Lugar de la Memoria: The Peruvian Debate on Memory, Violence and Representation

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Latin American Studies by Paloma Rodrigo Gonzales

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2010
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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2010
DEDICATION

To my parents.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to my advisor, Professor Nancy Postero for her dedicated guidance, constant support and encouraging interest. I also want to thank Professors Christine Hunefeldt and Michael Monteón for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

As everything I do, this was made with Jaime.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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by

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This study analyzes the public debate surrounding the creation of the Peruvian _Lugar de la Memoria_ (Place of Memory) through notions of memory, violence and representation. I argue that the Peruvian Place of Memory has successfully been framed, through a carefully constructed discourse, as a memory project that claims to present, not an archeological, imposed, static final version of the past, but a plural, dynamic, inclusive account of a historical period of violence. This discursive achievement has allowed the project to advance in two fundamental ways. First, the Place of Memory has elicited political alliances that would have been impossible without a declared willingness to represent a plural vision of the past. Second, resonating with proposals that claim to represent national memory, the Place of Memory aims to reconstruct the past in order to legitimize a present national project. Working toward that connection between past and present, the project has managed to discursively connect manifestations of extreme violence to less visible, underlying and persistent forms of structural violence. Despite
these valuable achievements, the Peruvian Place of Memory has one central limitation that results from not recognizing that the positions of who speaks and who is spoken of overlap with positions in the larger distribution of power. Overlooking the project’s, and its representatives’, position within power relations may revert the advances made through the discourse, finally turning the Place of Memory into a version of the past, imposed by dominant classes, that perpetuates the structure of power that the project repudiates.
Chapter 1

Historical Context

The proposal to create a museum of memory in Peru was approved by the Peruvian government in early 2009. This project, which is now referred to as the “Place of Memory” (Lugar de la Memoria), can be located within the Peruvian post-war period that began in 2001, when former President Alberto Fujimori fled the country and the interim government created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR - Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación).

In this section I would like to review the events that led to the emergence and progressive growth of an internal war in Peru’s early 1980s. From the beginning of the conflict, theorists have tried to solve the puzzle of a violent conflict that coincided with other important historical events that presented some opportunities for social and political transformation. For instance, political violence in Peru started in the midst of the first democratic elections after over 10 years of military dictatorship. Also, it emerged at a time when the Left had managed to become a formal political force that by the early 80s could channel and unify, through institutionalized mechanisms, the demands of a number of fragmented leftist organizations (Nelson 2002). The Maoist fraction, Sendero Luminoso (The Shining Path) and the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (MRTA Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement) were among these organizations. Moreover, the war was officially declared a year after the country had passed a new Constitution.
in which all Peruvian men and women, regardless of cultural, socioeconomic and educational background, were required to vote. While indigenous men and women were enacting their newly acquired obligation as citizens, *Sendero Luminoso* (self-identified as the Peruvian Communist Party PCP) initiated a so-called “popular war”, destroying the ballots and boxes through which peasants of the small town of Chuschi in Ayacucho were to express their vote. From then on the country underwent a period of escalating violence that left approximately 69,280 people dead (CVR 2003).

In this introductory chapter I will also describe the process that followed the resignation of Alberto Fujimori, focusing on the creation and development of the CVR, an crucial antecedent to the Place of Memory project.

1.1 The Origins of *Sendero Luminoso*

In Peru, it was not until the 1920s that alternative political organizations questioned the traditional oligarchic order (Tanaka 1998:5). Until then, the oligarchic project of turning Peru into a civilized European nation had induced governments to privilege international investment and foreign immigration. These “modernizing” policies allowed the country to achieve certain economic growth based on the exportation of raw materials such as minerals, sugar, cotton and rubber. But, this growth benefited only a few and the concentration of economic power that defined the oligarchy reinforced the control of traditional elites over large sectors of the population, particularly in the Andean regions (Contreras and Cueto 2007).

Around 1919 thought, the economic growth also brought with it the increase of public labor, the institutionalization of the Armed Forces, the development of a mining, agrarian and urban working class, and the appearance of intellectual groups and small scale commerce. The development of a middle class that was not incorporated to the Aristocratic Republic jeopardized the oligarchic enterprise and put the issue of exclusion on the table (Contreras, Cueto 2007). It was around that time, in the early 1920s that the *Indigenistas* (particularly influenced by Jose Carlos Mariátegui’s ideas) initiated a crucial debate trying to include indigenous groups in the project of a modern nation.

However, the first concrete transformation in distribution of power did not come
until 1968 with the military government of General Juan Francisco Velasco Alvarado. Velasco led a radical agrarian reform that would transform the configuration of Peruvian society. After Velasco, land ownership was no longer synonym of political power (Flores Galindo 1988). But, in spite of the egalitarian promises of Velasco’s reforms, and of the reconfiguration of land distribution and ownership, “top-down”, traditional structures of power remained at work, and after the reform, society underwent a process of “cooperativization” in which local powers were replaced by the State apparatus.

In the context of weakened traditional aristocracies and the State’s expansion, Ayacucho, a region located in the south-central Andes of Peru, organized one of the most unexpected social upraises of Peruvian 20th century (Degregori 1990). Carlos Iván Degregori traces the emergence of Sendero Luminoso back to a massive protest that developed in 1969, during Velasco’s military government. Degregori argues that even when Ayacucho was by 1969 one of the poorest regions in the country, poverty and a colonial social structure do not account for the emergence of a powerful, violent, political movement as the one that emerged exclusively in that region. Then, why did Sendero Luminoso develop in the way it did specifically in Ayacucho? Degregori identifies education as a crucial element in the development of the organization.

Ironically, in the late 1950s, impoverished local elites, affected by a national re-distribution of economic resources and economic flows, sought for new sources of power and demanded the re-inauguration of San Cristóbal de Huamanga University (UH), that had been shut down after the War of the Pacific. Rather than reinforcing the privileged position that the elites in Ayacucho traditionally occupied, the UH transformed the allocation of power in the region (Degregori 1990). The UH triggered a process of national immigration to Ayacucho, which provided commercial opportunities for new sectors of society. What is more, professors at UH, who came from either Lima or other regions, or in some cases from abroad, grew more prestigious and powerful than traditional elites. However, due to their transformative presence, scholars at UH were pointed out (by those who rejected social transformation) as “communists”, and thus targeted by the central government as a “dangerous” new force. As a preventive measure Velasco’s
administration decided to suspend all economic support to the university. Velasco also targeted this particular new source of mobility when he approved, in 1969, a Supreme Decree (DS 006-69/EP) eliminating free public education in the country. Due to the social process that began with the reopening of UH ten years before, the law brought about a massive social upheaval as UH was able to mobilize Ayacucho’s social forces demanding for public education and proper financial resources. What started in 1969 as a massive peaceful protest against Velasco’s Supreme Decree, transformed into a violent riot resulting in at least 10 killings. Chaos reigned in Ayacucho, while newspapers in Lima blamed the revolts on enemies of Velasco’s Agrarian Reform and did not disclose information on the real causes of the movement. Those who participated in the initiative to keep UH alive translated this movement into a broader regional force and founded the Frente de Defensa del Pueblo Ayacuchano (Defense Front of the Ayacuchano People). The main social force behind the upheaval was a new powerful alliance formed by peasants and students of Ayacucho. (Degregori, 1990)

It is here where Sendero Luminoso starts to develop (Degregori 1990). At the center of this new social force was the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP), which had been present in Ayacucho since 1960. By 1963 Abimael Guzmán Reynoso, a professor at UH who would later become founder and head of Sendero Luminoso, was leading the PCP in the region. By 1964 the PCP had dissected into two fractions, the first one followed the lines of Soviet communism, and the second one, Bandera Roja (BR) adopted Mao Tse Tung’s ideology. Guzmán was the leader of the Maoist PCP-BR fraction (Degregori, 1990). In 1974 a new small sub-group stemmed from Bandera Roja. This new maoist organization, self-identified as the new Peruvian Communist Party (PCP), was better known as Sendero Luminoso (The Shining Path) because of the slogan used in the party’s newspaper: “Through José Carlos Mariategui’s Shining Path” (Por el Sendero Luminoso de José Carlos Mariátegui) (Manrique 2002). Philosophy professor Abimael Guzmán Reinoso, leader of Sendero Luminoso was known within the organization as “President Gonzalo”.

1.2. The Development of the War (1980–2000)
In 1979, ten years after the mobilization in Ayacucho, and in the context of a military government facing massive popular protests\(^1\), general Morales Bermúdez formed a Constitutional Assembly and called for general elections. Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre (leader of the APRA - American Revolutionary Popular Alliance) was appointed President of the Assembly that would mark the return to democracy. This new Constitution established the universal right to vote for every adult over 18 years of age, man or woman, literate or not.

According to Manrique (2002) this transition caught the Left by surprise. Most leftist organizations believed that social transformation was only possible through an armed revolutionary struggle (18). During the years of military governments the Left, although fragmented, had been the only force that developed strong ties with worker’s unions (16). Its political relevance thus grew with its ability to mobilize popular protests in a context of increasing discontent (18). According to Manrique, the Left’s position was complicated because on the one hand they ideologically rejected “formal democracy”, but on the other hand, they had the opportunity to leave their marginal position in Peruvian politics and participate of a moment in which political power was being redefined (17). The Left finally chose to take the opportunity and got around 30% of the votes in the 1980 elections (17). However, Sendero Luminoso repudiated the “legal” Left and identified them as an enemy “even more dangerous that the bourgeoisie” that “deviated the people from their true path”. (Manrique 2002: 20. My translation)

In 1980 Fernando Belaúnde Terry, representing the center-left liberal party Acción Popular (AP), was elected President. That same year, Sendero Luminoso initiated in Ayacucho a war against the Peruvian State, triggering a period of escalating violence that continued along the following 20 years. According to the CVR’s Final Report, released in 2003, Sendero was the main perpetrator of human rights violations during the time of political violence, being held responsible for 54% of the 69,280 deaths reported. Sendero Luminoso represents a unique case among other Latin American cases, in which repressive governments were usually held accountable for most deaths and human rights

\(^1\) For details on the strikes of 1977 see Manrique 2002.
violations (CVR 2003).

Ideologically, Sendero Luminoso’s Maoist discourse aimed to impose a proletarian dictatorship. Stemming from the countryside towards the cities, the peasant class would seize power and put an end to a system of oppression and exploitation. Nonetheless, Sendero Luminoso “did not take into account the needs and aspirations of the peasantry, nor their organizations or cultural specificities, thus turning the peasantry into a homogenized mass, submitted to the party’s mandate. Rejection led to massacres and the disappearance of entire communities” (CVR 2003, Conclusions, No. 24. My translation).

According to Carlos Iván Degregori, Sendero Luminoso appeared in a context where traditional regional elites were not comfortable with the way in which new discourses threatened their power positions. Moreover, the national project offered indigenous groups the possibility of being part of a modern “us” in exchange for certain transformations that, according to Degregori, were actual “cultural mutilations” on the way of becoming mestizos (Degregori 2003:17). Educated provincial youth faced a disappointing and exclusionary modernization process that allowed them limited access to the mestizo world, translated into lack of job opportunities, racism and a centralized government.

In such circumstances, Sendero Luminoso was broadly accepted among young members of the new educated sectors that appeared around UH in Ayacucho. Moreover, Sendero Luminoso’s discourse of equality for all was initially well received among some local peasant communities. However, discourse also referred to equality, not in relation to dominant groups but within indigenous communities themselves. Disruption of traditional local organization, added to the widely spread practice of juicios populares (“popular trials”) transformed the perception of Sendero Luminoso among the peasantry. Popular trials were processes in which Sendero Luminoso irrupted into a community and publicly executed those who were accused of “immoral acts” such as adultery, alcoholism or theft. Sendero Luminoso also eliminated local authorities, who were considered representatives of the “reactionary regime”. This included communal
leaders. Due to their authoritarian practices Sendero Luminoso’s image gradually transformed from that of an ally to that of the powerful who dictates how justice operates and for whom (Theidon 2003).

Studies have proven that indigenous communities were active actors in the context of political conflict. Initially subscribing Sendero Luminoso’s discourse, they also organized rondas campesinas (peasant patrols) and established alliances with the military when it was time to “clean” their communities from Sendero Luminoso’s presence. In 1983 President Belaúnde recognized the rondas’ heroic role in fighting terrorism and rural communities appeared in the public sphere as active agents in the fight against the national enemy. This discourse allowed them to access the “national us” through the image of organized militarized communities that fought a clearly distinguishable enemy (Starn 1999).

The image that emerged with the rondas contradicted the perception of an innocent, easily manipulated indigenous mass, that constantly appeared in accounts of the conflict. In such context, even if the rondas allowed peasant groups to represent themselves as part of the nation, and active participants in the conflict, the response of the State to Sendero Luminoso’s violence revealed the exclusion and ethnic and racial discrimination that persisted in Peruvian society. The massacres that took place during the time of subversive repression occurred within an imaginary that “produced a sort of identikit of the violent: from Ayacucho, serrano(a), young, educated, Quechua = terrorist” (Degregori 2003: 18).

Alan García’s first government (1985-1990) tried to avoid violent repressive mechanisms. García assumed that the APRA’s position as a center-left party would facilitate negotiations with Sendero, and he proposed that the government should target first and foremost the socio-economic origins of the conflict (Tanaka 1998). But García’s first period was marked by populist measures, corporativism and the nationalization of banks and the insurance system. García led the country to a cumulative hyperinflation rate of over 2,000%. The economic crisis exacerbated the social conflict and the military’s response to violence brought about some of the most infamous cases of hu-
man rights violations. Among them are the massacres of peasants held in Accomarca and Cayara (Ayacucho) and the assassination of over 200 prisoners in penitentiaries in Lima.

By the end of García’s governmental period, the country faced a terrible economic crisis and growing power of terrorist organizations. Alberto Fujimori, an outsider, was elected President in 1990. His neoliberal government (1990-2001) has been credited for restoring peace in Peru. However, stability was achieved at the cost of a series of authoritarian measures, military “faceless” tribunals or tribunales sin rostro, and a general state of emergency that allowed the military and paramilitary forces to defeat “the enemies of the nation” at any cost.

By the 1990s Sendero Luminoso’s sanguinary tactics had already provided the State with the elements to build up a history of heroism. The media contributed to the construction of Sendero Luminoso as a “monstrous other” and the State of terror experienced by the population legitimized that image (Degregori 2003: 20). The sides of the conflict were clearly defined and reproduced in every official discourse. In this context, Peruvian societyparticularly those who could recognize themselves as members of a jeopardized nationwas not only willing to oversee the excesses committed by the Peruvian government, but was demanding extreme measures to be taken against “the enemy”.

In 1992, with support of the military forces, Fujimori carried out a self-coup d’état, shutting down the elected Congress, suspending the Constitution, and purging the Judicial Power. According to numerous surveys, the coup was welcomed by the public and perceived as a necessary measure in order to rescue the country from terrorism and from the economic chaos left by García. In addition to the positive image of a President “in charge”, Fujimori’s popularity escalated when his government captured Abimael Guzmán in 1992, decapitating and overall defeating Sendero Luminoso.

Support to Fujimori’s concentration of power and to the instability of the rule of law, coincided with the expansion of violence to the city. Sendero Luminoso had gained enough power to perpetrate violent crimes in residential areas of Lima. The capital
city experienced bombings in banks, houses of politicians and offices of government institutions. Violence in the city also manifested through the State’s mechanisms of repression. On the evening of November 3rd, 1991 members of the paramilitary group *Grupo Colina*, led by Vladimiro Montesinos, Fujimori’s Presidential Advisor, erupted into a neighborhood party in Barrios Altos, Lima. They forced people to lie on the floor and fired at them indiscriminately, killing 15 people, including an eight-year-old boy. Further investigations concluded that the assailants had been targeting a meeting of *Sendero Luminoso* that was actually being held on the second floor of the building. In 1992, a few months prior to the capture of Guzmán, the *Grupo Colina*, a paramilitary organization affiliated to the State’s intelligence apparatus, kidnapped nine students and one professor from *La Cantuta* National University of Education. All victims were reported missing. It has been argued that they were used as scapegoats for revenge after the bombing of a residential building in Miraflores, Lima. A year before, Fujimori had visited *La Cantuta*, but was forced to leave by the students who accused him of authoritarianism. In spite of his 60% national approval rate, he had been humiliated and therefore, he pointed out the university as a focus of subversion. In 1995, when the bodies of the students from *La Cantuta* were found and the government faced the need to process some of the perpetrators, the President approved amnesty laws for the military. It wasn’t until the year 2001 that the military justice decided to observe the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’ (IACHR) resolution that found such laws to be illegal.

Peru’s transition to democracy, after Fujimori’s illegal and fraudulent reelection in 2000, was unexpected. Thousands of videos that showed Vladimiro Montesinos (the President’s main advisor and chief of the Intelligence Services) buying off elected politicians, directors of newspapers and TV stations, entertainers and businessmen leaked out to the press. Once the network of corruption was unquestionably exposed, Fujimori fled to Japan and faxed his resignation. Congress rejected it and he was then removed from office through Congressional vote.

1.3. The Post War Period

Fujimori’s fall had more to do with accusations of corruption than with alleged
human rights violations. When Fujimori left the country, Valentín Paniagua, a Congressman and longstanding member of the opposition, was appointed transitional President. Paniagua nominated former UN Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar as Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in an attempt to formally break with the former regime and a return to international conventions.

Paniagua removed from office all military authorities related to Vladimiro Montesinos, head of military and paramilitary operations during Fujimori’s government. The transitional government also had the task to restore a democratic judicial system. Thus, Paniagua reformed the antiterrorist legislation that allowed for summary trials during Fujimorismo, which meant that some of the convicted senderista had the right to new trials in civil courts. Paniagua was severely criticized for such measures.

In the context of transition President Valentín Paniagua created the Peruvian Truth Commission. In 2001 when Alejandro Toledo was elected President, he changed the name to Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación: Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

It is important to note that during the period of violence, civil human rights organizations and some governmental institutions had been collecting information on human rights violations. Their research was then used by the CVR during its mandate.

According to Supreme Decrees the CVR was created as the entity in charge of clarifying processes and facts, and of assigning responsibilities to those who executed, ordered or tolerated violence and the violation of human rights in Peru between the years 1980 and 2000. After analyzing the causes and consequences of political violence, the CVR was to suggest initiatives towards national reconciliation. However, the CVR did not have any jurisdictional attributions and more specifically, it did not replace the Judicial Power or Public Ministry in any of their functions. The CVR would ultimately allow Peru, as a democratic State and society, to face its past in order to create the

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2 Decreto Supremo N 065-2001-PCM, N101-2001-PCM.
3 Decreto Supremo N 065-2001-PCM, Article 1
4 Decreto Supremo N 065-2001-PCM, Article 3.
necessary conditions for national reconciliation founded in justice.\footnote{Decreto Supremo N 065-2001-PCM.}

The CVR presented a Final Report on August 28, 2003. Their investigation was based on 16,917 testimonies collected principally among victims (Theidon 2003) and complemented by research from specialized scholars. The final report was divided in four sections. The fist one describes the process, the facts and the victims of the period of violence; the second one, the factors that made violence possible, the third one presents the consequences of violence, and the fourth section presents recommendations for reconciliation.

As part of its work, the CVR presented a Program of Integral Reparations (PIR). According to Laplante and Theidon:

The PIR is one of the most comprehensive truth commission reparation programs to date. Its definition of victims and beneficiaries is also one of the most inclusive includes symbolic reparations ... reparations in the form of services like health and education, restitution of citizen rights, individualized economic reparations, and collective, community-wide reparations. In its introduction, the PIR presents the ethical, political, psychological, and juridical justification for its proposals, linking reparations to the prevention of violence and the promotion of national reconciliation. It clarifies that the implementation of PIR should include the participation of victims, taking into special consideration issues related to culture and gender, noting that this inclusive process has its own potential symbolic and psychological benefits. (Laplante and Theidon 2007: 234)

The CVR did not grant amnesty to the perpetrators who cooperated with their investigations by providing testimonies. Furthermore the CVR condemned impunity and recommended that the government developed the necessary judicial mechanisms to facilitate the processing of victims’ claims (CVR 2003).

Unfortunately, the transitional government of Valentín Paniagua lasted only one year. Alejandro Toledo was elected President in 2001 and his own political agenda interrupted the development of the projects initiated during the transition. Among other things, his wife, Eliane Karp, a Belgian anthropologist, took over the negotiation tables
formed by the previous office and, according to critics this represented “a loss in dynamism and autonomy that indigenous policy issues enjoyed under Paniagua” (García and Lucero 2004: 174).

