. She told me that she found Belgium to strict and regulated. In SVG, she said, you could be a fisher the one day and a tattoo artist the next.

My neighbours downstairs were a woman from Troumaca and her little daughter who goes to the Troumaca elementary school. The woman works at the secondary school in Troumaca. She went to the University of the West Indies, and she did her undergraduate education on Barbados. Her husband lives in the US, because he started his studies there. She travelled back and forth, to visit her husband, and she also lived in the US for a while to do her masters. Their daughter is born in the US. When I went to her place on January 1 to wish the three of them a happy new year (her husband

was visiting for the holidays), she was cooking a festive meal and she asked me to stay for a drink or two. We talked a lot. My neighbour told me she always felt connected to SVG, because all the relatives who are living in the country. She has always travelled back and forth, so she automatically compared SVG and the US over the years. She stated that she is very disappointed with the politicians. She had hoped that they would develop a better manufacturing sector: the huge amount of fruit on the island could be made into jam, for instance. Next to agro-processing she also sees opportunities in handicrafts. She said that the unemployment is unbelievably high. It apparently shocked many people that even people with a university education are not able to find a job. My neighbour concluded that the private sector should step up, since the government does not do it. The government should arrange the advantageous circumstances, though. She was also not very pleased about the amount of money that has gone to the new airport.

Another way people work around the feelings of insecurity is going into the informal sector. When people noticed they were so dependent on the banana trade, and when that vulnerable banana industry indeed collapsed, many people got involved in growing another crop: marihuana. Now there is a significant number of marihuana producers. These are mostly young men. The marihuana business is a lucrative business, but it is also instable and insecure. Growing, selling and using marihuana is forbidden in SVG. So the feelings of insecurity because of a lack of employment opportunities and a dependence on one certain crop, are countered by going into another insecure business.

Because of the ban on marijuana production, the growing happens far inland, where the terrain is rugged and only accessible when you have a cutlass to make your way through the jungle. This does not prevent getting caught though. Every time I went to Kingstown I passed the detention facility. I have been told there are many people in it, most of them accused of growing or selling weed. It is a risky business, that is highly rewarded when everything goes well (good selling, not getting caught) but when things fall through, these farmers are in big trouble. So they continue to live with feelings of insecurity.

There is a lot of marihuana use, and many youngsters are hanging around in a specific spot. In Rose Hall, I saw such a place often, as it was on the way to the school. Every time I walked by, a group youngsters sat there smoking weed. Many people have told me that SVG became more and more unsafe and they felt insecure. I was always told to be careful, and to stay indoors at night. There were also apparently many worries about burglary and drug-related crimes.

People who can afford to go abroad regularly, avoid going to the Vincentian hospital, because of the terrible healthcare. When they need medical assistance, they go to Barbados, or otherwise they fly to their family in the US or Canada, also for their regular check-ups, for instance for diabetes.

In several ways, people in SVG try to work around the dependence and vulnerability they encounter. There are some serious limitations regarding infrastructure, centralization and services, but they accept it, make the best of it and try to limit the nuisance. In the political area, there are many people who try to achieve some change in the country, so they can let their voices be heard too.

7. Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to show how the Vincentian people experience and deal with the collapse of the banana industry. To reach that goal, I set up a research context with political, economic and social dimensions, to give some direction to my research. What I missed in the articles and reports about SVG that are available thus far, was the experience on the ground. How do the Vincentians experience their own society? With my research, I provided a narrative that combines the knowledge of the reports and the articles with personal experiences, based on observations and talks in St Vincent and the Grenadines. I found that the post-colonial status of SVG matters a lot in terms of dependence and vulnerability, although there are also other ways in which SVG is dependent or vulnerable, for instance because the country is disaster-prone.

The feelings of insecurity and uncertainty are pivotal to understand the society of SVG. There are not many opportunities provided in SVG, and the combination of inclining unemployment, increasing crime, a lack of trust in the government and limited possibilities to earn a good income and live off it, leads to an environment wherein the people take matters in their own hands. Some people make sure they are not dependent on Vincentian healthcare by flying abroad when needed. Others arrange an extra passport for their children when they plan to give birth abroad, so at least their children can have more opportunities. Some go into the high-risk business of growing marijuana, so they can at least make money. Others set up small initiatives together when they feel like the government does not provide what they should. Some people dissociate with the country and go live abroad, or at least visit their family abroad as much as possible.

This agency is something I did not come across in the existing research about SVG, and I think it is characteristic for the Vincentian people: they know they cannot expect a lot from the government so one way or another, they take matters in their own hands. In this way they make themselves feel less vulnerable and dependent, they counter their feelings of insecurity and they try to minimize uncertainty in their lives.

In an earlier chapter, I have set up a theoretical framework with a debate between Bauman and McMichael. The chapters about my data were grouped by the two concept pairs vulnerability and dependence, and insecurity and uncertainty. I will now connect my data to the theory, and I position my data in the debate around these concepts.

To provide a short recap: the debate between Bauman and McMichael is, in my opinion, not really a debate between two opposed scientists. They merely have different approaches and perspectives. McMichael takes a more political, global stance, while Bauman takes a micro-approach when he talks about how individuals live in current societies, and how they could improve things by making better choices.