Moreover, The PIR did not evolve during Toledo’s government. After receiving and acknowledging the CVR’s Final Report in 2003, Toledo publicly apologized in the name of the State to those who suffered during the time of violence. He also announced the proclamation of the National Reconciliation Day. Unfortunately, his government prioritized other projects over the CVR’s recommendations. The lack of political will was translated in the absence of financial support and institutional reforms aiming towards reparations (Oelschelegel 2006).

The lack of interest in following the processes of reparation has significant consequences. According to Theidon (2008), even though the process of sharing testimonies with the CVR had a positive effect on the victims, the absolute majority expected some kind of further reparation derived from their participation. In this sense, the CVR generated great expectations due to an implicit contract that was established during the recollection of testimonies. These expectations are yet to be addressed.

One other limitation presented during the post-CVR period was the limited media coverage of the information contained in the Final Report. According to Oelschelegel (2006), society has shown limited interest in such information and the discussion has been drawn to issues regarding the political reactions to the report’s publication rather than to its content. Furthermore, many pointed out the commissioners’ past militancy in leftist parties, arguing that the report presented an ideological bias. The CVR’s work was pointed out as Marxists or senderista for defining Sendero Luminoso as a political party and for incriminating the military in human rights violations.

In spite of indifference toward the Report, the CVR managed to transcend some of the limitations presented by other truth commissions. The CVR connected politi-

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6 December 10th, according to Decreto Supremo 097-2003-PCM.
7 The government created a 25 million dollar fund for the Armed Force and the Police destined to implement military technology. See Oelschelegel 2006.
cal violence to historical social exclusion and racial and cultural discrimination, while denouncing those directly involved in violent crimes. Among its main conclusions, the CVR stated that 69,280 people died in Peru as a consequence of political violence between 1980 and 2000. The internal war’s “immediate and fundamental” cause was Sendero Luminoso’s decision to begin an armed war against the Peruvian state. Also, Sendero is held responsible of the highest number of human rights violations and deaths (54%). The Peruvian Armed Forces (PAF) are responsible for 28.73% of the victims. According to Final Report, the Peruvian armed conflict “revealed the social gaps and divides, veiled racism, degrading and scornful attitudes that persist in Peruvian society, two centuries after its foundation as a Republic” (CVR 2003: Conclusion No. 1). Moreover, there was a direct relation between situation of poverty, and being a potential victim in the conflict. From the total of reported victims, 79% lived in rural areas, 75% spoke Quechua or other native languages and 68% did not have a high school degree. Finally, the CVR states that “the tragedy suffered by the populations of rural Peru, the Andean and jungle regions, Quechua and Ashaninka Peru, the peasant, poor and poorly educated Peru, was neither felt nor taken on as its own by the rest of the country, revealing the veiled racism and despising attitudes that remain in Peruvian society, almost two centuries after the Republican Foundation” (CVR 2003: Conclusion No. 9).

Besides the Report, the CVR held Public Audiences in Lima and other cities in Peru, led three body exhumations and organized a photographic exhibition called Yuyanapaq: para recordar (Yuyanapaq: to remember). Yuyanapaq, defined as the “visual narrative of the internal conflict in Peru” (CVR 2003), is a selection of 200 photographs that was originally inaugurated in Chorrillos, Lima in August 2003. The exhibition also included a smaller selection of 37 photographs that traveled to 5 different cities in the country. The CVR planned to keep Yuyanapaq open to the public for a period of three months, but the exhibition did not close until March 2005. By the time it was over Yuyanapaq had had over 200,000 visitors. Due to its enormous success the exhibition was reopened for a period of five years, from July 2006 to July 2011, in the Nation’s Museum.
In 2007, after an attempt to participate in the 2006 Presidential elections, Alberto Fujimori was extradited from Chile, trialed and found guilty of murder and human rights violations. He is currently serving a sentence of 25 years in prison.

In 2008, after visiting Yuyanapaq, members of the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development offered to fund a permanent Museum of Memory in Peru that would turn Yuyanapaq into a permanent exhibition. This study analyzes the process triggered by that specific offer.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

This project analyzes the debate surrounding the Peruvian Museum of Memory (Museum of Memory) recently re-baptized as the “Place of Memory” (Lugar de la Memoria) as a representational practice (Coronil 1996). Transcending debates regarding the unavoidable gap that exists between representations and a far more complex external reality, this theoretical assumption allows us to study the Museum of Memory first, as an instance of power and process of truth construction (Theidon 2003, 2009; Yezer 2008, Laplante 2007, Coronil and Skurski 2009) in which memory and history occupy a crucial position as the appropriation of the past is “permeated with intentionality” regarding the present (Theidon 2003: 67). Second, I assume that representational practices have concrete consequences in the constitution of social relations in the specific societies that they represent (Coronil 1996). In that sense, the Museum of Memory stems from the work developed by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación - CVR), a political project that aimed - according to their manifesto - to broaden access to citizenship by mediating a dialogue between victims of violence and a national audience. However, along the lines of what Fernando Coronil (1996) identifies as Occidentalism, representations that attempt to undermine colonial

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1 In this study, a dialogue is understood in the sense proposed by Vincent Crapanzano (1990b), where a “mutual change” occurs in the actors engaged “dialogically” with each other. In the author’s words, “the dialogical situation becomes productive of the selves in the encounter” (442).
structures, may “unwittingly participate in the reproduction of asymmetrical power relations” (57). The contradictions, limitations and potentialities of a project that aims to disrupt exclusionary structures, but faces the risk of perpetuating them, should be addressed at the intersection of debates around issues of memory and violence.

2.1. On Memory

Social sciences and humanities, particularly anthropology and history, are going through what David Berliner (2005) has identified as the “memory boom”. His work can be located within a current debate around the use of the term memory that draws attention to the overload, imprecision and overextension of the concept (Gillis 1984, Megill 1998, Klein 2000, Winter 2000, Kansteiner 2002, Beliner 2005). Why is the use of memory so appealing to scholars in social sciences today? What are the implications of choosing memory over history? What are its connotations and resonances in and outside of the academic field? How is the use of memory fertile, useful, productive, and how is it dangerous?

Questions regarding the protagonist role of memory in social sciences would not be on the table today if it were not for a crucial theoretical transition that took place during the early 1930’s. Maurice Halbwachs led the reformulation of memory as a socio-cultural phenomenon, rather than a mere feature of individual psychic. Along with historian Aby Warburg, Halbwachs opposed “numerous turn-of-the century attempts to conceive collective memory in biological terms as an inheritable or ‘racial memory’” (Assmann 1995: 125). Later on, and closer to the beginning of the “boom” in the 1980s, others would further develop the notions of collective, social or cultural memory, that in spite of their different overtones, work under the premise that “the specific character that a person derives from belonging to a distinct society and culture [is] a result of socialization and customs” (125). Also, academics such as Paul Connerton, Peter Nora, and Jen Assmann, known for their influential work in anthropology the first and in history the last two, coincide in the use of history as a defining often contrasting concept in their understanding of memory as a social fact.

When Maurice Halbwachs first employed the term collective memory, he pointed
out the individual’s ability to remember “in communication with others” who recognize themselves as members of a group (Assmann 1995: 127). Remembering is however, not a matter of accurately reproducing events from the past, but “in very large measure a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present” (Halbwachs 1992 [1980]: 69). This information is not merely data stored by the individual, but a collection of “shared data or conceptions” (31) that are transmitted through generations within a group. Moreover, this data is not limited to facts but also entail reproducing “attitudes and ways of thinking from the past” (64). The connection between individual and collective memory that Halbwachs explores is summed up in the assumption that “to forget a period of one’s life is to lose contact with those who surrounded us” during that time (30). Herein, an individual always remembers in relation to others.

Memory “retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive” (80). In that sense, memory is different from history. History depends on written text because there is no longer any individual person who can, in a social context, actually remember historical facts. In other words, there is a break between the reader and the witness (79). Also, “history is unitary there is only one history” (83) whereas “each man is immersed successively or simultaneously in several groups each group is confined in space and time [and] has its own original collective memory” (78). Finally, collective memory is interested in continuity, in processes through which “the group feels strongly that it has remained the same and becomes conscious of its identity through time” (85). In opposition, history “is not interested in these intervals when nothing apparently interesting happens” (85). In conclusion, from Halbwachs’ perspective, history is “learned” while memory is “lived” (57).

Social memory builds on the notion of collective memory, as Paul Connerton (1989) refers to “images of the past [that] commonly legitimate a present social order” (3). Through the concept of social memory Connerton looks into the connection between memory of groups and “recollection and bodies” (4), stating that:

If there is such thing as social memory, I shall argue, we are likely to
find it in commemorative ceremonies; but commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms. (Connerton 1989: 4-5)

Resembling Halbwachs’ collective memory, “culturally diffused” and “informally told narratives” define social memory in opposition to historical reconstruction and the production of formally written documents (17). Historians rely on “traces: the marks, perceptible to the senses, which some phenomenon, in itself inaccessible, has left behind” (13). Thus, the process of historical reconstruction is an inferential one that is still necessary “even when social memory preserves direct testimony of an event” (14). This last point relates to the fact that historians “are their own authority” (13). They cannot accept informants’ recollections as reliable sources, risking the autonomy that defines their discipline. They draw inferred conclusions from what they consider, qualifies as historical evidence.

Besides defining the mechanisms that separate historical reconstruction from social memory, Connerton makes an interesting point regarding the power that history can exercise over memory. He uses the notion of “organised forgetting” which is imposed particularly by totalitarian regimes to “deprive citizens of their memory” (14). From his viewpoint, “the struggle of citizens against state power is the struggle of their memory against forced forgetting” (15).

Similarly, Peter Nora “identified memory as a primitive or sacred form opposed to modern historical consciousness” (Klein 2000:127). Nora states that “so-called archaic or primitive societies” conceive a closer connection between remembrance and the sacred, which stands far from modern history’s scientific endeavors (137). In this context, memory acquires a “subaltern status” that turns the concept into “a form of counterhistory that challenges the false generalizations in exclusionary ‘History’” (137).

A historian, as well as Nora, Jan Assmann (1995) presents a divergent take that questions the persistent theoretical link between memory and informal, everyday communication, and its identification with “people without history” (in the Hegelian sense).
He presents the concept of *cultural memory* distinguishing it from what he calls *communicative memory* (the later, a notion comparable to Halbwachs’ collective memory). Communicative memory is a disorganized and informal, socially mediated form of remembrance. It has a “limited temporal horizon” (127), shorter that one hundred years, because it depends on oral, volatile, everyday communication (127). Cultural memory is distant from everyday life and has, as its central mechanism, “fixed points” that stand for “fateful events of the past whose memory is maintained through cultural formations (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)” (129). These sources of cultural fixation are defined as “figures of memory” (129) and their power rests on their ability to stabilize cultural memory for long periods of time. Therefore, the transition from communicative memory to cultural memory is the transition from everyday communication to “the context of objectivized culture and organized or ceremonial communication” (128). In many ways, Assmann’s cultural memory is expanding the use of the term to speak about larger, institutionalized sources of social identification such as the nation; opposing Halbwachs’ argument that “the nation is too remote from the individual for him to consider the history of his country as anything else than a very large framework with which his own history makes contact at only a few points” (1992 [1980]: 77). Assmann is trying to bring memory closer to modern history.

Although Assmann’s proposal allows for a closer relationship between “learned history” and “lived history” (Halbwachs 1992 [1980]: 57), scholars such as Kerwin Lee Klein (2000) have noted that, in such descriptions, the “leap” between individual and collective memory or we could say communal and national is often left unexplained. Moreover “the most common strategy for justifying the analogical leap from individual memories to Memoriesocial, cultural, collective, public, or whateveris to identify memory as a collection of practices or material artifacts” (135). In this form of memory, which Klein calls *new structural memory*, “the new ‘materialization’ of memory thus grounds the elevation of memory to the status of a historical agent, and we enter a new age in which archives remember and statues forget” (136). Klein warns against the fact
that “freed from the constraints of individual psychic states, memory becomes a subject in its own right” allowing for authors to “move freely from memories as individual psychic events to memories as a collection of material artifacts and employ the same psychoanalytical vocabularies throughout” (136). The employment of vocabulary related particularly to therapeutic psychoanalysis is a point that will be further examined in this section, as it relates to the dangers posed by the use of memory as a term that automatically entails healing processes, as well as more inclusive practices, and challenges to the imposition of top down narratives.

Stemming from the different perspectives presented above we can say that, in general terms, memory is employed when referring to the social activity “by virtue of which one registers, retains and revisits events and experiences” (Berliner 2005: 200). Moreover, memory points to those elements of the past that persist because they are relevant to the present existence of a group in an intimate, everyday-life form, different from distant historic events. In several anthropological studies, the reproduction of the human species, as social beings, is explained in terms of “cultural memory, a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experiences in the interactive framework of a society” (Assmann 1995:126).

Current concerns regarding the vagueness of the notion usually revolve around one central question: in contemporary social sciences, what is not memory? (Berliner 2005, Crapanzano 2004). Considering that “the label ‘memory’ aims to grasp the past we carry, how we are shaped by it and how this past is transmitted” it is difficult to clearly separate it from “the general process of culture” (Berliner 2005: 201-2). As Berliner argues, a notion that stands for the “accumulated past which acts on us and makes us act” (201), functions “among anthropologists as an avatar of the never-ending debate about the continuity and reproduction of society” (203). Using memory as an indiscriminate replacement for notions such as culture, identity or history (Klein 2000, Berliner 2005), endangers the “specificity of what anthropology of memory is, i.e. to understand the way people remember and forget their past” (Berliner 2005: 206) [emphasis added].

It is surprising that a concept so broadly employed in current research was re-
cently, and according to the 1969 *Dictionary of Social Sciences*, a “word that verged on extinction” (Klein 2000: 131). Furthermore, the 1968 edition of *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* did not even bother to present a definition of the word “memory” (131). Then, why did the situation turned so drastically during the twentieth century? Some authors have attempted to explain the “memory craze in history and the social sciences” considering social, cultural, economic and historical facts and theoretical trends (Berliner 2005: 203). According to Klein’s insightful analysis, the term fits a historical moment: “memory is partial, allusive, fragmentary, transient, and for precisely these reasons, it is better suited to our chaotic times” (Klein 2000: 138). He is referring specifically to the “postmodern turn”, as a historical explanation for the “memory boom”. Resonating with earlier definitions, Klein suggests that “history is modernism, the state, science, imperialism, androcentrism, a tool of oppression; [while] memory is postmodernism, the ‘symbolically excluded’, ‘the body’, ‘a healing device and a tool for redemption’” (138). He argues that memory “simply sounds less distant” (129) in part because it has been historically associated with religious contexts and meanings that are older and more deeply rooted in human experience than history. Furthermore, “explicit religiosity aside, memory serves as a critical site for the generation and inflection of affective bonds” (130). History, on the other hand, has since its establishment as a discipline, made an effort to stand far from memory and closer to scientific objectivity. In that sense, and particularly when memory attempts to provide a space for subaltern voices, “memory’s notorious vagaries become its strengths, and the acknowledgement of what some historians have taken as evidence of memory’s inferiority to ‘real’ history emerges as therapeutic if not revolutionary potential” (137-8).

The postmodern turn also had an impact on social sciences in Latin America. The fall of modern narratives, specifically Marxism, led Latin American thinkers to progressively turn away from European trends, toward ideas “born and bred in another part of the so-called Third World” (Mallon 1994: 1493). The influential framework of Subaltern Studies brought with it what Florencia Mallon identifies as the “deepest, most irresolvable, most fertile tension” of the project. On one hand, the “linguistic turn” that
came with poststructuralism, called for textual analysis, deconstruction of documents and theories, and questioning preexisting forms of knowledge; whereas, on the other hand, the project aimed to follow Gramscian ideas of political transformation. Latin America stood in a space between Foucault and Derrida, and Gramsci; between the inexistence of a “truth” and the need to change social reality. In spite of its essential contradictions and of the methodological challenges of a project unable to escape them, the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group challenged the nation as an “elite creation”, that had historically “obsured” the existence of dynamic subaltern social subjects, recognizing that “not to acknowledge the contribution of the people to their own history manifests the poverty of historiography and points to crucial reasons for the failures of national programs” (Founding Statement of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group cited in Mallon 1994: 1505).

In those lines, memory had also played a crucial part in the appearance of “identity politics” in the US. In Klein’s words: “memory appeals to us because it lends itself to the articulation of ethnoracial nationalisms that turn away from the cosmopolitan discourse of history” (143). Memory, allowed for new sources of identification and self-recognition that escaped the colonial structure of national projects. The risks raised by this process stand closely to what Assmann tried to call into question: the idea that only “people without history” possess memory. I would further this observation, following Klein’s concerns regarding non methodical uses of the term, stating that it can also be assumed that talking about memory presupposes the inclusion of those traditionally excluded from official history.

Undertaking his own explanation for the memory boom and of the reasons that complicate its clear separation from culture David Berliner (2005) calls attention to the ability of memory to talk about continuity. Regardless of the early association of memory with fragility, ephemerality and uncertainty (Crapanzano 2004, Berliner 2005), memory as a social phenomenon “helps us think through the continuity and persistence of representations, practices, emotions, and institutions, an idea fundamental to anthropologists since he founding of the discipline” (Berliner 2005: 205).
A third suggestion to more clearly understand the leading role of memory today comes from scholars dealing with trauma, as “the key to authentic forms of memory” (Klein 2000: 138). Indeed, from their perspective, “memories shaped by trauma are most likely to subvert totalizing varieties of historicism” (138), mostly due to the traditionally marginal positions that groups which experience trauma occupy. Developing that line of thought, memory becomes the means for the “return of the repressed” (138). This theorization stems from a long-standing and rich debate around “one of the most productive sites of memory work” (138): the Jewish Holocaust. Studies on the Shoah speak about the moment in which an event “limit-event” (140) escapes the capacity of historical discourse, not only because it is inaccessible through Western representations, but also in so far as it puts into question “the West” itself and thus, its forms of knowledge. When the limitations of history surfaced, “memory appeared to answer these problems, either by consuming history whole or by weaving into it as so to provide an authentic linkage with the past while still preventing the totalizing narrative closure that many historians believed marred the work of their predecessors” (139). To some extent the Holocaust marks the transition to a new era, in which memory comes to history’s aid (Klein 2000: 139).

In regards to this last description of memory as the means through which marginalized or repressed groups gain control over the recollection of their past, Klein observes that simply stating that the use of the concept automatically entails “the return of the repressed”, is dangerous and “speculative” (143). He however is not denying the latent potential of the notion, but differentiates studies on memory that carefully apply psychoanalytical concepts to the remembrance of victims of violence, from those cases in which psychoanalytical language (such as trauma or mourning) is not pertinent. In other words “we should be worried about the tendency to employ memory as the mode of discourse natural to people without history” (144), regardless of their particular “lived history”, of the events they choose to remember, and of their relevance to the group’s present.

Recognizing memory as a social construction, built in relation to others, and ac-
knowing the fact that the use of the term responds to the ongoing search (particularly in social sciences) for more inclusive ways to account for the multiplicity of viewpoints from which “people experience and interpret their pasts” (Berliner 1995: 206); I would like to locate this work along the lines of Klein’s concerns, not assuming that speaking of memory entails the “return of the repressed” but asking, how can a project that claims to be a memory project be more inclusive and “come to history’s aid”? For that purpose, memory is understood in this study as a form of “recollection”, intimately related to the elaboration of identities, but different from the notion of “cultural reproduction” (Berliner 1995: 206). It aims to understand the ways in which a group (in this case at both the communal and the national level) chooses to recall and transmit events in the past, in so far as “the event is not what happens [but] that which can be narrated” (Feldman 1991: 14 cited in Malkki 1995: 107). Framing collective memory in terms of narratives allows for a crucial additional dimension in the debate over memory: the ability to consciously elaborate narratives with political purposes. Connecting to earlier authors’ elaborations on the relevance of memory to a group’s present, Theidon (2003) notes that “the conscious appropriation” of the past “involves both memory and forgetting both being dynamic processes permeated with intentionality” (67). In the particular context of “war and its aftermath” (67), communal and national stories “use the past in a creative manner, combining and recombining elements of the past in service to interests in the present” (67). In that sense “each narrative has a political intent and assumes both an internal and external audience” (67). Thus, in Caroline Yezer’s (2008) account of the way in which a particular village in Ayacucho constructed a narrative of the past, she finds that “speaking about the war was never an unguarded confession of past events, but a negotiated dialogue in which the person giving testimony is also questioning, albeit surreptitiously, their interlocutor” (278).

Aside from understanding the recollection of past events as a political instrument, various authors have expanded on the relationship between memory and collective identities. In the particular context of post-war, questions on memory “are questions that look not only to the past, but squarely to the future as people determine what sort of
human community they reconstruct after sustained political violence” (Theidon 2000: 541). A powerful site of memory appears in this search: the body.

In her study with widows of political violence in Guatemala, Linda Green (1999) describes the ways in which traumatic events are recalled through the body, more specifically through the ill body. Green explains that, the widows “had come to (re)present through their bodies the horrors that they had experienced, and such illness had become a powerful communicative force” that, at the same time, “forged a commonality” among them (117). In a way, refusal to heal is refusal to forget, and a call for “treating” the political body in order to cure physical pains. Hence, the body speaks of past atrocities, where “silence imposed through terror” becomes the norm (64). Other authors (Malkki 1995, Nelson 1999, Sanford 2003, forthcoming) have explored the forms in which race or the “liberatory promises [of] freedom from the horrors of essentialist racial difference” brought by discourses of mestizaje becomes the bodily expression of social memory. Physical difference is socially constructed, allowing for social and political inequality to be inscribed in racially differentiated body features (Malkki 1995: 54). Through her analysis of the Hutu refugees’ “shared body of knowledge about their past” (53), Liisa Malkki finds that in the construction and transmission of what she calls “mythico-history”, ethnic groups systematically reproduce and describe, what are believed to be perfectly accurate delineations of physical difference (1995: 54), which are accountable for a person’s character and therefore position in the sociopolitical system. The body is therefore inscribed with memory, as it becomes the constructed vehicle through which a group defines “otherness” and “commonality” in relation to the past.

That being the case, narratives of the past can be consciously constructed and transmitted with political purposes regarding the present. The body as a site of memory can also be narrated in ways that forge a “naturalized” identity for present purposes; intimately connected to what in means to be human in a determined social context, and to the construction of an other, that in the context of war, becomes the enemy (Taussig 1992, Malkki 1995, Sanford 2006, Theidon 2004, 2006), the bare life (Agamben 1998) whose death is stripped from any human meaning. This logic also applies to the study
ofi nations, particularly postcolonial nations, which through historical reconstruction, inscribed in bodies, define the national citizen who is the subject of rights. This, without denying by any means that such definition is constantly being contested, transformed and negotiated (Mallon 1995).

It is important to note however that the agency (in the sense of producing an effect) of memory in present social life is itself conditioned by the social context in which it acts. In Arjun Appadurai’s (1981) words, there are “cultural limits to the past as a symbolic resource” (201). This point becomes crucial when speaking of societies, or nations narrating memories of violence in order to forge social and political transformation. Hence if “political violence is studied by examining the link between the historical memory and the social relations of the society within which it is produced, implemented, and achieves effects (Coronil and Skurski 1991: 333)”, the study of the remembrance of political violence should be studied in the same way. A state that chooses to remember past atrocities is, even if only in form, drawing a line between the past and the present, between civilization and barbarism, democracy and totalitarianism, peace and violence (Coronil and Skurski 1999, Laplante 2007). National memory projects that specifically use the term due to its connotations are expected to provide a space where traditionally marginalized groups can tell their story, be heard by a larger national audience and be acknowledge as citizens and subjects of rights. This opening is only possible in certain social and political contexts at the national and global levels. Thus, where history was imposition, oppression, exclusion and memory provided dialogue, multiplicity and inclusion; memory is now democracy whereas repression is forgetfulness. Many researchers consider memory, understood as a space where traditionally excluded groups tell their “truth”, as the first step toward more inclusive democracies. Summing up the Peruvian case:

Social memory refers to the passed-on attitude that Peruvians with darker skin and Indian features are “valued less” and, in effect, second class citizens who do not fully enjoy their right to live, neither in terms of social development nor freedom from being killed. And until the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] was formed, they did not even
enjoy the same right to denounce these conditions and to speak out about such injustices. (Laplante 2007: 440)

The Peruvian Museum of Memory is a project that discursively chooses to remember rather than forget. As other “nunca más” projects, it advocates for the recollection of the past in order to avoid repetition. It aims to be a memory project as it intends to include in its narration of past events, the experiences of those whose “truths” have been systematically excluded from national history. It also means to use those experiences of violence for political purposes regarding the present, and for the undertaking of a more inclusive definition of the “Peruvian us”. The fact that it is a state-sponsored project, actually funded by the German government, and developed in the capital city and power center of the country—the region less affected by political violencer—reveals the aspiration of an official project, that addresses “the nation” and even the world. However, can a project in which “there is a break in continuity between the society reading this history and the group in the past who acted in or witnessed the events” be a memory project (Halbwachs 1992 [1980]: 79)? More importantly, can a project in which “readers” take narratives away from “witnesses” be a memory project? If so, how? These questions will be broadly addressed throughout this study.

2.2. On Violence

Violence can never be understood solely in terms of its physicality force, assault, or infliction of pain alone. Violence also includes assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim. The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what gives violence its power and meaning. (Schepер-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004: 1)

I want to position this study along the lines of those who speak of violence as a social phenomenon, therefore transcending the physical dimensions of its effects, and bringing into the discussion issues of meaning, making sense of one’s world, and being a human being; ultimately social, cultural and political issues. In that respect, Maurice Blanchot (1995) paraphrased by Schepер-Hughes and Bourgois says about torture that “it is not so much what one undergoes in torture as what goes under with it i.e., everything that structures human existence: time, space, touch, senses, and the sentient
world” (2004: 24). Fundamentally “we are social creatures”. Hence “cultures, social structures, ideas, and ideologies shape all dimensions of violence, both its expressions and its repressions” (Schepers-Hughes and Bourgeois 2004: 3). This take on violence confers the notion with certain characteristics that have been addressed from different perspectives.

Various authors have analyzed violence through the socially constructed dichotomies that separate the world into normal/abnormal or legitimate/illegitimate (Foucault, Agamben, Schepers-Hughes, Bourgeois). Among the core notions for that approach, Giorgio Agamben provides “a line”, in this case separating what he calls bare life, or life conceived as a biological minimum, from “political beings” (Butler 2004: 67). Bare life is conceptualized as life that can be killed but not sacrificed (Agamben 1998: 82). In that sense, it can be eliminated but its death is stripped from all meaning, for bare life inhabits the “state of exception”: a space outside the context in which human life becomes meaningful (socially, culturally, politically).

The definition of what is violent is therefore always mediated by the social understanding of what is normal or worthy. Hence, the social determines no only the existence of “good” (normal, legitimate) or “bad” (abnormal, illegitimate) forms of violence, but also the existence of violence itself. Moreover, “depending on one’s political-economic position in the world (dis)order, [the exact same] particular acts of violence may be perceived as ‘depraved’ or ‘glorious’” (Schepers-Hughes and Bourgeois 2004: 2) and may have either destructive or productive effects in regards to the construction of a world order. In other words, an act which is for a group or person, disruptive, may be for another the means to create a social dichotomy that organizes the social: “us” vs. “them”, dominant vs. dominated, etc.

In that respect, there is an undeniable connection between the development of extreme violence and “othering” mechanisms. According to David Apter (1997), people do not commit violence without a discourse that allows consensus (2) regarding its sense and objectives. Through language, narratives, rituals and everyday practices, communities “produce” enemies, dangerous others, bare and killable lives (Theidon
2006, Agamben 1998). In Liisa Malkki’s research with Hutu refugees in Tanzania, the construction of Hutu and Tutsi “body maps” that informed the development of acts of violence in Rwanda clearly depicts this dimension of violence. For instance, “the body maps were far from being naturalistic descriptions of inert [bodily] features for their own sake”. However, “their power as cultural constructs [was] inextricably encoded in other domains of social practice” such as the construction of ethnic difference. As a consequence, acts of extreme violence were informed by these constructs, and enacted accordingly in highly symbolic ways, which caused that “through violence, bodies of individual persons become metamorphosed into specimens of the ethnic category for which they are supposed to stand” (Malkki 1995: 132). On that same point, but in relation to the Jewish holocaust, Philip Gourevitch (1998) states:

Genocide after all is an exercise in community building. [] The ideology of genocide was promoted as a way to not create suffering but to alleviate it. The specter of an absolute menace that requires absolute eradication binds leader and people in a hermetic utopian embrace, and the individual always and annoyance to the totality ceases to exist. (Gourevitch 1998: 140).

Studies have explored not only the ways in which the construction of a world order allows and informs extreme violence, but rather how acts of cruelty seek to de-humanize, to shatter that which defines humanness, which separates bare lives from meaningful living. In her analysis of “micropolitics of reconciliation” in postwar Peru, Kimberly Theidon (2006) analyzes the way in which members of peasant communities in the region of Ayacucho represented, through language, what they understood as “falling out of humanity” (442). The words they used when referring to the enemy within their communities described the absence of fundamental elements of their material and social life. senderistas were defined as those who had no land, no family, no religion, as gringos or foreigners, as orphans and therefore poor. This in a context where being a member of the community is determined by participation in a reciprocity

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2 The Quechua term “waqcha” means both, orphan and poor.
system of collective labor. The extent to which one is able to participate depends on access to labor force (family extension) and land.

Addressing the issue from a different perspective, Primo Levi’s notion of “gray zone” explores how extreme violence enforced in Nazi concentration camps was not limited to physical violence, but put into question morality and sense of self-worth by bonding perpetrators and “privileged” victims through guilt (Levi 1988: 85). Extreme “living” conditions in concentration camps increased victim’s willingness to cooperate with the oppressors in order to obtain certain privileges. Thus, the questions regarding whether or not it surviving was worth it, or “why didn’t they prefer to die” (99) rather that become accomplices in the murderous enterprise, becomes the question between choosing bare life over meaningful death.

Besides the approaches outlined above, violence has been studied as a cultural manifestation in a on itself. Contrary to the belief that violence is a disorganized, spontaneous, chaotic expression, research on the subject proves that violence has rules, procedures, rituals and symbols (Rosaldo 1980, 1989; Taussig 1984, Malkki 1995, Coronil and Skurski 2009). In his study on “culture of terror”, Michael Taussig (1984) describes the early 20th century rubber-gathering enterprises of the Putumayo river as spaces in which “terror and torture became the form of life”. Terror appears in that context as “an organized culture with its systematized rules, imagery, procedures, and meanings involved in spectacles and rituals”. For instance, ritualized violence spawn a sense of solidarity among the rubber company employees, while “beating out through the body of the tortured some sort of canonical truth about Civilization and Business”(1984: 51). Going back to Liisa Malkki’s work (1995), the author also presents violence as a highly symbolized phenomenon from which power and meaning are derived. Malkki argues that acts of cruelty “take on conventions” and develop within a preexistent and “overarching moral order” (1995: 134-5). Consequently violent acts are not only enacted and patterned symbolically, but also become “mythlogically meaningful” when narrated through what she calls “myhtico-historical” recounts that align with those preexisting cosmological principles (1995: 135).
Along those lines, Coronil and Skurski (2009) argue that violence has for long, been perceived as an independent and destructive “force that controls humans rather than an instrument used by them” (1-2). Violence, they underscore, is inherent to power. It is applied in the “organization, legitimation and contestation of power”, and plays a fundamental role in the formation of modern nation states (2). The foundational and organized character of violence is obscured by a process of “mystification” that prioritizes discourses of extreme cases of violence, thus legitimizing more common, less radical manifestations of violence in everyday life (3). In that sense, “violence itself participates in the definition of violence” providing hegemonic power to certain narratives over others that remain marginalized (6-7).

In a way the Place of Memory project aims to recognize the social and cultural dimensions of violence in order to connect extreme, exceptional manifestations of violence with more diffuse, subtle, expressions of violence in everyday life. To trace that line of thought I will borrow Philip Bourgois’ (2001) analytical classification of violence into four types, adding a fifth one, the violence of speaking about violence, which I believe is crucial for the purpose of this study.

According to Bourgois (2001) Violence can be first, “direct political” violence exercised by the state or by those who reveal against it. This form of “targeted physical violence” is informed by the separation of legitimate and illegitimate terror (Bourgois 2001: 426). Cases of political violence in Latin America fall into this category. I would also like to include in this category a form of violence that I believe is intimately connected to state violence: cases of organized “communal violence” (Schepers-Hughes and Bourgeois 2004:12). In cases such as the genocide in Rwanda or even in Peruvian internal war, political violence is enacted at the local level. It becomes “communal violence another model of modern genocide one based on proximity and intimacy in which there is face-to-face and hand-to-hand mass murder of former neighbors, coworkers, and compatriots” (Schepers-Hughes and Bourgeois 2004:12).

“Chronic, historically entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality” determine the second category: “structural violence” (Bourgois 2001: 426).
Paul Farmer’s (1997) study of human suffering in Haiti depicts the ways in which “life choices are structured by racism, sexism, political violence, and grinding poverty” (282). Structural violence is often “conflated with otherness” (287), or equated to cultural, racial or ethnic difference, ignoring questions on “who is likely to suffer and in what ways” (288). Bourgeois’ study on US Inner-city race and class apartheid in the (1995) supports that same argument, stating that discussions on violence and poverty in the US “frequently degenerate into stereotyped conceptions of race” (303). The drug dealers that Bourgeois works with react against exclusion and racial discrimination by “celebrating marginalization as a badge of pride” (304), and more importantly, directing their brutality against themselves and their immediate community, rather than against their structural oppression actually blaming themselves for their failure to achieve the American Dream” (307). Bourgeois’ study is here linking structural violence to the third type, which is “symbolic violence”.

In Pierre Bourdieu’s words, symbolic violence is the “violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 272). It is the form of violence that relies on “the mere fact of taking the world for granted, of accepting the world as it is, and of finding it natural because [the] mind is constructed according to cognitive structures that are issued out of the very structures of the world” (272). Those cognitive structures are according to Bourdieu the binary dichotomies that turn constructed relations of power into “natural” (273). In his account, the author uses the example of male domination to describe a form of effective power that legitimizes a relationship by inscribing it in the social construction of biological bodies.

The fourth type of violence developed by Bourgeois, but based on Schepet-Hughes’ concept, is the “violence of everyday life” (426), which refers to the “micro-interactional level” of social relations. In that sense, Nancy Schepet-Hughes uses the term “invisible genocides” to talk about forms of violence that are not invisible “because they are secreted away or hidden from view, but quite the opposite ... the thing that are hardest to perceive are those which are right before our eyes” (Schepet-Hughes and Bourgeois
This form of violence is not only “invisible” or “misrecognized” (borrowing Bourdieu’s notion) but rather identified as “something good” (21). In her research about child death in Brazil, Schepers-Hughes (1992) portrays the bureaucratic work of state functionaries involved in the process of distributing coffins, as contributing to the “routinization and normalization of child death” (280). Their everyday attitudes towards death, “the rapid dispatch” and indifferent treatment of death as any other bureaucratic matter “conveys that, nothing worth nothing, has really taken place” (280). The author places violence at the level of routine everyday activities that can go from a public or private office to the domestic space.

Finally, and crucial to the present study, is a form of “discursive violence”, related to talking, studying and writing about people’s experiences of violence, thus specifically connected to questions of representation. Anthropological theory has addressed the problem of speaking about others, paying particular attention to “the colonial and imperialist violence that “produced” the very subjects of [the] discipline the so-called primitive, indigenous, traditional, non-industrialized peoples of the world”, whose “lives, suffering, and deaths have provided generations of anthropologists with their livelihood” (Schepers-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 5). The violence of talking about violence experienced by others, of privileging certain narratives and truths over others, that often characterizes projects of truth and reconciliation “will exist as long as some people have the desire, and more significantly, the opportunity and the power to make objects of the lives of others” (Binford 1996: 421).

Along those lines, in their studies of the Peruvian case Laplante and Theidon (2007), recognize that the Peruvian CVR acted as a necessary listener that heard, acknowledged, validated and created an official national document out of the experiences of those who had been historically marginalized and discriminated (238). However, as in most transitions that take the form of truth commissions, the need to construct a unified version of a violent historical period results in victim typologies. “Victims” are defined as those whose basic human rights have been violated. Because the discourse of human rights is a powerful tool, such a definition can elicit concrete social transforma-
tion because it opens up the possibility of appropriating that discourse in the struggle for citizenship and recognition at the national and international level. However, as this appropriation is mediated and conditioned by being an innocent victim, only those who are innocent are granted the “right to rights” (Theidon 2008: 13). In such context, peasant communities reconstruct their stories in a way that will allow them access to this new opening towards citizenship obscuring the important characteristic of a case as complex as the Peruvian internal war, in which people do not fall into delineated categories.

Among the limitations posed by the discourse of victimhood and innocence (particularly in Peru) is that it does not allow for the discussion on the reasons that explain why Sendero Luminoso became so powerful and why their discourse was attractive to many. Also, in a study on victims of sexual violence in Ayacucho during the period of internal war, Kimberly Theidon (2007) identifies another effect of the “violence in defining violence”, while trying to reinterpret the notion of “gender sensitive” processes in truth commissions. According to the author, even when the CVR used a broad definition of sexual violence along their research, focusing on sexual violence itself “may result in a narrow definition of the gendered dimensions of war” (458), which informed by the typologies of victim and perpetrator, mar women’s self representations of heroism and resistance. According to her experience, when narrating their terrifying experiences, women in Ayacucho refuse to represent themselves as victims. They transform their victimization into heroism, as they “trade their bodies” for the lives of their loved ones (469). Theidon’s analysis raises an important question regarding why is the path to citizenship and rights, victimhood therefore shame instead of the heroism of an honorable struggle. This question points directly to questions on who determines the “rules of the game”.

Also commenting on the silencing effects that may result from representing the less powerful, Florencia Mallon (1995) argues that:

Any process of burying or expunging local voices, even if it is done for the larger good of participation and solidarity, bears too a high cost. Simplifying local political discursive practices denies the dignity, agency
and complexity of rural peoples and facilitates the kind of racist and dualist “otherings” to which they are still subject. (Mallon 1995: 329)

Another level of analysis refers to the (violent in an of itself) discursive location of violence within constrains of space and time, usually an “elsewhere” (or “others”), which in Taussig’s words “should make us suspicious about the deeply rooted sense of order here” (1992: 269). This point is worth noting specially in colonial societies in which the “civilizing projects” of modern nation states are oblivious to the violence inherent in the imposition of their project, even when they seek to establish peace, freedom and democracy (Pratt 2000).

Because of the position that those who speak of violence occupy, this form of discursive or representational violence is linked to structural violence, which “all too often defeats those who would describe it”. According to Paul Farmer (1997), there are (at least) three reasons why this happens. First the potential “‘exocitization’ of violence” where “the suffering of those who distance, whether by geography, gender, ‘race’, or culture, is somehow less affecting” (286). Second, “the sheer weight of suffering, which makes it all the more difficult to render” and communicate, and third, the complexity of suffering, the “dynamics and distribution of suffering”, are “poorly understood”, considering that “to explain suffering, one must embed individual biography in the larger matrix of culture, history, and political economy” (286).

This study comments on decisions made regarding how to speak about violence, therefore, on who makes those decisions. Because of the peculiarities of the Peruvian case this work pays special attention to notions of “direct”, “structural” and “discursive or representational” violence.
Chapter 3

The Negotiation: transforming a Museum into a “Place”

The disclosure of an apparently final decision regarding an unresolved matter within Alan García’s administration roused Peruvian public opinion in early 2009. The Peruvian Government decided to reject an over two-million-dollar donation coming from representatives of the German Government, that was meant to fund the creation of a Museum of Memory. The groups that appear as constants in the Peruvian debate around issues of violence and memory represent divergent opinions as well as different power positions. Along those lines, in her interpretation of Alberto Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, Florencia Mallon (1995) describes a “continuous processes through which power and meaning are contested, legitimated and redefined at all levels of society”. Here she is referring to hegemony as hegemonic processes: an always-dynamic negotiation among contesting forces. The project of a national Museum of Memory, and more specifically, the discussion regarding its form, place, content, direction and so forth; provides a space for negotiation regarding whether or not the nation should remember, what it should remember, how it should be remembered, and who is to make those decisions.