For me and my research, Bauman and McMichael are complementary. One of the main things that I discovered while doing research, is how the collapse of the banana industry in the post-colonial context has had a major impact on the Vincentian society as a whole, and on the individuals who live in SVG. The connection with McMichael's theory about the dependence of some countries on the world market due to political processes is easily made. The vulnerability of SVG as a country became very apparent after that collapse. People experienced insecurity, also because the government makes certain choices and almost half of the population does not agree with these choices and does

not trust the government. Certain things that need to be arranged by the government are not good enough in SVG, such as healthcare and infrastructure. These are, according to McMichael, parts of a 'social contract' between government and the citizens, and erosion of this social contract often leads to a decrease in faith in the government.

McMichael's approach and theory is very useful to compare to the recent history of SVG, and to explain why things happened, on an international scale. Bauman's theory and approach is useful when you look at why there is uncertainty and insecurity and how people deal with these consequences of the collapse of the banana industry. Bauman's idea that people experience uncertainty, have the feeling that they cannot control certain things and therefore minimize risks to have the idea they still have control over something, can also be recognized in the Vincentian society. People try to work around the limitations and take matters in their own hands.

The perspectives of Bauman and McMichael are in particular complementary when you look at the scale, as stated in chapter 4. In my opinion, both of them make interesting points and their general ideas are applicable to the Vincentian case. However, McMichael focuses too much on the history and on the dichotomy of the First World countries as causers of underdevelopment and the Third World countries as victims. In my experience, there is more nuance. The Vincentians who I talked to who were dissatisfied with the status quo, blamed their own government for the current state of the country, not the First World countries for the past. McMichael does have a point with the eroded social contract between the government and the inhabitants: in SVG many people have the opinion that the government of the country does not suffice in creating good living circumstances. The high unemployment rate, poorly maintained roads and neglected social issues are serious concerns.

Bauman's work is more abstract than McMichael's. Therefore, it is easier applicable to my Vincentian case. A constantly changing world and the additional uncertainty can be seen in many places in the world. Something typically Bauman is his active utopia and hope: things could be different, they could be better, if people made better choices. There is agency in this: humans are able to remake the world. However, not everybody is able to do this. The people who are staying behind because they cannot keep up, such as the poor, are the real victims of liquid modernity. What I have seen in SVG, is the will of its people to recreate their own circumstances and to always look for opportunities. They know things could be better, but they love their country, hence they look for ways to improve their own living conditions.

8. Conclusion and reflection

8.1 Conclusion

The research question that guided my thesis was the following: How are the Vincentian people affected by the collapse of the banana industry, and how do they cope with its consequences? The answer to the first part of the question can be given by using the four themes I used throughout the whole thesis, and that I distilled from my data. St Vincent and the Grenadines has always experienced dependence and vulnerability, either during colonial times, or during the post-colonial trade preferences and the reliance on one single crop. The collapse of the banana industry clearly showed this dependence and vulnerability, and it induced a certain level of insecurity and uncertainty in the lives of the Vincentian people. Structural poverty, high unemployment rates and limited opportunities became the reality in society, as opposed to a steady reliance on bananas and even the possibility to send all children abroad to study or work. At the same time, the government could not provide enough social assistance and many people lost their faith in the government. The polarizing forces between the two main political parties strengthened this loss of faith, at least for almost half of the population.

The second part of the question is the consequence of the conditions described above. The Vincentian people do not rely on their government, they take matters in their own hand. One way or another, they work around the limitations they come across. The experienced insecurity and uncertainty is countered in different ways, for instance by looking for opportunities outside of the country, by starting small initiatives themselves, or by organizing political opposition when they do not agree with the government and have political aspirations. They minimize risks and try to control things so they are not as vulnerable and dependent as they were before, when they solely relied on their banana trees.

8.2 Reflection and recommendations

Looking back in time, the research process was quite a bumpy ride (just like my experience with the Vincentian vans). I still like my idea of an inductive approach: I think it is interesting to go somewhere with no decided categories and theories and to find out what happens on the ground. It gives great insight in people's daily life and because there is no prior knowledge, I had an uninhibited experience of St Vincent and the Grenadines. Yet, the setting and my lack of experience with this type of research caused some problems that were not too easy to work around. The short time of the fieldwork (three months) was also a limitation. As mentioned before, the data I found was very broad and rather thin in some areas, so I had some difficulty to work around this.

The final result and conclusion is relevant though, and it really contributes to the existing knowledge of SVG. SVG is not a well-known country and there was not much research about it, so every research is a contribution. My research specifically focusses on the experience of the Vincentian people, and by linking this to the existing literature about SVG and the theories about vulnerability, dependence, uncertainty and insecurity I managed to give an account of SVG, connecting on a global, national and local scale.

In the context chapter I provided, there are several issues that my research did not focus on, such as gender inequality, or censorship. It would be interesting for future research on SVG to look at some

of these issues. Another idea for an interesting research would be the perspective on Vincentian society of the ULP voters, as I mainly met NDP supporters and the polarization and hostility between the parties were probably influential on the research. It would also be very interesting to do research on the marijuana farmers, for instance on how they experienced the collapse of the banana industry and why and how they chose to go into the risky business of marijuana farming. There are many possibilities and I think that more research on the island of St Vincent and the Grenadines will be a great contribution to our knowledge about the country.

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