In the account presented below, the actors who participate - to a greater or lesser extent - in such a discussion are in simplified terms, first, the intellectuals: social sci-
entists, scholars and artists led by renounced writer Mario Vargas Llosa. Second, the Peruvian Armed Forces (PAF) supported by some members of the Government, particularly Ministers of Defense. A third crucial participant is President Alan García (and members of his administration). Finally, local and international human rights organizations join in, as well as associations representing victims and their families.¹

3.1. Advocating for a Museum: Intellectuals, Defensoría del Pueblo, CVR, Grassroots and Human Rights Organizations

According to official sources, the offer of financing a Museum of Memory had been formalized in September 2008, in the context of a bilateral cooperation agreement between Peru and Germany.² The proposal came to be after members of the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development visited Yuyanapaq: para recordar (to remember); an itinerant photographic exhibition developed in 2003 by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación (CVR), that attracted over 200,000 visitors during its first season in Lima and was then transferred to the Nation’s Museum.³

On March 5 2009, before the government had released any comments to the press regarding the issue, representatives of the German Embassy stated that their offer had been rejected, in spite of the various means through which they attempted to channel it.⁴ Due to the absence of an “official version”, some well-recognized intellectuals, such as Mario Vargas Llosa (writer), Fernando de Szyszlo (artist), Alonso Cueto (writer) and Julio Cotler (sociologist), openly denouncing the government’s resolution, began to collect signatures in favor of the project.⁵

In that context, the Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsmen’s Office), the institution that had been involved in the negotiations from the moment that the offer became avail-

¹This section has been developed based on information published in the media. It is important to note that the sources themselves may have specific opinions regarding the project. This is the case of Expreso, a diary that evidently opposes the creation of a museum of memory for political reasons that escape the scope of this study.
² La República, March 5, 2009.
³ http://www.pnud.org.pe
⁴ La República, February 24, 2009.
⁵ La República, February 24, 2009.
able, argued that until then the government seemed in favor of accepting the donation but for different purposes, particularly related to reparations owed to victims of terrorism. Ombudswoman Beatriz Merino urged a reconsideration. In her public speech, she claimed that “the unity of a nation is sustained in equality, freedom and justice and never in hate or intolerance. From this basic unquestionable premise stems the compelling need for truth, the need for people to get to know one another through truth. From this premise derives the international tendency to create museums of memory”. Also connecting memory to national identity, Merino argued “the notion of belonging to a community of truly free and equal men and women causes us to grieve when one of us dies. That feeling pushes us to remember them and never to forget them”.

Salomón Lerner joined this first series of reactions. Philosopher, chancellor emeritus of Peru’s Pontifical Catholic University (PUCP), and former President of the CVR (2001-2003), Lerner described the government’s response as “not only an expression of bad manners, but a frivolous and cynical attitude towards what happened”. He manifested his perplexity regarding the “surreal” situation and severely criticized the government’s arguments of redirecting the funds to projects other than a museum when, according to Lerner, the government was fully aware of the specificity of the offer. He explained that the German Government’s intention was to provide a permanent space for Yuyanapaq, which after a first period in the Casona Riva Aguero in Chorrillos was transferred to the Nation’s Museum where, according to an agreement between the CVR and the Ombudsmen’s Office, it could stay for a space of five years. Considering that that accord was to expire soon, Lerner wondered about the fate of the exhibition suggesting that the government was interested in dissolving it. In his words, “it is known, that the government does not want it [Yuyanapaq] to exist”.

Moreover, Lerner pointed out the contradictions between García’s ongoing project of creating for the first time in history a Peruvian Ministry of Culture and rejecting

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a generous offer for the creation of a museum.\textsuperscript{10} In his opinion the discourse was “schizophrenic”.\textsuperscript{11} He also dismissed another circulating argument that a museum of memory might reopen the wounds of a violent period, stating that those wounds never healed on the first place.\textsuperscript{12} From his perspective, the objective of an exhibition such as \textit{Yuyanapaq} was from the beginning to first, raise awareness on how violence, such as the one exposed through the photographs, should not be allowed to develop ever again in the country, and second, to raise consciousness on the importance of paying attention to the poorest sectors of Peruvian population, who suffered the most during those violent years.\textsuperscript{13}

Along those lines, Members of grassroots organizations such as the worker’s union, Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú (CGTP), publicly questioned the government’s decision, referring to it as “irrational” and even a “bad joke”.\textsuperscript{14} Human Rights Organizations replied as well. Francisco Sober, representing APRODEH (Pro-Human Rights Association) categorized the APRA’s position as “unacceptable”, advocating for the need of permanent spaces in which Peruvians can remember times of terror. Also, the PUCP Institute of Democracy and Human Rights described the government’s attempt to direct the donation as they pleased, as disrespectful. Representatives of victim’s organizations in Lima, particularly family members of students murdered in \textit{La Cantuta} University by paramilitary groups, aligned with this position, stating that it proved the administration’s lack of respect toward human rights.\textsuperscript{15}

3.2. Against the Museum: The Government, PAF, \textit{Fujimorismo}, and the Catholic Church

In response to these initial reactions government officials finally clarified their position, underscoring first, that they had not made any final decisions regarding the


\textsuperscript{12} Salomón Lerner, \textit{El Comercio} February 27, 2009. My translation.

\textsuperscript{13} Salomón Lerner, \textit{El Comercio} February 27, 2009. My translation.

\textsuperscript{14} Mario Huamán, CGTP Secretary General, \textit{Radioprogramas del Perú}, February 25, 2009. My translation.

\textsuperscript{15} Mario Huamán, CGTP Secretary General, \textit{Radioprogramas del Perú}, February 25, 2009. My translation.
German donation. They confirmed that the administration had not rejected what they considered to be a generous offer, but rather planned to use it differently. In words of, at the time Prime Minister, Yehude Simon, “Peru has not rejected the money we are thankful [for the donation], but we believe that the money should go to the victims of violence. That is the answer we have so far”.16 The government was supposedly waiting for a response from Berlin regarding that option, before they decided on the destiny of the two million dollars. Simon also declared that, unlike past governments, Alan García’s administration had given close to 108 million soles in reparations to victims of terrorism, and invested nearly 500 million soles in social projects in the areas affected by violence and was willing to persevere in that effort.17

At the end of February 2009, Minister of Defense Ántero Flores-Aráoz expressed a controversial point of view: “if people want to go to the museum, but they don’t eat, they will starve to death. We have priorities”.18 Ironically, in the context of this debate, Alan García restated his intent to finally create a Peruvian Ministry of Culture, which he had promised since his presidential campaign in 2006. Following their leader, members the APRA19 underscored the centrality of cultural issues in their administration, and resolved the apparent contradiction explaining, “the idea is to preserve the exhibition of photos of violence in the Nation’s Museum and to give those resources [the German offer] to the victims in Ayacucho” (Gonzalo Gutierrez, Vice-chancellor).20 In response, advocates for the museum agreed on the need to invest money on victims and areas most hardly hit by violence but questioned the use of foreign donations for that purpose. From their perspective, if the government proudly claimed to be responsible for sustained economic growth in the country (10% PBI), why couldn’t it assign an important amount of the national budget to reparations? In the words of Salomón Lerner, providing reparations “is the responsibility of the Peruvian State and not of the German

17 *Andina*, February 27, 2009.
19 *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana*
In a context of increasing antagonism toward the government’s “pragmatic” position, Alan García’s argument took an important turn. Instead of citing the irrelevance of memory projects in countries with economic deficiencies, he opposed the particular form of memory that was being put forward by members of the intelligentsia. Hence, the President echoed the arguments of groups that in 2003 accused the CVR of persecuting elements of the PAF and minimizing Sendero Luminoso’s responsibility in the period of war by referring to the group as a political party instead of a terrorist organization. Back when the Final Report was made public, scholars involved in the CVR were baptized as the “caviar Left” (Izquierda Caviar), members of the elites that sympathized with communist and socialist ideas, and were thus biased in their understanding of the internal conflict. García switched his position stating that “memory is not patrimony of a group, regardless of how smart its members are, and how good the university they come from is. Memory is national”. He continued, “Nobody is entitled to say ‘we own the memory of 28 million Peruvians’. I think that there are people who have a different point of view, hundreds of thousands of people, maybe millions; what’s important is to include in a plural manner, all interpretations of memory available”. In conclusion, García suggested that he was not against a museum, but against the kind of museum the German Government was willing to fund. Moreover, the President described the kind of project that he would be inclined to stand for, as one showing “all perspectives of a national memory”. The need to “expand” the project was conditioned to the willingness of the donors: “if the German gentlemen expand their offer () nobody could say no, much less me”. In his opinion if the request of a small group for a museum were to be heard, then the National Congress would have to corroborate any conclusions they may reach regarding national memory. He compared this possible case scenario with

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25 President Alan García, Deutsche Presse Agentur, March 2, 2009.
the moment in which public opinion questioned the CVR’s conclusions (specifically the number of deaths they reported): “I am telling you that many Peruvians said: this is not how things are, there is an exaggeration, excess”. In that respect, García explained that the CVR was one version, but not the final truth or “the” memory. From his viewpoint those Peruvians who were not represented in the CVR’s work “also should take part in the interpretation [of the past]; I think that is logic and democratic”. Among those Peruvians “The Armed Forces and the National Police should have the right to hold one or two spaces [in a potential museum] where they can present their own interpretation”. However, reiterating the argument that posed the museum as “dangerous”, García explained that Peru should not assign funds to projects of such nature “until we truly reconcile with ourselves” and eradicate any feelings that may fuel forms of premeditated revenge.

Other members of the government backed up the idea that it was “too soon” for Peru to have a formal space to remember. Chancellor Víctor Andrés García Belaúnde cited German and Spanish experts, who pose that a country, undergoing a process of reconciliation, needs between 30 or 40 years to heal. He also dismissed the CVR’s conclusions as “too controversial”, reminding public opinion his status of victim. Sendero Luminosomurdered his father in 1985, and as a victim he stated, he does not feel represented in the CVR’s report. Furthermore, in his words, “I feel that the museum [of memory] would be the museum of the report. I feel it revives the differences and conflicts of this nation”.

The military’s position was firm and clear. Vice-president and General Commander of the Peruvian Navy, Luis Giampietri, declared that a museum of memory would target the PAF. He also accused the CVR of offering a “partial memory” of the “anti-

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26 President Alan García, Deutsche Presse Agentur, March 2, 2009. My translation.
27 President Alan García, Deutsche Presse Agentur, March 2, 2009.
28 President Alan García, Deutsche Presse Agentur, March 2, 2009. My translation.
31 Deutsche Presse Agentur, March 9, 2009.
32 Radioprogramas del Perú, March 9, 2009.
subversive war”. It is important to mention that Giampietri was a member of a “Defense Commission” created by the National Congress to corroborate the information exposed in the CVR’s Final Report. The entity raised controversy particularly regarding the number of victims reported by the CVR, and questioned some of its final conclusions. Giampietri remembered that during a meeting in which that Commission questioned the CVR’s conclusions, he addressed Salomón Lerner saying: “the way things are at this moment, neither you or me, considering our ages, will live to see reconciliation”. In that sense, the Vice-president considered that “all the truth is not in the report. First we have to find it [the truth] and then we can make memory, and regarding this case it is difficult to find truth”. Further reinforcing the longstanding differences between the CVR and the PAF, Giampietri said of the report: “that report was made for civilians. We were the bad guys”. Giampietri then argued that a museum of memory would represent a victory for the “caviar Left”, people who cannot “cash their paychecks” unless they make accusations against the Armed Forces. Also, he warned, if the project were to develop it would only deepen the existing differences among Peruvian people, who had already endured an anti-terrorist war. Finally alluding to soldiers who continue to fight against subversion, Giampietri asked, “In which room of the museum would they place a bust of a marine that recently died for the patria?”

Along those lines, members of the Congress Defense Commission, which focuses among other issues on laws that benefit the PAF, argued that one of the two million dollars from the German donation would serve to “maintain a golden bureaucracy”. In that same context fujimorista Cecilia Chacón expressed “we do not need museums or

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33 Expreso, March 2, 2009.
34 Expreso, March 2, 2009.
36 Expreso, March 2, 2009.
37 Expreso, March 2, 2009.
38 Expreso, March 2, 2009.
39 The Commission of National Defense, Internal Order, Alternative Development and the Fight against Drugs was established in August 2008. Presided by Edgar Núñez (APRA) it is meant to strengthen legal projects regarding those matters.
40 Edgar Núñez, APRA Congressman, La República, March 5, 2009.
The Catholic Church aligned with the government, the PAF and Fujimorismo. Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani, who during Fujimori’s administration had a very questionable position regarding human rights, rejected a donation that could not be used for ends different from the museum. In Cipriani’s words, “I believe that we have crossed the line in this attempt to turn one version of some facts of some years, into the Museum of Memory. I believe, brothers, this is not Christian. I don’t see much reconciliation there.”

In response to Nuñez’s and other declarations linking the German donation to economic interests in the Ombudsmen’s Office, the German Embassy in Peru, clarified that their offer did not entail hiring personnel from that institution. They additionally disclosed their intended budgets, which would include 65,000 euros exclusively for construction of the main building and an information center, whereas one million euros would be used to maintain the museum for a period of ten years.

3.3 “Mario Vargas Llosa convinced Alan García to accept the Museum of Memory”

In early March 2009, Mario Vargas Llosa internationally renowned novelist and presidential candidate for the Right in the 1990 general election began to appear as the spokesman of those in favor of a Museum of Memory. Particularly through his article Peru does not need museums, published in El Comercio on March 2, 2009, Vargas Llosa question’s the government’s position. The writer begins the text by posing the following question: “what can cause a man who is not stupid to utter stupidities”? He is referring to Flores-Aráoz, Minister of Defense, who in Vargas Llosa’s words “is not a gorilla [with] sawdust brains but a lawyer who, as a professional and politician, has made a distinguished career” representing the Christian Popular Party in Peru (PPC), and the

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41 La República, March 5, 2009.
43 La República, March 4, 2009.
44 La República, March 5, 2009.
45 Title of an article by Pedro Escribano published in La República, March 27, 2009.
country as the Peruvian Ambassador of Peru in the OAS.  

Vargas Llosa ventures a response pointing to the “intolerance and lack of culture”, deeply rooted among Peruvian and Latin American political classes, that explain the “philosophy” according to which a country like Peru poor and with unsolved social deficiencies does not need museums.  

Following that logic, Vargas Llosa states, “countries should only invest resources in the defense of their archeological, monumental and artistic patrimony, once they have assured prosperity and wellbeing for their entire population. If such pragmatism would have prevailed in the past, then the Prado, the Louvre, the National Gallery, the Hermitage would not exist and Machu Picchu would have been auctioned off to buy pencils, alphabets and shoes”.  

Vargas Llosa also addresses Flores-Aráoz’s description of the CVR as a biased organization that equated the armed forces with terrorists, not without first locating himself as a neutral figure in regards to that controversy. In that respect, the writer reiterates his position first as Fujimori’s political enemy and competitor during the 1990’s Presidential election, then as a longstanding adversary of the Left, and finally as a person targeted by Sendero Luminoso and victim of two failed murder attempts. The writer starts by saying that critiques accusing the CVR of misrepresenting the role of terrorist organizations “are flagrantly unfair”. In that respect, he continues, “Nobody criticized Sendero Luminoso and the MRTA’s terrorism more than me. I was a [presidential] candidate during those years and dedicated good part of my campaign to denounce their crimes and their fanatic craziness and to defend the necessity of combating them with maximum energy”. However, Vargas Llosa clearly underscores that the fight against terrorism should have developed “inside the law”, posing that “if a democratic government starts to use the terrorist’s methods to defeat terrorism, as Fujimori did, they

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somehow win the war, even when they apparently lose”. The writer speaks also of his uninterrupted rejection to the Left’s ambiguous position toward terrorist organizations. Then he alludes to the CVR:

For all that I believe I can say, with absolute objectivity, without being accused of having extremist sympathies, after having spent many hours reading the commission’s [CVR] work, that there is in it a sustained effort to unearth the historical truth among the labyrinth of contradictory documents, testimonies, reports, declarations, and manipulations that they had to contemplate. Without doubt, some mistakes have slipped in those nine bulging volumes. But not in its considerations or in its conclusions is there the minimum intent of partiality, but, in contrary, an honest and almost obsessive eagerness to show with the greatest precision what happened, pointing out unequivocally that the fanatic senderistas and emerretistas, convinced that murdering all their opposers would turn Peru into a socialist paradise, held the first and greater responsibility in this monstrous butchery. (Vargas Llosa 2009. My translation)

After expressing his disinterested support and faith in the institution he states that those who criticize it are mostly members of the military and of Fujimori’s party who, denying the report’s conclusions, obscure “their complicity with an authoritarian regime that besides kleptomaniac and corrupted to the bone, exhibits a petrifying record of murders, tortures and disappearances perpetrated under the excuse of anti subversive fight.” Vargas Llosa then speaks specifically about Yuyanapaq, in his opinion “one of the most moving expositions ever seen in Peru”, which depicts through visual material the consequences that the “ideological fanaticism” of terrorist groups and the “disdain toward morality and the law” of the Special Forces, had on the poorest most helpless sectors of Peruvian society.

From his standpoint it is not surprising that a country like Germany that “has made an admirable effort to confront an atrocious past and is for that [reason], now, a solidified democratic society” has decided to finance an initiative that could have in

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Peru similar results. Vargas Llosa affirms that Peruvians do need a museum of memory to prevent ideas and actions that could once again unleash political violence. In his terms, Peruvians need a museum “to learn in a vivid manner, where the delirious unreasonable of Marxist and Maoist ideologists leads us, and, in the same way, the fascist methods with which Montesinos and Fujimori combated them, sacrificing tens of thousands of innocents”.

He advocates for museums as educational spaces that battle ignorance and prejudice. In that sense, museums play a crucial role in replacing the narrow, intolerant, in his words “provincial” perspective of life that fuels war, for a more ample, inclusive, tolerant vision that gives rise to peace and reconciliation through culture. In his article Vargas Llosa defines culture as “that knowledge that makes us capable of differentiating the ugly from the beautiful, the intelligent from the stupid, the good from the bad and the tolerable from the intolerable”.

Also in regards to culture, the writer connects structured cultural programs to better government and to general progress, stating that “in countries where there are plenty of museums, politicians are often much more presentable than ours and it is not quite as frequent that those who govern say or do stupid things”.

After Vargas Llosa’s publication, on March 10 2009, the University of Lima released the results of a study that contradicted the government’s ungrounded arguments of a “general rejection” and “lack of identification” with the project among the population. According to their research, 74.1% of participants said they “agreed with the museum’s objective”, whereas 25.1% opposed the project. Interestingly enough, socio-economic levels (SEL) with lower income rates had the largest percentage of supporters: 91.3% in the D SEL, 69.2% in E, and 77.1% in C. In those sectors with higher income rates, the majority supported the project as well (62.8% in the B SEL, 60.0% in the A SEL). Also, the age group between 18 and 27 had the most supporters (88.9%), followed by the range between 38 and 47 years of age (80.7%). The sector with less approval rates

(although still a majority with 65.8%) was the in the age group between 48 and 70 years old.

A couple of days after the study was made public, Minister Flores-Aráoz announced the creation of a photographic exhibition, designed by and for the Armed Forces, in order to expose the effects of terrorism on the institution. This project sought to recover the experiences of those “who entered [the fight] by constitutional mandate to recuperate peace”, including civil society, ronderos and auto-defense committees.

However, the process changed directions drastically when, on March 25 2009, President Alan García and Mario Vargas Llosa met behind closed doors. Two days later, on May 27, the unexpected meeting was made public and Chancellor García Belaúnde stated that the President had agreed to Vargas Llosa’s proposal. The writer was surprised that the reunion had been made public; however, he took it as a sign of good will toward the museum. He confirmed that the meeting had been positive, that the President had agreed to develop the project and that he had even accepted some suggestions regarding who should develop it. In his words: “it was a private meeting. I did not attend representing anyone other than myself. In that meeting I told him that I considered that rejecting the possibility of having a Museum of Memory was a big mistake”. As it was later revealed, in the meeting Vargas Llosa underscored the importance of developing a broad, inclusive perspective that would represent victims from all parties involved in the conflict, even if Yuyanapag were used as a starting point.

Once the President’s acceptance was made public, the director of the National Institute of Culture (INC), Cecilia Bákula, supported the motion, assuming that her institution should take over the enterprise as “the entity that in actuality preserves the

60 Andina, March 12, 2009.
62 La República, March 27, 2009.
63 La República, March 27, 2009.
64 La República, March 27, 2009.
65 La República, March 27, 2009.
66 La República, March 27, 2009.
However, former Prime Minister, Congressman, and long standing right hand man of the President, Jorge del Castillo suggested Mario Vargas Llosa should be the one leading the project.68

3.4. Early Stages of the Project: New Discourses and New Alliances

By the end of March, 2009 García’s Government passed a Supreme Decree (R.S. 059-209-PCM) designating a specialized “High Level Commission” (HLC) for Peru’s Museum of Memory. The rule specifies:

Considering that it is the Government’s policy to promote a culture of peace based on the respect of human rights, equity, freedom and representative democracy; [and that] the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has manifested its intention to fund the construction and sustainability of the “Museum of Memory” it is necessary to compose of a group of high level personalities to coordinate and promote the design, organization, implementation and administration of the “Museum of Memory” Project.69

The six “high level personalities” that conform this novel institution are, first, writer Mario Vargas Llosa, President of the HLC; second, philosopher, chancellor emeritus of the PUCP, and President of the CVR, Salomón Lerner Febres (vice-president of the HLC); third, anthropologist and Professor at PUCP, Juan Luis Ossio; fourth, architect and dean of the Architecture Department at PUCP, Frederick Cooper Llosa; fourth, painter Fernando de Szyszlo; fifth, also former member of the CVR, monsignor Luis Bambarén; and sixth, jurist Enrique Bernales, former member of the UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights.

The decree determines that the commission’s responsibility is to assure “that the mentioned museum represents, with objectivity and an ample spirit, the tragedy Peru endured due to subversive actions developed by Sendero Luminoso and the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru during the last two decades of the twentieth century”70 (stress added). Its main objective is to show all “Peruvians the tragic consequences that

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67 La República, March 28, 2009.
69 R.S. 059-2009-PCM
70 R.S. 059-2009-PCM
result from ideological fanaticism, transgression of the Law, and human rights violations, so that our country does not revive again such lamentable experiences.” Complementing the norm’s mandate, in his first declarations as president of the HLC, Vargas Llosa defined the museum as a “homage to all civil and military victims” and a project “in service of Peru, legality, freedom, democracy”.72

Once the commission was made official, the issue was discussed in the public sphere using two discursive resources: on the one hand, the unquestionable objectivity of a figure as prestigious as Vargas Llosa (extended to all members of the HLC), and on the other, the HLC’s intentions to expand the CVR’s work and to develop a more inclusive project.

By April 2009, opposition to the museum was mainly made up of sectors of the PAF, some members of APRA, Fujimorismo and, more importantly, some victim’s organizations. In response to divisive positions, President Alan García publicly called for trust and pushed the need to rely on “a personality of the importance of Mario Vargas Llosa” arguing that “if Peru loses confidence in the criteria and intellectual level of a character such as Mario Vargas Llosa, we are moving backwards. He is beyond any political or personal appetite”.73

In that sense, and in Lerner’s words, Vargas Llosa emerged as “a public powerful voice, with intellectual and moral authority in the country and outside”. Moreover, all members of the commission were described as having an “elevated moral sense” and an “impeccable public and professional trajectory”.74 Furthermore, separating his present endeavor from his previous assignment as president of the CVR, Lerner expressed that the museum’s content should include not only Yuyanapaq but also the visions of other institutions and victims posing, “there cannot be reconciliation without truth and dialogue”.75 Along those lines, Lerner described the museum as an opportunity for the

71. R.S. 059-2009-PCM
72. La República, April 1, 2009. My translation.
Armed Forces to publicly recognize their heroes and their brave actions; a space where other groups “that in one way or another suffered during those years, in the Armed Forces, or the Police, the *ronderos* and victim’s families” present their own version as long as they transparently seek “truth and understanding.”76 Mario Vargas Llosa also commented on his intentions to complement the CVR’s vision, stating that they would include “some other aspects that were left aside violence from all parts was represented, but innocence from all parties was not.”77

In addition, and echoing with Vargas Llosa’s first article, Lerner’s perspective leaned towards educating, particularly those who did not experience violence directly. Paraphrasing his statements, the history of violence should be used to provide better education at national universities so that students do not fall for subversive ideologies, to integrate non-Spanish speakers with the rest of the country, to improve the justice system, and to provide services such as healthcare. Lerner draws attention to those who were helpless and who “because they were abandoned, listened to *Sendero Luminoso*.78

Amnesty International (AI) also celebrated the news of a museum and the willingness to incorporate different “visions”. Silvia Loli Espinoza, director of AI Peru, said that the museum would permit reconciliation as long as it represents what the country has endured as a whole, as well as the role that each side has played through time. According to her the initial controversy around the project was only “natural”, as every process of “historical transition” involves contested versions regarding the facts. However she stated, “that is not bad, it is part of the process of enriching a reading of reality. What matters is that people have the most objective information possible so that they can make their own analysis.”79 She also recognized that exposing the facts represents a “moral reparation”, which is as valuable as a material one.80 Along those lines, José Miguel Vivanco, director of Human Rights Watch in Peru suggested that the program

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would elicit a new debate, that will help “depoliticize” attitudes regarding the period of internal war, and more importantly, create a consensus around issues of human rights.81

Other members of the HLC were also very careful to separate their assigned mission from political or judicial purposes. In that sense, architect Frederick Cooper clarified “[we] act in good faith and do not pretend to take advantage or use [the museum] to punish or hurt anyone”.82 He argued the museum’s purpose is not to “do the math and figure out who was guilty, but to internalize the facts and excesses committed during that period in a visual manner.”83 Cooper followed Lerner and posed the need to direct attention toward the Andean population, and the poorest sectors of the country that do not “exist in our everyday preoccupations”.84

During the first stages of the Project, the government’s radical change of position prompted new political alliances at least at the discursive level. Unexpectedly, representing the PAF, General Otto Guibovich supported the construction of a plural, non-biased museum.85 Also, members of García’s administration, who initially had radically rejected the project, began to switch positions in response to the “openness” of the new project and its separation from the CVR. In that sense, Minister of Defense Flores-Aráoz, even when maintaining his suspicion toward the CVR, accepted the government’s decision to move forward with the museum: “I believe that [the government] has reached a solution that has an important value: other visions will be added to that memory, and there are visions different from the ones reached by the CVR.”86 Flores-Aráoz would later request the use of the term “terrorist violence” instead of “political violence”, because from his (mistaken) perspective, “when they say political violence they mean that politicians are violent and that is not the case”.87 Regarding the role of the Armed Forces during the years contemplated by the museum and the CVR’s re-

81 Andina, April 1, 2009
86 Andina, April 1, 2009. My translation.
87 Expreso, April 4, 2009.
port he reiterated that subversive groups “caused plenty of damage in Peru and it was the Armed Forces, complying with their constitutional obligation and following governmental order, the ones who went out to defend us and we owe them gratitude.”

It would be interesting to ask who is part of that “us” that Flores-Aráoz is referring to. The Minister although recognized the possibility of “some excesses” among members of the PAF, which should be investigated and individually punished.

Vice-president Giampietri, initially opposing the museum as well, underlined the importance of including “those who fought terrorism” and are as a consequence, physically impaired.

Also regarding the CVR’s Report, Giampietri hoped that, considering the discrepancies around its conclusions, particularly when it came to the number of deaths reported, this new commission would not by any means treat that previous study as an absolute truth.

The General Commander of the Peruvian Army joined positions in favor of a more representative memory saying, “if we speak of a memory, let it be national”. He also affirmed that the PAF would collaborate in any project in which they felt properly represented.

However, in the context of celebration and optimism coming from members of the HLC, human rights organizations, and members of the government trying to negotiate a position in this new space, the Association of Family Members of Victims of Terrorism (AFAVIT) demanded to be heard. According to an interview published in Expreso on April 2 2009, their President stated, “we do not want what happened with the CVR, which had a biased vision, to happen again. They never took into account the opinions of those who suffered in one way or another, due to terrorist violence. Today we demand for this commission not to ignore us.”

According to Expreso, members of AFAVIT were surprised that Lerner and Bambarén had been called to participate in

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88 Expreso, April 4, 2009.
89 Expreso, April 4, 2009.
90 Andina, April 1, 2009.
91 Andina, April 1, 2009.
the museum, when they “already had their chance” as members of the CVR.\textsuperscript{94} Fernando de Szyszlo, in an interview with Perú 21, aggravated the situation. Szyszlo answered to the question on whether or not the HLC would require the Armed Forces to present their position saying, “no, absolutely not. I do not think that will be in the museum’s program, because we will not consult representatives of the victim’s relatives either.”\textsuperscript{95} Responding to such affirmations, Vice-president Giampietri stated: “that means they will only listen to the terrorist’s truth”.\textsuperscript{96}

Moreover, and in spite of the victories toward building a consensus, some representatives of García’s administration maintained their divergent positions. Among the most salient was Mauricio Mulder, secretary general of García’s party (APRA), who explicitly rejected the museum as a means to “repeat subliminal propaganda in favor of terrorism”.\textsuperscript{97} He also noted that the creation of a museum was contradictory, considering that “Sendero Luminoso is not a closed episode” but an ongoing political problem.\textsuperscript{98} Speaking more specifically of the photographs that will serve as primary material for the museum Mulder dismissed “the benefit of looking at a dismembered person lying on the ground”.\textsuperscript{99} Mulder also made a point regarding the financial benefit that such project could bring for NGOs, particularly those involved in the defense of human rights. He argued that NGOs appeal to “historical guilt” in developed countries and profit from this sort of cases claiming to be raising awareness.\textsuperscript{100} The leader of APRA questioned the absence of victim’s relatives in the HLC, and the fact that the majority of its members ignored “reality during those days and did not know what was going on” outside of Lima.\textsuperscript{101} In that regard, Mulder suggested that the HLC should include one representative of victim’s organizations, one member of the Armed Forces, someone from APRA and someone from Acción Popular (both parties in power during the years in

\textsuperscript{94} Expreso, April 2, 2009. My translation.  
\textsuperscript{95} Perú 21, April 2, 2009. My translation.  
\textsuperscript{96} Expreso, April 4, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{97} Expreso, April 3, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{98} Expreso, April 3, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{99} Expreso, April 3, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{100} Expreso, April 3, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{101} Expreso, April 3, 2009.
Fujimorismo also expressed its position advocating for a “museum of victory” rather than a “museum of memory”, which should be “made with money from the Peruvian State under the conditions that we believe in and not those imposed or suggested” by funding governments. Keiko Fujimori said that a “museum of victory” would “vindicate our Armed Forces, national police, ronderos, auto-defense committees, and hundreds of people that fought terrorism”. Concerning the leader of the memory enterprise, she expressed that “even though Mario Vargas Llosa is someone respectable, he has made the great mistake of convoking only his friends, who were part of FREDEMO (Vargas Llosa’s political party back in 1990) and people from the CVR” who in her opinion described a period of time that should be clearly called a period of terrorism as an “internal conflict” providing the status of a political party “to a group of terrorists”.

In a similar way, Juan Susano Mendoza, former coordinator of auto-defense committees in Ayacucho dismissed the museum’s project, first because of its connections to the CVR, which from his perspective did not consider their point of view and were “acting as pro-terrorists”. From his viewpoint “it was the commission of Lies and this will be the Museum of Lies if they do not consult with us”. In support of his argument, Mendoza noted that 40% of those who were killed in Ayacucho were members of peasant patrols. He also mentioned that NGOs in Ayacucho “lived from our suffering, Supported terrorists and hurt the ayacuchan people.” Finally, Mendoza raised the issue of place, claiming that the museum should be located in Ayacucho. The Regional President of Ayacucho supported Mendoza’s request regarding the museum’s location, explaining that museums that remember violent experiences are usually installed in the

102 Expreso, April 3, 2009.
places where violence developed. Members of Congress representing Ayacucho advocated for Huamanga, capital city of Ayacucho, as the proper site for the museum. Nevertheless, members of the HLC responded maintaining that Lima allows for more people to visit the exhibition, whereas, Lerner said, a museum in Ayacucho runs the risk of going unnoticed. The HLC sustained first, that Lima is a city of almost 9 million residents that include not only limeños (residents of Lima) but also people from all over the country. In Lerner’s words “Lima is not only of limeños but belongs to all Peruvians.” Second, Lima was indifferent to violence and holds a great number of students that did not experience terror and that need to learn about its causes and consequences. Third, Lima serves as a “showcase” for foreign countries. Although the HLC reinstated its intentions of developing the central project in Lima, Lerner and Bambarén mentioned the necessity to create an itinerant exhibition that could travel throughout the country.

By April 12, 2009 the Mayor of San Miguel district offered to the HLC two spaces for the museum. Those two spaces had actually been made available for the project even before the HLC was officially established and the museum’s promoters had celebrated that predisposition. The next day, the district of Villa El Salvador presented a similar proposal, under the argument of being an emblematic place of the period of internal war; the place were activist Maria Elena Moyano lead the Federación Popular de Mujeres de Villa El Salvador (FEPOMUVES, Popular Federation of Women of Villa El Salvador) and was brutally murdered by Sendero in 1992. However, by the end of July 2009, the Commission announced their final location in the district of Jesús María, in the public space known as Campo de Marte.

110 El Comercio, April 5, 2009.  
111 La República, April 6 2009. My translation.  
112 La República, April 6 2009. My translation.  
113 La República, April 6 2009. My translation.  
114 La República, April 6 2009. My translation.  
116 Andina, April 12, 2009.  
117 Andina, April 13, 2009.  
In early August, once again, associations that represent victims of terrorism announced a “march of sacrifice” to the capital city, demanding economic reparations, protesting their exclusion from the commission lead by Mario Vargas Llosa, and rejecting the designation of Campo the Marte as a final location. The space was considered inappropriate because Campo de Marte in Jesús María is the site of El Ojo que Llora (The Eye that Cries), a monument that, according to members of the association, includes names of terrorists together with those of victims murdered by Sendero Luminoso and the MRTA. ¹¹⁹ Reviving the discussion on the museum’s site, by early September neighbors of Jesús María would protest against the construction of the museum in their district. They claimed it would affect traffic and decrease the number of green areas in Jesús María. ¹²⁰ The Mayor of the district, in response to their complaints, explained that the plan was still to be submitted to public consultation. ¹²¹ The matter of location continued to be discussed and members of the PAF expressed preoccupation toward the idea of creating movable exhibitions that would travel to different places in the country, arguing that this would “generate more suffering” and contribute to fuel desires of revenge. ¹²² Among them, Flores-Aráoz said the proposal was “inopportune” considering the ongoing fight against terrorism in some areas of the country. ¹²³

Before the public consultation was enacted in Jesús María, a new site was announced. The museum will be raised in the district of Miraflores, overlooking the ocean. ¹²⁴ The district’s Mayor, Manuel Masías, ratified his offer reminding public opinion that “the museum will be located in a heroic city that has also been a scenario of terrorist barbarism”. ¹²⁵ A few days later, on November 18 2009, Masías cancelled all debts of those neighbors in Miraflores who were affected by the terrorist attack in Tarata Street, perpetrated in 1992. ¹²⁶ Twenty-five people were killed in that bombing, while

¹¹⁹ Expreso, August 10, 2009.
¹²⁰ Expreso, September 14, 2009.
¹²¹ Expreso, September 21, 2009.
¹²³ La República, August 18, 2009.
¹²⁴ Radioprogramas del Perú, October 29, 2009.
¹²⁶ Andina, November 18, 2009.
155 were severely injured.\textsuperscript{127}

By the end of August newly assigned Minister of Defense, Rafael Rey assumed the role of the museum’s main foe. From that position Rey requested human rights organizations and NGOs to cease persecuting members of the Armed Forces for crimes against humanity. According to Rey, there are no legal arguments to use such a term when referring to people who were following orders, “even in case of excesses.”\textsuperscript{128} From his point of view “crimes against humanity” are, by definition, only terrorist actions motivated by political and ideological reasons.\textsuperscript{129} This of course is not the precise definition of the legal term, which refers to systematic, organized attacks to human dignity. Regarding human rights advocates Rey clearly stated: “I do not recognize them as human rights advocates, I recognize them, in any case, as advocating for some rights of some people”.\textsuperscript{130} Posing the following question, “do you think that it is fair that our forces, who are risking their lives, their health are being accused of murder in the first degree?”\textsuperscript{131} Hence, Rey publicly rejected the project of a museum of memory.\textsuperscript{132}

In spite of arguments against memory institutions in areas of the country still facing political violence, Lerner reinstated the need to locate permanent branches of the museum outside of Lima, which would turn the museum into a “living center”.\textsuperscript{133} According to Lerner, we need, instead of just a traditional, static museum, an institution in constant construction that is always moving forward and that hosts not only a research center but active offices administering reparation programs.\textsuperscript{134} In the context of figures expressing opposition to what they considered a “dangerous” idea, Sendero Luminoso announced its intention of becoming a formal political party and participating in the 2011 Presidential Elections. Lerner categorically opposed this, declaring that Sendero

\textsuperscript{127} Andina, November 18, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{128} Andina, August 26, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{129} Andina, August 26, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{130} Andina, August 26, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{131} Andina, August 26, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{132} Expreso, September 3, 2009.  
\textsuperscript{133} Salomón Lerner, Andina, August 17, 2009. My translation.  
\textsuperscript{134} Salomón Lerner, Andina, August 17, 2009. My translation.
Luminoso “is the anti-politics” and describing the proposal as “inadmissable”\textsuperscript{135}. A few days after this public pronouncement, Lerner received a death threat that forced him to request protection from the government.\textsuperscript{136} Human Rights Watch and other international groups promptly urged the government to reject threatening attitudes towards human rights advocates such as Lerner.\textsuperscript{137}

Public opinion at large denounced the violent threats to Lerner’s life and on November 12, 2009 a new study was made public. According to the survey carried out between November 3rd and November 6th in Lima and Callao, 60.8\% of the population agreed to the construction of a museum, and 32.9\% was against it. However, the study revealed as well that 43.6\% of people in Lima believed that human rights NGOs were politicized and only 33.9\% thought that they acted neutrally.\textsuperscript{138}

Encouraged by the majoritarian support of the museum among residents in the capital city, the HLC promptly announced an inaugurating ceremony in the site chosen for the building. However, the announcement was considered “a joke” by victim’s associations.\textsuperscript{139} They reiterated that, in spite of requesting an invitation, they had not been called to participate in the inaugural ceremony. In that respect, Mercedes Carrasco, president of AFAVIT, confirmed that her organization addressed a formal letter to the Presidency of the Ministers Council demanding to participate, and received no response.\textsuperscript{140}

Nonetheless, some of the most notable personalities of the nation took part in the event held on December 16 2009 in Miraflores. Among the participants were, besides Mario Vargas Llosa and members of the HLC, President Alan García Pérez and former Secretary General of the United Nations Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. Also, representing the continuance of the CVR’s legacy was Pilar Coll, member of the Reparations Council. On behalf of the victims of the period of violence were Vanessa Quiroga, survivor of the

\textsuperscript{135} El Peruano, September 15, 2009.
\textsuperscript{136} Radioprogramas del Perú, September 25, 2009.
\textsuperscript{137} Radioprogramas del Perú, September 25, 2009.
\textsuperscript{138} November 12, 2009.
\textsuperscript{139} Expreso, December 8, 2009.
\textsuperscript{140} Expreso, December 8, 2009.
Tarata bombing, and Raída Cóndor, mother of one of the nine students of La Cantuta University murder by paramilitary groups during the Fujimori administration.141

During the ceremony, Mario Vargas Llosa outlined the objectives of the project he leads. The museum, he reiterated, would be first “the museum of the victims” and “of the abandoned families”.142 Second, the museum would clearly illustrate how “wanting to transfer fundamentalist Maoism, from the Chinese Revolution to Peru, caused unprecedented massacres in the country” not without exposing “the absolute weakness of democratic institutions in the country”.143 Third, “the reason for the museum is to speed up the elimination of violence thanks to pressure from civil society, public opinion, [and] a national consciousness of having to end political and social violence” in order to “take off and become a modern country where the law functions and there is justice”.144 Among the other guests who actively participated in the protocol, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar underscored the seriousness of strengthening the mandate of human rights in a world that faces everyday the consequences of ignoring their mandate.145 Also, Pilar Coll, member of the Reparations Council, had the opportunity to draw attention to the lack of resources that hinder the efforts of the institution she represents.

President García gave, in my opinion, an extremely interesting discourse. He described the event as a “moment of reflection” and an impulse toward the development of “our democratic culture”.146 Then he summarized the museum’s final objective saying that “the one who arrives at this house must not only make equilibrated conclusions of what happened with all its causes and problems, but also leave convinced that violence is never the path to good”.147 However, García extended the project’s interests beyond both time constraints and forms of extreme violence. The President spoke about the need to trace violence back to processes prior to 1980, when the “aggression”

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141 La República, December 17, 2009.
142 Mario Vargas Llosa, Deutsche Presse Agentur, December 13, 2009. My translation.
143 Mario Vargas Llosa, Deutsche Presse Agentur, December 13, 2009. My translation.
144 Mario Vargas Llosa, Deutsche Presse Agentur, December 13, 2009. My translation.
147 http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.
to our still “imperfect democracy” was brewing.\textsuperscript{148} Also, the museum should, through the specific case of the internal war, reject “every form of violence”.\textsuperscript{149} He continued, “violence, it has been said here, is inside us; [violence] is everywhere; violence, like a demonic temptation, is in every human being” as a constant threat that surfaces “when one sees collective lynching, sexual submission of minors; when one sees the abuses against women”, but also “when one sees the [living] condition of the most humble, the mocking and exclusion of the weak, the homosexual”.\textsuperscript{150} In conclusion, “that an ideology with an organization was capable of forming a nucleus to make it more present and stronger should not hide the underlying issue”.\textsuperscript{151} In other words, terrorist organizations were able to channel and externalize latent violence.\textsuperscript{152} To this organized form of violence, he states “society, surprised and incapable of knowing how to responded reacted through its institutions naturally committing excesses, mistakes and abuses”.\textsuperscript{153}

Mario Vargas Llosa also took the opportunity to elucidate that those who claim the museum of memory will serve to “attack and discredit the army” and to “attenuate or justify” acts of terrorism and extremism sometimes using the discourse of human rights to threaten “our precarious democracy”, are part of a “campaign impregnated with exaggerations and lies”.\textsuperscript{154} Once again, specifically addressing the representation of the PAF, Vargas Llosa sustained that “the sacrifice and heroism shown by many members of the military during the years of terror will be present in its [the museum’s] rooms, as well as the pain of civilians; because the museum will be the house of all victims with no exception, no prejudice, no ideological or political parti pris”.\textsuperscript{155} Finally Vargas Llosa marked the beginning of the project hoping that the museum of memory becomes the house of all Peruvians who wish to live in peace, without fear, respecting their differences, beliefs

\textsuperscript{148} http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.
\textsuperscript{149} http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.
\textsuperscript{150} http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.
\textsuperscript{151} http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.
\textsuperscript{152} http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.
\textsuperscript{153} http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.
\textsuperscript{154} http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.
\textsuperscript{155} http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.
and desires, of those who defend freedom and the rule of law.\textsuperscript{156}

Minister of Defense Rafael Rey did not participate in the ceremony. The day after the museum’s inaugural protocols, during a military parade, Rey referred to the project hoping that its advocates stay true to their promise of impartiality, particularly considering that “the so-called truth commission” and its photographic exhibition were not impartial.\textsuperscript{157} According to Rey:

The principal error of the so-called truth commission was to sustain that what happened in Peru during the combat against terrorism, combat that exists today, that has not ended, that is not a thing of the past, and not something to remember or not to forget as some may say was a confrontation between to parties, equally evil, equally assassin, equally genocidal and that a society, who they call civil precisely to separate militaries from the rest of society, suffered the worst part. Of course society suffered the consequences but militaries as much as civilians belong to that society, the only one that exists.\textsuperscript{158}

Earlier in October 2009, the HLC began to negotiate a way out of their confrontations with the Armed Forces: they formally invited the institution to participate in preparing the project.\textsuperscript{159} The PAF accepted the invitation and assigned a special commission to prepare a report with their version, which would soon be released.\textsuperscript{160} Right after the museum’s inauguration, Mario Vargas Llosa invited General Otto Guibovich to discuss the specific role of the PAF in the museum.\textsuperscript{161} As soon as Guibovich agreed to that meeting, stating he would be “honored”\textsuperscript{162}, to speak to Vargas Llosa, Rafael Rey expressed his desire to discuss the project with the writer.\textsuperscript{163} Guibovich and Vargas Llosa met and the general declared that he fully agreed to “a place that recognizes the efforts of society to preserve democracy from the claws of terrorism”.\textsuperscript{164}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[156]{http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.}
\footnotetext[157]{http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.}
\footnotetext[158]{http://www.agenciaperu.tv, My translation.}
\footnotetext[159]{Andina, October 18, 2009.}
\footnotetext[160]{Andina, October 18, 2009.}
\footnotetext[161]{Andina, January 13, 2010.}
\footnotetext[162]{Andina, January 15, 2010.}
\footnotetext[163]{La República, January 14, 2010.}
\footnotetext[164]{Deutsche Presse Agentur, February 5, 2010. My translation.}
\end{footnotes}
In the international sphere, Mario Vargas Llosa also represented the memory project. He traveled to Chile, invited by Sebastián Piñera, who at the time was a Presidential Candidate, to participate in the inauguration of the museum of memory in that country. Members of La Concertación jeered at the writer during the ceremony accusing him of supporting right wing policies. Moreover, in an interview with El Mercurio in Chile, Vargas Llosa explained his current alliance with García: “I was the adversary of a radical Alan García in his first government and I am someone who defends his second government because he is not the same Alan García that he used to be”. He expanded on how “now-a-days [García] is a governor convinced of the importance of fiscal discipline, [who knows] that inflation is catastrophic for the poor, in favor of open markets, motivating investments and integrating Peru to the world”.

3.5. The Place of Memory (El Lugar de la Memoria)

On January 27, 2010 the project took a new turn when Mario Vargas Llosa announced a new name for the Museum of Memory. In a press conference the writer explains:

The museum is associated consciously or unconsciously with an institution that preserves the past, that roots the past. We do not want the place of memory to be an archeological reconstruction of violence in Peru. We want it to be a living organism, an institution that is in a permanent process of re-elaborating its contents; an institution where the research and the study of the past does not consider the past as frozen, definitely known, but as something that, as research develops, [continues] reveling secrets, providing a more worthy, fair, exact vision of the historical fact.

The change of name from “Museum of Memory” to “Place of Memory” (Lugar de la Memoria) was approved through a Supreme Resolution (R.S. 098-2010-PCM) on April 4, 2010. The norm literally states that “the denomination “Museum” could lead to the error of thinking that the violence experienced in Peru is a thing of the past

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165 La República, January 11, 2010.
166 Radioprogramas del Perú, January 10, 2010.
when there still exist notorious remanents [of subversive activity in the country] and also unsolved structural problems in our society which, as explained by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Report, constituted the social context in which terrorism was able to develop.”

It also states that the new denomination responds to an international tendency of referring to institutions that seek to prevent historical repetition of violence as “places”. Moreover, the new resolution adds two new members to the HLC: Mariella Marcela Pinto Rocha and Bernardo Alonso de la Cruz Roca Rey Miro Quesada. Pinto, the only woman integrating the group, has been director of APCI (Peruvian Agency of International Cooperation) since Toledo’s administration. However, her position has been questioned by Peruvian public opinion because of her background in Education, which did not seem to fit the position’s requirements. Moreover, she had a relationship with former Minister Diego García Sayán. Because of this some members of Fujimorismo demanded whshe left her position and requested an investigation on her expenses in 2006. On the other hand, Roca Rey Miro Quesada is an entrepreneur, former director and member of El Comercio, the most powerful newspaper in the country. He is now director of APEGA, Peruvian Association of Gastronomy. His designation is criticized because of his lack of experience with human rights issues, the same as Pinto.

García’s administration decided that the Ministry of Foreign Relations would manage the funds assigned by the German Government. In that regard, members of the HLC made public the ad honorem nature of their work. The next step before executing the project was fulfilled in early April, when the design for a building, by a group of Peruvian Architects, was chosen through public contest. According to Vargas Llosa, their proposal won over the other 98 designs based on its “functionality” and “sobriety”. The contest, according to architect Frederick Cooper, sought to complete the content of the museum a with building that would through its architectural design be in

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169 R.S. 098-2010-PCM
itself a “museographic testimony” aiding and transmitting of the project’s values.\textsuperscript{172} By April 2010, the project had been clearly outlined and according to the HLC construction works should begin around July 2010.\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{172} Radioprogramas del Perú, January 10, 2010.
\textsuperscript{173} Deutsche Presse Agentur, April 5, 2010.
Chapter 4

Outlining and Contextualizing the “Place”

Going back to one of the initial statements of this paper, if “political violence is studied by examining the link between the historical memory and the social relations of the society within which it is produced, implemented, and achieves effects” (Coronil and Skurski 1991: 333), the study of the remembrance of political violence should be gauged thought that same connection. Thus, in this section I would like to provide some context to two of the elements that play concrete roles in the negotiated discourse on the Place of Memory: its representatives and its chosen location. But first, I will disentangle some of the elements of the Place of Memory, in an attempt to answer the following question: what kind of project has the debate discursively produced?

4.1. Summary

As mentioned in the previous section, two assertions have been crucial in the development of Place of Memory. The first one is the promise of objectivity. This first pledge is personified in the figure of Mario Vargas Llosa, even when, as I will expose later on, his position in Peruvian politics is far from “neutral”. His disaffiliation from any of the parties traditionally involved in the discussion on memory and violence (PAF, APRA, Fujimorismo and the Left) conveys the message of an independent, disinter-
ested, apolitical project. Furthermore, his moral integrity is categorically described as unquestionable and his capabilities, as those of an internationally recognized prominent intellectual. The initial steps, that finally led the writer to occupy the presidency of the HLC, took the form of the spontaneous, individual expression of an academic’s opinion. He published *Peru does not need museums*, and spoke to President Alan García about the importance of a museum of memory as Mario Vargas Llosa, the writer, not as the leader or member of any political organization, and he made sure to publicly state this position. The construction of this image was key to negotiate García’s support, as it allowed the government to explain its radical change of position regarding the project based on the absolute impossibility of political bias toward, or manipulation of, national memory that Vargas Llosa guaranteed.

The second commitment of the project is toward inclusion. Willingness to include various perspectives of the time of terror was communicated mainly through the expansion although never rejection of the CVR’s work. Members of the HLC, even when subscribing the CVR’s conclusions, opted for locating *Yuyanapaq* as a “starting point” over which a broader perspective could be constructed. This openness ultimately translated into an alliance that would have been impossible otherwise: cooperation between representatives of the CVR and members of the PAF and thus of course the possibility of stronger governmental approval. It is also crucial to note that cooperation from the PAF added *heroism* to the preexisting “filter” categories of *victimhood* and *innocence* which established the limits of who would be represented in the museum (questions raised in Laplante and Theidon 2007, and Theidon 2007, 2008). Here, Vargas Llosa’s opening discourse, as president of the HLC is self-explanatory:

> “the sacrifice and heroism shown by many members of the military during the years of terror will be present in its rooms, as well as the pain of civilians; because the museum will be the house of all victims with no exception, no prejudice, no ideological or political parti pris”.¹ (Stress added)

To conclude, again, the two overarching discursive tools that gave rise to the

¹ [http://www.agenciaperu.tv](http://www.agenciaperu.tv), My translation.
The Place of Memory were objectivity and inclusion. So, what has been produced by this discursive process?

The resulting, negotiated concept of the Place of Memory also did address the general direction of the project’s content. In that regard, The Place of Memory will expose both the causes and consequences of the period of violence. These were clearly outlined from early discussions. According to the project, violence in Peru was caused first and foremost by the ideological fanaticism motivating the actions of two subversive or terrorist organizations: *Sendero Luminoso* and the MRTA. Vargas Llosa, whenever referring to any of these two groups chooses invariably the category “terrorist”, whereas former members of the CVR, participating of the Place of Memory, employ the term subversive to replace the terms “party” and “revolutionary movement” used throughout the CVR’s report.²

The second cause of violence identified by the Place of Memory committee is framed throughout the debate in political terms, rather than pointing out to actors, institutions or organizations who directly perpetrated violent acts. In that sense, violence was a consequence of the disregard for democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the context of Alberto Fujimori’s authoritarian regime. Thus, in opposition to the CVR’s Final Report which clearly states that the Peruvian Armed Forces can be held accountable for 28.73% of deaths and disappearances (occupying the second place after *Sendero Luminoso*, responsible for 54% of the victims), in the discourse around the Place of Memory the FAP is no longer signaled as the second “cause” or responsible force (CVR 2004). Thus, responsibility falls one those who were in command of the political project, more precisely, on the two masterminds of *Fujimorismo*, Alberto Fujimori and Vladimiro Montesinos who are currently serving time for charges of corruption and human rights violations.

Besides these two direct sources or causes of violence, there is a third element

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² When referring to *Sendero Luminoso* the CVR’s Final Report uses “Peruvian Communist Party *Sendero Luminoso*” (PCP-SL). The MRTA, as stated in its name, appears as a “Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement”.
that has been, even if less frequently mentioned, posed by very powerful voices. This third mainspring is the underlying context of social inequality and exclusion that permitted and informed the growth and development of organized forms of violence in Peru. Echoing for the first time with the CVR’s version of the war, President Alan García publicly underlined the historical and structural interpretation of the causes of extreme violence. Thus, the Place of Memory project has listed according to relevance or level of involvement, the following causes of political violence in Peru: subversive (or terrorist) actions motivated by ideological fanaticism, a counter-subversive project developed outside the rule of law and democracy, and social inequality.

The consequences of violence are without any objection described as tragic. The loss of innocent human lives, the sequels of trauma, pain and suffering, the material and social devastation left by the period of internal war have affected the country in unprecedented ways. However, the sequels of violence do not affect everyone equally. The Place of Memory project does recognize the significantly higher impact of violence on the poorest, most abandoned sectors of Peruvian society. These groups that conform the overwhelming majority of victims have particular cultural, ethnic and racial characteristics. In that sense the Place of Memory project aligns with the CVR’s conclusions, where from the total number of victims of violence, 79% lived in rural areas and 75% spoke Quechua or other native languages. Hence in terms of the Final Report victimhood was conditioned by “ethnic-cultural” characteristics, level of education (68% with no high school education), and being part of the peasantry (CVR 2003). Going back to the identification of the consequences of violence, for the Place of Memory project, the most dreadful concrete consequence of violence is its victims, defined as everyone “that in one way or another suffered during those years”, but who as described above, are mostly uneducated, poor, indigenous, peasants.

An additional level of the discussion on the Place of Memory revolves around

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3 Paraphrasing its conclusions, the CVR estimates that the number of reported fatal victims (69,280) exceeds the number of deaths in any of the external and civil wars fought in Peru along its 182 years of independent history. (CVR 2003: Conclusion No. 2)

its objective. Why is it important, why is it necessary, why was rejecting the German donation a “big mistake”? Unlike other memory projects that underscore remembrance as a healing process in and of itself, the Peruvian Place of Memory stresses the need to remember violence in order to, first and foremost, avoid repetition. Exposing the consequences of the period of war, for instance, the consequences of terrorist acts and authoritarian repression, should convey the message that violence does not lead to anything but devastation. Along those lines are a number of secondary, related purposes. One is to draw attention toward the poorest, most abandoned, sectors of society, usually identified by the museum’s advocates with Andean, Quechua speaking groups. These groups ought to be integrated to “the rest of the nation”. This particular task speaks to those the project address: the “nation”, but particularly those whose “everyday preoccupations” do not involve the excluded sectors of Peruvian society. In that respect, the museum will also serve, according to Lerner and Vargas Llosa’s agenda, to educate, particularly those who did not experience violence first hand. Education prevents future generations from falling for promises of transformation through subversion and encourages the search for alternative institutionalized solutions (among the cited ones are a strong justice system and social services). Educating through a museum or, in this case, a “place” to remember, is the means for a transition from the ignorance, prejudice and intolerance that fuel war, to dialogue, tolerance and understanding that lead to peace. This transformation is framed in terms of “culture” as a form of knowledge, which is however closely related to modernity’s “cultural institutions” (museums, the arts, etc.). In the case of Mario Vargas Llosa the connection between western modernity, prosperity and culture is very explicit. He specifically cites Germany as an example to follow in terms of becoming a consolidated democracy, and moreover states that “in countries where there are plenty of museums it is not quite as frequent that those who govern say or do stupid things”. The writer even goes as far as to literally use the word

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5 Again, exclusion is defined in socio-economic and cultural terms rather than racial characteristics.
“provincial” when referring to narrow-minded worldviews that hinder dialogue and lead to violence. Going back to *Peru does not need museums*, Vargas Llosa writes “museums replace the tiny, provincial, stingy, unilateral, ‘bell tower’ vision of life and things, for a wider, more generous, more plural one. They attune sensibility, stimulate imagination, refine our feelings and awake in people a critical and self-critical spirit. Progress does not only mean many schools, hospitals and highways”; it means culture (understood in the terms we have previously referred to).

Additionally, the Place of Memory has been described as a creation in homage for the victims from all parties involved in the period of terror. This idea more frequently describes what the “place” will be like, rather than one of its objectives. However, some human rights organizations recognize the project as being, in and of itself, a very valuable form of reparation to the victims, even when it will not, according to the project’s discourse, translate into judicial consequences. The Place of Memory, it has been stated, is not about ascribing responsibilities, but about self-reflection, culture, knowledge, education. Summing up, we can say that the Place of Memory’s primary objective is to prevent the repetition of violence aiming toward the larger goal of a consolidated democracy.

Along those lines, the Place of Memory fits the description of a proposal that, distancing itself from historical or “archeological” representations of a defined “true” past, chooses to constantly and dialogically re-interpret the past in order to transform the present. Hence, it is defined as a “living organism”, a space for research and reflection rather than a static exhibition of past facts. Thus, as described in the previous section the project is defined by its name and the *Place of Memory* is not a *museum of history*.

I have outlined the type of project that has been discursively constructed through the debate. The Place of Memory is supposed to be an apolitical, impartial and comprehensive project that, through the visual experience of the causes and consequences

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of violence in Peru, seeks to prevent the repetition of such a dreadful experience and
to work toward the consolidation of a more inclusive democracy. Being a “place” and
not a “museum” the project rejects imposed, unilateral, versions of a defined past and
subscribes dialogical processes (research, reflection, debate, etc.) that through various
voices aims to interpret the past from and for the present. Having established the course
of the Place of Memory I would like to move forward to more tangible aspects of the
project, providing historical, political and socioeconomic context to two of its elements:
the projects representatives (HLC) and its location in Miraflores.

4.2. Contextualization / Analysis

The promise of an inclusive, all-encompassing, democratic project has served
throughout the debate not only to shape a more suitable space for memory in Peru
(memory in the sense introduced in the theoretical framework), but also as a politi-
cal requirement for its approval and later development. However, even when the Place
of Memory aims to represent “all victims”, only a few people get to “coordinate and
promote the design, organization, implementation and administration of the “Museum
of Memory” Project.”11 Much more important than the understandable limited number
of participants in the HLC is the lack of diversity within the group. This “homogeneity”
does not necessarily refer to the member’s political opinions or militancy (which range
from radical neo-liberalism to leftist inclinations) as much as to their position in the na-
tional distribution of power. In that sense, the debate surrounding the Place of Memory
in Peru raises issues regarding what Caroline Yezer calls “the racial and regional divi-
sion in labor of memory” (Yezer 2008: 280). Referring to the process of providing and
collecting testimonies led by the CVR, Yezer clearly states that “In Peru, the division of
labor of those who had to remember, those who listened, and those who managed the
interpretation of that memory overlapped the broader patterns of regional, economic and
racial divisions” (2008: 281). For instance, Yezer argues that providing testimony in a
process of transition is not inherently liberating but, depending on the position people
occupy in the “division of labor” of national memory, it may actually be experienced

11 R.S. 059-2009-PCM
as a mechanism of coercion, a way of transferring power over one’s own narratives to an agent that already occupies a privileged position (282). In that respect, members of the HLC are all part of a Limeño intellectual elite: professors at a private universities in Peru and abroad, and internationally recognized scholars and artists in a country where only 11.8% of the population has access to higher education at the university level. De Szyzslo, world-renowned artist and PUCP alumni, has been a visiting Professor at Cornell, UT and Yale University. Juan Ossio, currently teaching at PUCP, has also been invited to teach at University of Chicago and University of Virginia, and is a Guggenheim, Getty and Werner-Gren grantee. Cooper is dean of the Architecture Department at PUCP, from which Lerner is former Chancellor. All members of the HLC are from Lima, connected to a very prestigious private University, the government or a power group such as El Comercio.

Along those lines, the central figure of the Place of Memory Project is renowned novelist Mario Vargas Llosa. Even when his image has served as an appropriate vehicle to create consensus around a project that required to stand beyond any political interests, Vargas Llosa’s participation in the country’s political live, has been far from “neutral”. Through his active role in drafting the Uchuraccay report in 1983, his 1990 political campaign, and even in his literary work, Vargas Llosa has positioned himself as a promoter of the neoliberal model and an advocate of modern capitalism, even when it develops in detriment of indigenous cultures. The modernizing project is a constant in Vargas Llosa’s rhetoric.

Let us look first at Vargas Llosa’s literary career. Literary critic Misha Kokotovic (2009) argues that in the work of the Vargas Llosa, the inherent violence that modernity exercises through the imposition of its ideas over “peripheric”, “non-modern” societies is invisible. Particularly in two of his novels The Green House (1965) and The Storyteller (1987), Vargas Llosa deals with the relationship “between indigenous peoples and capitalist modernization” (99). According to Kokotovic, these two pieces depict Vargas Llosa’s gradual transition from revealing the “contradictions of an imposed modernity, which promises freedom but only reinforces existing gender and racial hierarchies”, to-
ward not challenging “readers to recognize the self-contradiction of an imposed modernity implicit in it” (103). Through time, as Vargas Llosa becomes a more prominent defender of neoliberalism at the global level, his ability to see and communicate the contradiction of modernity decreased. Here I want to cite a section of Vargas Llosa’s essay *Question of Conquest* (1990), cited in Kokotovic. I find it particularly noteworthy for its remarkable resemblance with Flores-Aráoz’s controversial argument for the prioritization of hunger over culture (cited above), which ironically guided Vargas Llosa’s statement in *Peru does not need museums*:

> If forced to choose between the preservation of Indian cultures and their complete assimilation, with great sadness I would choose the modernization of the Indian population because there are priorities; and the first priority is, of course, to fight hunger and misery. (Vargas Llosa 1990: 52-53)

It would be unfair, and very likely a mistake, to suggest that the writer’s opinion has not changed in twenty years. Actually, in his article, Kokotovic notes that faced with the very feasible prospect of candidate Ollanta Humala becoming President of Peru in 2006 (with a nationalist, anti-liberal discourse denouncing the rules of the free-market) Vargas Llosa recognized the necessity of a “deep reform” that incorporates the poor and marginal sectors of society into the process of economic growth that benefits only a few, even when this reform “is also clearly intended to occur within a free-market framework” (Kokotovic 2009: 107). However, echoing with Vargas Llosa’s guiding question on Flores-Aráoz’s position: what could cause a man, who has advocated for assimilation processes that sacrifice indigenous cultures in favor of eliminating hunger and poverty, to repudiate and passionately militate against that very same logic? The answer is probably along the lines of first, the kind of culture that a museum represents (modern western culture), as opposed to the broader conception of “Indian culture” as a way of life, and second, a discursive process that locates the speaker outside any political debates, economic models and conceptions of progress, which allows the same person to sustain two apparently contradictory positions even when they are both part of one larger political viewpoint.
The perception of a country where modernity coexists with “primitive” cultures also permeated Vargas Llosa’s analysis in the investigation of the eight journalists murdered in the Iquichano community of Uchuraccay in 1983. During Fernando Belaúnde’s government, eight journalists flew from Lima and Ayacucho to the Ayacuchean highlands to investigate the killings of alleged members of Sendero Luminoso by a peasant community. President Belaúnde himself had publicly celebrated the act as a demonstration of national heroism (Mayer 1991). When the eight reporters arrived to Uchuraccay, apparently after speaking to some of the comuneros, they were cruelly massacred by members of the community themselves. The killings were registered, as they were happening, by one of the victim’s camera and the photographs were later exposed in all the major newspapers in the capital city. In response to the widespread media coverage of the case, Belaúnde’s government organized a commission in charge of clarifying the facts behind the mysterious assassinations in Uchuaccay. Mario Vargas Llosa was the leader and spokesman of the Uchuraccay commission. Juan Ossio, anthropologist and member of the Place of Memory’s HLC was also part of that investigating group.

Baptized as the “Vargas Llosa Report”, the group’s final document concluded that the Iquichano community of Uchuraccay killed the eight journalists on suspicion that they were senderistas (Del Pino 2003: 81). Within the context of war, a community that ignored Peruvian laws and lived “in a time wrap” (Poole and Réquie 1992:140), was “convinced by their traditions, culture, the conditions in which they live, and by the practice of their daily livesthat in their fight for survival everything is valid and that it was a matter of killing first or being killed” (Vargas Llosa et al. 1983:33 cited in Mayer 1991). Thus the crime was framed in terms of “cultural misunderstandings” that arose as a consequence of a war declared to Sendero Luminoso (Mayer 1991:183). This contradicted the Left’s belief that the PAF had played a fundamental role in the killings. As a result, even when the report depicted a spontaneous “popular” rejection to Sendero

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12 For details on the Uchuraccay case see Vargas Llosa et al. 1983.
13 It is important to note that Ossio disagreed with some of Vargas Llosa’s most controversial statements concerning the case. Ossio also advocated for and finally accomplished the release of those comuneros who were charged with the killings. For details see Mayer 1991: 213 n.36.
Luminoso, anthropologist Kimberly Theidon explains, “they grounded their findings in the assertion that two irreconcilable worlds coexist in Peru: modern/civilized/coastal Peru, with Lima as its center, and the traditional/savage/archaic Peru, mapped onto the highland communities, particularly Ayacucho” (Theidon 2008: 10). The only way to reconcile this fragmentation “Vargas Llosa laments”, is acknowledging, “that ‘modernisation is possible only with the sacrifice of the Indian cultures’” (Poole and Rénone 1992: 140).

The Vargas Llosa Report has been criticized from a number of different perspectives, for serving as a cover-up for the government, for portraying the comuneros as members of an homogeneous Andean and “primitive” mass, for using anthropological language in a study that was not serious anthropological research for conveniently picking evidence that supported their thesis, for not investigating other deaths that served as support for their claims, and so on and so forth. However I would like to point out one specific process, analyzed by Enrique Mayer (1991), in which the dichotomies assumed in the report (according to Vargas Llosa the separation of an “official Peru” from “deep Peru”) were transferred to the investigative process itself. After the report was released, in 1984 the case went to trial in Ayacucho. Witnesses were murdered and evidence disappeared in a case that was “debated more in newspapers than in the court” (201), and in which members of the military refused to testify (202). However, Mario Vargas Llosa and members of his group, following the court’s directions, provided their testimony. The novelist’s encounter with Huancavelican Judge Hermenegildo Ventura Huayhua turned into an attack to “the person of Vargas Llosa” (202). Ventura questioned him on the profits he had made from publishing an article on the case in the New York Times, and on his involvement with the obstacles that hindered the process of a fair trial. As cited in Mayer’s article Vargas Llosa “was asked by another member of the court ‘When you refer to absolute truth do you refer to occidental or oriental Peru?’” (Caretas 1984a). In response to the judge’s behavior the media triggered a chain of attacks on Ventura’s professionalism, but also “dug into his humble provincial origins

14 See Mayer 1991 for a detailed account of the arguments against Vargas Llosa’s thesis.
ridiculed his literary ambitions and underlined every grammatical mistake” the judge had made in judicial documents. Although he was finally removed from the case on the basis of a mistrial, according to Mayer, Judge Ventura enjoyed great popularity among the “common people”, particularly serranos who celebrated “the discomfort that one of their paisanos had inflicted on a coastal and urban Limeño” (Mayer 1991: 202).

It is also important to mention some of the issues of representation brought up by the Uchuraccay case. Throughout the report, the voice of the comuneros was invisible. According to Mayer, they “come to us in the third person plural and in indirect speech” (Mayer 1991: 205), not through transcribed testimonies that could leave a space for alternative interpretation. Thus as a closing note, particularly relevant to this study, “their point of view was always mediated by translators, interpreters and experts” (Mayer 1991: 205).

The perception of a country divided in two cultural was also present in Vargas Llosa’s campaign for the Presidential elections of 1990. As Poole and Rénique (1992) state, Vargas Llosa’s campaign “painted a world divided between the dichotomies of communism and democracy, clientelistic tradition and capitalist modernity” (1992: 139). In that sense, in 1987 (Alan García’s first government), the President’s plan to nationalize the bank system in Peru provided the writer with the perfect spark to lead a process that has been identified as the return of the Right (Poole and Rénique 1992, Tanaka 1998). In response to García’s move, Vargas Llosa and a group of intellectuals created the social movement Libertad (Freedom), holding a meeting in Lima that according to Poole and Rénique (1992) was marked by the presence of “elegantly dressed women and youths from the wealthy neighborhoods of Miraflores and San Isidro” (138). Libertad consolidated a right wing block joining forces with the two political parties in power during President Fernando Belaúnde’s mandate, Acción Popular (Popular Action) and Partido Popular Cristiano (Popular Christian Party). This new coalition became FREDEMO (Frente Democrático, Democratic Front) and Vargas Llosa turned into the Right’s Presidential candidate for the 1990 general elections. In words of Poole and Rénique (1992), “The brilliance of Vargas Llosa’s political ascendancy lay in intellec-
tualising and articulating the racialised class fears in Lima’s elite” through a movement that oposing populism and representing “radical liberalism” was capable of “replacing Peru’s decrepit right-wing parties” (140-41). Vargas Llosa was thus considered the representative of “formal” or “official” Peru in a race for office that was clearly intersected by race (considering the racial characteristics of white Vargas Llosa, “el chino” Fujimori and “el cholo” Toledo), religion (Fujimori representing protestant evangelism), and class conflicts (Tanaka 1998, Poole and Rénique 1992). However Martín Tanaka (1998) notes that Vargas Llosa’s popularity did extend beyond the upper classes: “due to Vargas Llosa’s summoning capacity, his enormous prestige as a writer, and a renewed neoliberal ideology, toward the second half of 1897 the Right could once again be the political expression, not only of bankers and entrepreneur’s interests, but also of important middle and popular sectors” (Tanaka 1998: 121. My translation). For instance, despite losing the election to an unknown “outsider” (Alberto Fujimori got 68% of the votes in the in the second-round), Vargas Llosa received most votes in the first round with 33%. His defeat has been attributed to the fact that he joined forces with already discredited “traditional political groups”, whereas his candidacy as an independent outsider would have been much more successful. However, Vargas Llosa’s failure was also conditioned by the identification of Libertad as the candidate of the wealthy neighbors of Miraflores and San Isidro. (Tanaka 1998, Poole and Rénique 1992)

Thus, when we confront the project’s discourse with concrete decisions regarding who will represent it, we see that the claim of ”neutrality” and ”inclusion” contradicts first, the decision on a president that has a very strong neoliberal political background, who has shown in repeated opportunities disregard for the opinions and perspectives of indigenous groups. Second, the discourse contradicts the decision on a HLC that does not allow for a legitimate representation of those who were directly affected by political violence. Members of the HLC belong all to the same privileged socio-economic sector. The fact that they occupy power positions may provide the project with legiti-
macy among other power groups, but runs the risk of becoming a top-down, imposed enterprise that violently decides on how historically marginalized groups (in this case "victims") will be remembered.

As described in the previous chapter, once the possibility of creating a national museum of memory became a reality, authorities discussed the issue of the appropriate site. The first problem to be solved was between locating the project in Lima, the capital city and political center of the country that concentrates close to one third of Peru’s population; or Ayacucho, the place in which violence originated and took the most human lives. Members of the HLC solved this first conflict by discursively locating the memory project at the “national level”, claiming that the capital city would make it accessible to more people in the country and more visible to the outside world. The discussion was thus resolved in favor of Lima.

Once that first cut had been made, it was time to choose one among the 43 districts that constitute the area of Metropolitan Lima. As negotiations evolved, a couple of candidates emerged. San Miguel was the first district to formally offer two suitable spaces for the Place of Memory. The HLC celebrated the early initiative, but opted for the Campo de Marte in Jesús María, one of the largest parks in the city that, surrounded by governmental buildings, serves as a public space for sports and artistic events, and for the annual military parade. It is there that sculptress Lika Mutal built the monument El Ojo que Llora, a labyrinth made out of stones with engraved names and ages of the victims of violence. This homage was destroyed and splattered with orange paint by Fujimoristas when their leader was extradited from Chile to face trial for human rights violations in 2007. In the midst of the discussion about the museum’s location, Villa El Salvador demanded to host the memory project, defending the historical value of the district as the nerve center of social organizations that resisted and were systematically targeted by Sendero Luminoso. Nonetheless, the HLC finally announced the district of Miraflores as their chosen location, and framed their decision in symbolic terms, considering that Miraflores was the scenario of the most tragic terrorist attack perpetrated in the city of Lima toward the end of the internal war. Miraflores is for this reason recog-
nized as a “heroic city” due to the number of deaths caused by one particular bombing in 1992. However, if the experience of violence and “heroism” was a decisive motive to choose one location over another, then the question is why Miraflores and not Villa El Salvador? Is the number of deaths a good enough explanation? The decision on the first over the later acquires significance, particularly if we consider the historic and socio-economic conditions of both districts, in so far as context uncovers the prioritization of some aspects of the memory project over others.

The process of violence in Peru, and particularly in Lima, took an important turn in 1989. In that year Sendero Luminoso held its First Congress and made the strategic decision of increasing the intensity, visibility and of level violence in the capital city as the ultimate objective of their so-called “popular war”. This move marked the beginning of what the CVR later identified as the second “peak” of violence in terms of the number of deaths.16 Interestingly enough, the two iconic terrorist attacks of this bloody phase took place in the districts of Miraflores and Villa El Salvador, respectively. The first one was the car-bomb explosion in Tarata Street in Miraflores, which left the highest number of fatal victims in any of the attacks perpetrated in Lima. The second one was the murder of popular leader Maria Elena Moyano of Villa El Salvador, which according to the CVR (2003), represented a breaking point because of the level of cruelty exercised by Sendero and because it exposed the vulnerability of the popular organizations in their attempt to fight back.

By early 1990 a declared “state of emergency” in Lima had suspended all constitutional procedures and, as specified by the CVR, the atmosphere of terror and insecurity took over the capital city until September 1992, when the imprisonment of Sendero Luminoso’s leader, Abimael Guzmán, radically transformed the state of affairs (CVR 2003). Only between January and July 1992, 37 car bombs exploded in Lima, killing approximately 50 people (CVR 2003). The attack in Tarata (July 16, 1992) took 25 lives, hurt around 155 residents, and had material consequences estimated in USD 3,120,000.

16 According to CVR’s Final Report the three highest peaks of violence in terms of victims are 1984, 1989 and 1990. For more information see Volume I, Chapter 1, “The periods of violence” (CVR 2003).
According to the CVR, 360 families were affected in one way or another by this violent act. Besides Tarata, among the most sadly memorable incidents in Miraflores were, also in July 1992, the bombing of the Instituto Libertad y Democracia (ILD, Freedom and Democracy Institute) known for its neoliberal politics, and the attack on the upscale Hotel Maria Angola in 1995, each causing around five deaths. Banks and embassies with offices in Miraflores were targeted as well.17

Whereas Sendero perceived Miraflores as the center of bourgeois economic power, Villa El Salvador was attacked because its strong community based and grassroots organizations were accused of asistencialismo (Poole and Rénique 1992), of serving “yankee imperialism’s plans to fight the people’s war through military aid and social development” (El Diario, cited in Poole and Rénique 1992: 92).

Villa El Salvador is one of the “self-managed” districts that conformed the southern Urban Self-Managed Community of Villa El Salvador (CUAVES, Comunidad Urbana Autogestionaria Villa El Salvador), created in the 1970s originally by survivors of a devastating earthquake in Ancash (province located north from Lima). Through time, with the assistance of international entities such as the UN, CUAVES turned what used to be a desert into a district “with paved streets, municipal gardens, schools, and electrical, water and sewage systems created through the efforts of its residents” (Poole and Rénique 1992: 88). One of their strongest groups, and thus victim of numerous senderista attacks, was the Metropolitan Organization of ‘Glass of Milk’ Committees and Soup Kitchen, commonly known as Vaso de Leche. In 1991 alone, Sendero Luminoso murdered five of its organizers (Poole and Rénique 1992).

Maria Elena Moyano was Deputy Mayor of Villa El Salvador, founder of Vaso de Leche in the district, and president of the Popular Federation of Women of Villa El Salvador (FEPOMUVES, Federación Popular de Mujeres de Villa El Salvador). In 1991 FEPOMUVES administered 112 comedores populares (public kitchens) that fed 30,000 people daily and provided milk to 60,000 children and elderly residents (CVR 2003) in the context of the worst economic crisis Peru had experienced in decades.

17 German Embassy in Av. Arequipa and offices of the Wiese Bank.
In September 1991 Sendero detonated a bomb in one of FEPOMUVES’ workspaces. Maria Elena Moyano denounced the attack and stated in a public interview that she would personally organize urban patrols to fight terrorism in Villa El Salvador. The next day she led a march for peace challenging Sendero’s mandate of an armed strike in the district and from that moment on she was targeted by senderistas a symbol of resistance. On February 15, 1992 Moyano attended a fund raising event organized for the Vaso de Leche Committee. Members of Sendero dressed as civilians broke into the party and shot Moyano twice, then dragged her body to the entrance of the locale and dynamited it, using around 5 kilograms of explosives. Her eight and ten-year old boys were present at the party.

Thus, both Miraflores and Villa El Salvador were targets of terrorist violence, but for radically different reasons that correspond to the historic and socioeconomic characteristics of each district. Unlike Villa El Salvador, Miraflores, founded in 1857 is part of the central, oldest section of the city that before becoming part of the center of an ever-growing metropolis was the area that wealthy families chose to build their vacation houses and ranches.

Now a days Miraflores is still home to Peru’s upper and upper middle class. According to the latest study by APEIM (Peruvian Association of Market Investigation Enterprises 2010) Miraflores belongs to a group of districts in which 28.3% of the population can be located at the highest socioeconomic level (SEL A). The majority of its residents, 41%, belong to SEL B, whereas only a 2.5% are part of the lowest sector (SEL E). On the other hand, Villa El Salvador belongs to a conglomerate in which the socioeconomic distribution is the exact opposite: 19.9% of its residents can be located in the lowest strata (SEL E), the majority of residents (44.1%) are in the next lowest sector (SEL D), while the percentage of people that belong to the highest SEL is 0.0% (APEIM 2010). Moreover, Villa El Salvador has an average income per capita of USD219, below the average monthly income of approximately USD230 in Metropolitan Lima, whereas

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18 Miraflores, San Isidroo, San Borja, Surco and La Molina conform “Zone 7”. (APEIM 2010)
19 Villa el Salvador, Villa María del Triunfo, Lurin and Pachacamac belong to “Zone 9” (APEIM 2010)
Miraflres has the second highest income per capita in the city, with USD384 (Alcázar and Andrade 2008).

So then, going back to the initial question of this section, what does the election of Miraflres over Villa El Salvador can tell us about the Place of Memory project? What aspects have been prioritized over others through their decision and what other opportunities have been left behind? It is important to note first that, even when both districts have been object of extreme and extraordinary forms of violence, only Villa El Salvador has endured and continues to suffer less visible forms of structural and everyday violence that have been pointed out as a persistent underlying cause of direct violent acts. Second, where both districts have their share of victims (being the number of deaths higher in Miraflres), the history of Villa El Salvador could have allowed the project to give “heroism” and “resistance” a more central role. This is not to say that the location of the project will determine in any way the content of the exhibition, however this could have been an interesting discursive tool pointing to the project’s position regarding alternative forms of representing and being represented (besides victimhood). Among some concrete consequences though is that the spotlight has been used by Miraflres to cancel debts to its victims. This privilege has not been extended to all victims in an outside of Lima, where economic constrains are much graver. A third element concerns the potential audience and exposure that the project aims to reach and has to do with the fact that Miraflres is Lima’s touristic district by excellence, holding the highest number of hotels and high-end restaurants in the city. In that sense, the museum is very likely to be added to a touristic circuit, circumscribed to the central area of Lima, in which other cultural institutions art galleries, bars and restaurants participate. It must be said that the ordinary tourist in Lima does not visit areas such as Villa El Salvador, hence choosing this second district could have either risked less international exposure or expanded the circuit towards a different (less “modern”) conception of local culture. Along those lines it is important to mention that the majority of migrants that conform Villa El Salvador are migrants, originally from the regions of Apurímac and Ayacucho, hardly hit by political violence between 1980 and 2000 (INEI 1993). Some
groups of migrants moved to Lima escaping from the internal war that developed in their communities. They represent a community of “victims” and their families.
Chapter 5

Conclusions

In this final section I would like to bring back the ideas exposed in the theoretical framework of this study, analyzing the strengths and limitations of the Peruvian Place of Memory project through notions of memory, violence and representation. Before I begin, I want to restate that the Place of Memory is a project that has not yet been executed. What I have analyzed in this work is the discourse in which the project has been framed, but not the concrete product that will follow that discursive framework.

That being said, I want to start by stating that the Peruvian Place of Memory has successfully been framed, through a carefully constructed discourse, as a “memory” project. Accordingly, the Place of Memory publicly claims to present, not an “archaeological”, imposed, static final version of the past, but a more plural, dynamic, inclusive account of a historical period of violence. This stance was literally stated in the Supreme Decree that formally created the project.

This central discursive achievement has allowed the project to advance in two fundamental ways. First, the Place of Memory has elicited political alliances that would have been impossible without a declared willingness to represent a plural vision of the past. Moreover, without that discursive opening, it is very likely that the government would have altogether rejected the project. Second, resonating with proposals that claim to represent national “memory”, The Peruvian Place of Memory has the clear objective
of reconstructing the past aiming to legitimize a present national project. Working toward that connection between past and present, the Place of Memory project has managed to discursively connect manifestations of extreme, direct violence to less visible, underlying and persistent forms of structural violence.

Despite these very valuable achievements, the Place of Memory has one central limitation that results from not recognizing that the project is by definition a representational practice. The Peruvian Place of Memory, as the process of appropriating a highly politicized past, according to interests in the present, in which the positions of “who speaks” and “who is spoken of” overlap with positions in a larger, preexistent distribution of power, is by all means a representational exercise. Hence, depicting the Place of Memory as an apolitical enterprise veils the power relation embedded in representation. Moreover, overlooking the project’s position (and more specifically the members of the HLC) within power relations may reverse the advances made through the discourse, finally turning the Place of Memory into an imposed, unitary, exclusive version of the past, imposed by dominant classes, that perpetuates the structure of power that the project repudiates. In other words, the Place of Memory runs the risk of becoming another case in which “structural violence defeats those who would describe it.” (Farmer 1997: 286)

These three elements producing unexpected alliances, connecting direct violence to structural violence, and veiling the power relation of a representational practice have their own interesting consequences. I will further explore them here.

So first, how was the project established as a memory enterprise? We have seen that the project acquires relevance as a means to prevent the repetition of violence in Peru. Connecting destruction and pain to authoritarianism and subversive actions, the project legitimizes the nation’s greater goal of a consolidated democracy. If disregard for the rule of law leads to death and devastation, reinforcing its mandate, through the recognition of equal rights for all Peruvians, is laid out as the means toward a peaceful, more just society. However, the most important move in that respect was the strategic decision to change the project’s name from “museum” to “place”: the Place of Memory
(Lugar de la Memoria). After assuming the task of exposing a tragic past, the project’s High Level Commission decided to redefine the venture, distinguishing it from the traditional structure of a museum, in which an expert decides on one “true” version of past events. Remembering Mario Vargas Llosa’s words, “we do not want the Place of Memory to be an archeological reconstruction of violence in Peru”\(^1\) that exposes a unitary version through a static, completed representation. The Place of Memory aims to be a “living organism”\(^2\), capable of re-elaborating, questioning and re-defining its contents, and more importantly, capable of accounting for different versions and perspectives of the past, “providing a more valuable, fair, exact vision of the historical fact”.\(^3\) Moreover, the Supreme Resolution (R.S. 098-2010-PCM), echoing the CVR’s conclusions, states that “the denomination ‘Museum’ could lead to the error of thinking that the violence experienced in Peru is a thing of the past when there still exist unsolved structural problems in our society which constituted the social context in which terrorism was able to develop.”\(^4\)

With this plural, negotiated voice, the Peruvian Place of Memory has managed to unite, as supporters of the same memory project, intellectuals involved in the CVR (who are usually signaled as leaning toward the Left); the APRA, in power during the most critical years of the war and the economic crisis; the PAF, pointed by the CVR as the second perpetrator of humans rights violations during the time of violence; international and local human rights organizations, politicians representing the Right, members of Ollanta Humala’s “nationalist” party, and the Catholic Church. Even when the discursive alliance occurs within groups that already occupy powerful positions, it is, as I have mentioned before, a necessary first step toward the realization of the project.

The most remarkable consequence of this sort of “political truce” is the repositioning of the PAF in regards to the period of violence. As explained in the previous chapter, in the debate surrounding the Place of Memory, the PAF no longer appears

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\(^1\) Radioprogramas del Perú, January 10, 2010.
\(^2\) Radioprogramas del Perú, January 10, 2010.
\(^3\) Radioprogramas del Perú, January 10, 2010.
\(^4\) R.S. 098-2010-PCM
as the institution accountable for the second highest number of victims. The PAF has been formally invited to present its own version of the violent period, underscoring the need to represent not only the institution’s “heroism”, but their “innocence” as well. Here, Mario Vargas Llosa’s statements have been quite revealing. The writer said that “violence from all parts was represented [by the CVR], but innocence from all parties was not” and promised that “the sacrifice and heroism shown by many members of the military during the years of terror will be present” in the Place of Memory.

It is important to remember that since the Final Report (CVR 2003) concluded that the PAF was the second perpetrator of human rights violations during the investigated period (1980-2000), the CVR and its members have been accused of equating the militaries to terrorist organizations. This accusation has been, ever since, used to disregard any of the recommendations and imputations presented in the Final Report, as it facilitated the identification of CVR members as “pro-terrorists”. I want to underscore that the CVR’s Final Report clearly states that “the members of the leadership system of the PCP-SL [Sendero Luminoso] hold the gravest responsibility for the conflict that bled Peruvian society”, among other reasons “for their genocidal policy that involved acts to provoke the State [and] for their decision to proclaim the so-called strategic equilibrium that stressed the terrorist character of their actions”. Moreover, when referring to the role of the PAF, the CVR starts by saying:

The CVR notes that the armed forces, by decision of the constitutional government in an executive decree issued December 29th, 1982, were duty bound to confront the subversive groups that challenged the constitutional order of the Republic and threatened the fundamental rights of citizens. The CVR recognizes the efforts and sacrifices made by members of the armed forces during the years of violence, and offers the most sincere homage to the more than one thousand brave agents of the military who lost their lives or were disabled in the line of duty. (CVR 2003, General Conclusions, No. 53, No. 54)

In spite of the actual content of the Final Report, the PAF has continued to reject

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the document, denying any implication of the institution, as a whole, in cases of human rights violations. The Place of Memory has changed the PAF’s position first, by signaling Fujimori’s authoritarian system as the second cause of political violence, and second, by promising to expand the CVR’s work to reach a more plural account of the facts. This was also made possible by Mario Vargas Llosa’s position as the project’s leader, which establishes a discursive distance between the Place of Memory and the CVR. This distance is quite relative, considering that two former *comisionados*, including President of the CVR, Salomón Lerner, are members of the HLC. Also, Mario Vargas Llosa has publicly expressed his support and respect for the CVR’s work. Thus, as presented in previous sections, the Place of Memory has been strategically placed as an expansion of the CVR’s *Yuyanapaq*. This discursive move allows the project to continue to support the CVR’s work, while avoiding past conflicts.

Besides the possibility of joining antagonizing groups in favor of a memory enterprise, I have mentioned the project’s accomplishment of connecting terrorist and repressive violence to structural inequality and exclusion. In that respect, it is important to remember that the Peruvian internal war is first and foremost a case of extraordinary, extreme, direct, targeted physical violence. According to the CVR’s Final Report (2003), 69,280 Peruvians were murdered between 1980 and 2000 in a war initiated by *Sendero Luminoso*.

Accordingly, the specific characteristics of the Peruvian war, and the identification of terrorism/subversion and authoritarianism as the central causes of violence, could facilitate the separation of these extreme acts of direct violence from a larger framework. In other words, because terrorist organizations and dictatorships occur outside of what is expected from “normal” or “democratic” structures, violence could, as a result, be located “elsewhere”, in the past, in a “violent other”. However, the Place of Memory has managed to link extreme violence with structural violence, and violence “here and now”. This position has been expressed particularly by Salomón Lerner (aligning with the CVR’s report), Mario Vargas Llosa, President Alan García Pérez and, as I mentioned above, in the decree that outlines the direction of the Place of Memory project.
It is interesting to remember how García’s discourse during the inaugural ceremony of the “place” stands very closely to Schepper-Hughes and Bourgois’ definition of a “violence continuum”, which stands for “all expressions of radical social exclusion, dehumanization, depersonalization, which normalize atrocious behavior and violence toward others” (2004: 21). In García’s words, violence is “everywhere, in every human being” and is expressed through “collective lynching, sexual submission of minors, abuses against women” and also, “the [living] condition of the most humble, the mocking and exclusion of the weak [and] the homosexual”.\textsuperscript{8} He then makes the connection adding, “that an ideology with an organization was capable of forming a nucleus to make it [violence] more present and stronger, should not hide the underlying issue”.\textsuperscript{9}

It could be argued that García’s interest to expand the scope of the study of violence to a broader period of time, responds to the interest of separating his first government (1985-1990) from concrete political responsibility.\textsuperscript{10} Still, his position represents a very interesting discursive opening. What does this connection of the past to the present allow? Why is it productive to connect direct violence to structural inequality?

Besides bringing violence to the present, as a problem that still needs an integral solution, the connection of extreme violence with the less visible forms of violent expressions, that permeate everyone’s lives, reduces the risks of “othering” experiences and broadens the possibilities of creating “witnesses”. Along those lines, James Polchin defines witnessing as the active participation of experiencing an event and then talking about it. Hence, as opposed to a passive viewer or spectator, the active witness transcends the act of seeing and becomes a producer of knowledge (2007: 210). The effect that memory projects, specifically those related to violent and traumatic events, may potentially have over their audiences is described with optimism in one Nancy Schepper-Hughes’ articles where she argues that, even when Truth and Reconciliation Commis-

\textsuperscript{8} \url{http://www.agenciaperu.tv}, My translation.

\textsuperscript{9} \url{http://www.agenciaperu.tv}, My translation.

\textsuperscript{10} It is important to note that at the beginning of hid government García established a strategy that would target the social causes of subversion instead of opting for violent repression. He even removed from their charges high rank members of the military directly or indirectly involved in massacres during his mandate. (See Tanaka 1998).
sions, like the one developed in South Africa, are processes that do not involve “ordinary people”, its “real effects will perhaps be felt in small ripple effects and, hopefully, in various community circles where people might be able to meet with others to talk about just what happened to them, how they behaved, and how to set the record straight” (1998: 466). This coveted effect becomes central when speaking about representational practice, since, following Fernando Coronil, “the fundamental issue becomes, not the unavoidable gap between reality and representation but the relationship between the representation and constitution of social relations in specific societies.” (1996: 75)

The objective of creating witnesses has been put forward by members of the HLC who underscore the potential educational character of the project, as it will address those who did not experience violence directly, thus younger generations and privileged sectors of society. As I have exposed in this study, research proves that particularly in colonial societies that face the challenge of moving on after periods of political violence, the healing process requires the existence of an audience that responds and acknowledges the “victims” as equals, as citizens and subjects of rights (Theidon 2006, 2007, 2008, Laplante 2006, Yezer 2008). The Place of Memory seems to be taking an important step in that direction.

In a different, but equally important way, structural violence is recognized through the debate around the Place of Memory, as the framework that informed the development of the war. The HLC and the project’s advocates recognize that most of the victims of violence occupied the least privileged positions in the national socioeconomic structure and thus, that the likelihood of becoming a victim of violence was directly related to condition of poverty, indigeneity and lack of formal education.

Despite the valuable opportunities opened by the project, when we compare the discourse to the facts, some central questions arise. Among them, if we go back to the beginning of the debate, when President Alan García opposed the creation of a museum

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11 The experience of the later group could be debated, since, as we have seen in previous sections, Lima was a target of violence, and people did live in fear, even when the intensity of other’s experience is unimaginable to them.

12 For numbers refer to CVR 2003.
of memory, he argued that “memory is not patrimony of a group, regardless of how smart its members are, and how good the university they come from is.”

This issue was raised again when members of the HLC rejected the term “museum” as a category that suggests the imposition of some expert’s version of the past over everybody else’s. The question then is: was the role of the “expert” really transformed with the transformation of the project’s name? The Museum of Memory turned into a “place”, but decisions on the means of representation are still left to “experts”, intellectuals who forge alliances with other power groups. Victims’ organizations are not among the groups that have been formally invited to participate (in the way in which the PAF has), very likely, because their “presence” is taken for granted in a project that is based on their experiences, but also because their participation was not an indispensable requirement for the government’s approval. As the project evolves, this may change, however I think it is important to point it out.

In that sense, the limitations of the Place of Memory align with those of any “memory” project. A crucial risk posed by the use of “memory” is that of assuming that memories “shaped by trauma” are more “likely to subvert totalizing varieties of historicism” (Klein 2000: 138) only because groups who experience trauma, occupy historically marginalized positions. The main mistake of the memory venture is to presume that because it discursively challenges final, imposed generalizations of the past, it automatically acquires a “subaltern voice” (Klein 2000: 143), even when it is evident that inclusion is limited to those who will be represented (everyone who suffered regardless of origin”) and not to those who represent. This limitation is related to the way in which a group chooses to recall and transmit past events. Along those lines, various studies sustain that “the event is not what happens [but] that which can be narrated” (Feldman 1991:14, cited in Malkki 1995.). Focus on narratives opens new possibilities of representation, as they constitute a space in which groups can consciously elaborate their past according to political purposes in the present. As narratives assume at the same time internal and external audiences, they are strongly connected to matters of

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identity and access to broader discourses, such as human rights, global multiculturalism, etc. Unlike the CVR’s Final Report, which collected testimonies in the form of narratives, a photographic exhibition raises issues regarding bodies as sites of memory and the impossibility of consciously addressing an audience. The specific risks entailed in the exposure of violence through photographs, escapes the scope of this study. However, the connection between the discourse of memory and the “embodiment” of history become particularly relevant if we consider that “Peruvians with darker skin and Indian features are second class citizens who do not fully enjoy their right to live, neither in terms of social development nor freedom from being killed” (Laplante 2007: 440). Moreover, in an exhibition the absence of an active speaker facilitates the spectator’s detachment from what he/she observes and poses the danger of reproducing “othering” mechanisms that perpetuate the rigid positions that “victims” occupy within an already fragmented nation.

The museological experience of subaltern groups may reinforce in the elites the perception of an “other” always victimized, either through violence or political and subversive manipulation. This becomes more feasible if people from certain social and racial groups are represented only as “victims”. It is interesting how, after a discursive negotiation, the PAF, which was previously considered a “perpetrator”, can now fit into categories of “innocence” and “heroism”. In opposition, civilians are mostly “victims”. Let me go back to Vargas Llosa’s promise: “the sacrifice and heroism shown by many members of the military during the years of terror will be present in its [the museum’s] rooms, as well as the pain of civilians”.

Would this limited representation of civilians as “victims” change if victims’ organizations (mostly form indigenous background) were formally invited to participate? Maybe we would also see a combination of victimhood and innocence with notions of heroism, survival and resistance.

Besides the lack of indigenous representation in the project’s decision-making process, the decision on Miraflores over Villa El Salvador could be considered a missed opportunity to expand the “victims” means of representation. As we have seen in the

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previous chapter, Villa El Salvador is identified (in and outside Peru) with survival, resistance, and heroism. In that sense, the decision on Miraflores over Villa El Salvador could also point to the subordinate position that structural violence occupies in the project, as opposed to extreme, terrorist violence. As presented before, Miraflores was repeatedly targeted by subversive violence. However, it was rarely the site of governmental repression, considering that the usual suspects were not expected to be part of the upper and middle classes in Lima. Moreover, Miraflores as a region is not known for suffering from the effects of structural or everyday violence, considering its residents occupy the highest strata in the socioeconomic distribution. This is not to say that the location will condition the content of the “place’s” exhibition. But it is interesting to see how the creation of the Place of Memory has already had concrete economic consequences for the neighbors of Miraflores, as the Miraflores City Hall cancelled all debts owed by victims who live in the district. Also, as part of a “cultural” and touristic circuit, the Place of Memory is very likely to stimulate local economy.

Finally, I want to address the issue of representation. As stated above, for the purposes of this study, representational practices are not evaluated according to their ability to accurately reproduce the “outside world”. That venture is simply an impossible task. The analysis of the Place of Memory as a representational practice becomes relevant when we locate it within a larger distribution of power and think of the consequences it may have in Peruvian social relations (Coronil 1996). In that regard, Charles Hale (1997) explains:

As we know, the issue of ‘who speaks’ is central to any theory of representation and points to the scholar’s role in the power relations of cultural production. A certain way of representing a subject implies a particular way of constructing meaning and framing a subjectivity in the context of specific interest. (Hale 1997: 825)

As we have seen through this study, the Place of Memory manages to fulfill the requirements of a memory project through two main discursive tools: inclusion and objectivity. We have also seen than the willingness to include plural voices in
the project’s representation of the past has allowed for some alliances among already powerful groups. However, victim’s organizations and indigenous groups (among them, ronderos and auto-defense committees), which because of their race, culture and socio-economic condition do not occupy power positions, have not been invited to discuss the terms in which they want to be represented. These groups have not been able to choose representatives, in the sense of appointing someone to speak for them. Thus, even when the museum is according to the HLC, “the museum of the victims”, victims will be “spoken for” by groups who occupy privileged positions in the “the racial and regional division in labor of memory” (Yezer 2008: 280).

The inability to see this contradiction may be related to the second discursive tool: objectivity or impartiality. We have seen how members of the HLC, and particularly Mario Vargas Llosa, were presented as guarantees of a transparent project. Their presence as well respected intellectuals conferred on the project an apolitical aura. We have seen however, that the political stances of members of the HLC are far from “neutral” (not that being neutral would ever be possible), as they have taken part in highly politicized processes such as the CVR, The Uchuraccay Report and even a Presidential election. However, the discourse that has provided important opportunities to the project has also been able to “erase” these political backgrounds. I would argue that in that process of becoming apolitical, “neutral”, different from power, the Place of Memory has also managed to veil its own power position as the one who, in connection to overarching forms of power, is allowed to “speak of” groups who occupy traditionally marginalized positions. In that sense, Fernando Coronil argues that discursive representations “seem to be the products of invisible hands laboring independently according to standards of scholarly practice and common sense. Yet they involve the use of a shared spatial imagery and have the strange effect of producing a remarkably consistent mental picture or map of the world” (1996: 52). A few questions arise from this reflection. First, if the project’s representative were able to see the contradiction entailed in the absence of indigenous representatives (and women by the way) in the decision-making

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process, would they be able to solve the contradiction? How? Maybe we should try to solve this question thinking of concrete decisions that could significantly transform (at least the perception) the old formula of the limeño speaking for the “other”. I would suggest that a first step toward narrowing the gap is formally inviting indigenous groups to participate in the project.

Summing up, those who represent the Peruvian Place of Memory project have made the bold move of creating a “place” instead of a “museum”. That discursive commitment to plurality and dialogue has permitted first, that power groups, that back in 2003 refused to remember or to even speak of “reconciliation”\(^\text{16}\), support the creation of a space to remember. Second, it has expanded the prospects of producing “witnesses” and of reveling persistent forms of violence that, in Peru, permeate everyday life. This, because it refuses to speak of violence as some “mystical” manifestation, independent from its context, that has been left in the past. For these reasons, and because it has revived the debate on memory and reconciliation that seemed to be of very little interest to politicians and public opinion in general,\(^\text{17}\) I believe that the Peruvian Place of Memory is a fundamental step forward in the process that the CVR initiated in 2003, as it sought “full citizenship for all Peruvian men and women”.\(^\text{18}\) However, the project is, so far, excluding “victims” groups from the representational process, becoming an enterprise that is far from being inclusive.

\(^{16}\) Even President García in 2003 rejected the possibility of reconciliation. See Theidon 2006.
\(^{17}\) For a description on processes after the Final Report see Oelschlegel 2006.
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