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Constructing Memory amidst War: The Historical Memory Group of Colombia

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ABSTRACT[1]

Between 2007 and 2013, we were part of the Historical Memory Group (GMH), a research group comprising researchers and experts working under the auspices of the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation of Colombia. The GMH was tasked under Law 975 with producing a report on the origins and causes of the armed conflict in Colombia. Despite the dominant right-wing political context and the ongoing armed conflict, the GMH enjoyed intellectual and operative autonomy in its research. This article interrogates the dynamics and reasons that served as the basis for the GMH's special sensitivity towards victims; the notion of victim implicit in the research work, with its inclusions and exclusions; and the dilemmas that arose in the group's work. We argue that the GMH can be characterized as an agent of knowledge production about a violent past that was able to articulate comprehensive and plural narratives about violence in Colombia. However, this work was limited by state and institutional dynamics that sought to domesticate and instrumentalize the voices of those who had been systematically silenced. A review of the GMH's work suggests three critical dilemmas that constrain truth-telling mechanisms: the dilemma between opening spaces for truth telling and the safety of those providing testimony; the dilemma around whose victims' voices gain authority in the documentation process; and the risks of institutionalizing a discourse around victims that bestows narrative capital to state and societal institutions.

KEYWORDS: Colombia, victims' discourses, historical memory, human rights discourse, plural narratives

INTRODUCTION

The experience of the Historical Memory Group (*Grupo de Memoria Histórica*, or GMH) in Colombia, a research group comprising researchers and experts working under the auspices of the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation of

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Colombia (*Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación*, or CNRR), is unique in its investigative format and embodies the challenges of historical memory work in and after violent conflicts. In this article, we describe the objectives and methodological framework used by the GMH, centring our analysis in a topic relevant to the field of transitional justice (TJ) – the participation of victims in the construction of memory and the challenges this participation entails. We discuss three main dilemmas faced during the investigative process: reconstructing historical memory in the midst of war, the increased authority given to the voices of certain victim profiles and the institutionalization of a discourse around victims that bestowed narrative capital to state and societal institutions.

The GMH arose from a paradoxical political context during the presidency of Álvaro Uribe Vélez. On the one hand, he denied the existence of an armed conflict in Colombia, while guerrilla activity reached its peak. At the same time, he promoted national reconciliation policies with the disarmament of paramilitary groups. During his first term (2002–2006) the government passed Law 975 of 2005, known as the Justice and Peace Law, through which Colombia entered into a TJ process.[2] The Law combined the tensions between a local discourse of an antiterrorist warrant and the global discourse around forgiveness and reconciliation.[3]

Law 975 served as the legal framework for the demobilization of paramilitary groups and the 'reintegration' of their members into civilian life, establishing the right to truth, justice and reparations for victims. Under this Law, demobilized combatants are offered 'alternative punishments'[4] if and when they cooperate with the justice system and give reparations to victims. This cooperation consists in giving *versiones libres* (voluntary depositions) in which demobilized paramilitary members confess the crimes and human rights violations for which they are responsible. Nevertheless, after 10 years of this Law, the results in terms of convictions of perpetrators and reparations for victims leave much to be desired. It would seem that the capacity of the special judicial system is overwhelmed. Despite registering more than 4,000 paramilitaries in this process, by July 2015, not even 20 sentences had been handed down.[5] This shows the ways in which TJ, in a more decided way than

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2   Justice and Peace Law, Act 975 of 2005, Official Gazette No. 45.980.

3   Alejandro Castillejo, 'Iluminan tanto como oscurecen: De las violencias y las memorias en la Colombia actual,' in *Memoria, Silencio y Acción Psicosocial: Reflexiones sobre por qué recordar en Colombia*, ed. E.B. Cuellar (Bogotá: Editorial Cátedra Libre, 2010).

4   The alternative prison punishments are applied to those convicted of serious crimes such as massacres, forced disappearances, homicide and rape. The punishment can be between five and eight years in prison, depending on the severity of the crimes. Maximum punishments are suspended for up to 50 years. These alternative, lesser punishments are conditional on confessions, cooperation with judicial authorities, reparations towards victims and the adequate resocialization of the accused. The condition for these alternative punishments is that demobilized persons confess completely and truthfully to all of their crimes as members of an armed group. See, Justicia Transicional, 'Ley de Justicia y Paz: respuestas a sus preguntas,' http://www.justiciatransicional.gov.co/ABC/justiciaypaz (accessed 1 December 2015).

5   See, e.g., Centro de Memoria Histórica, *Justicia y Paz: ¿Verdad judicial o verdad histórica?* (2012); Nina Chaparro, 'La reparación a las víctimas en la Ley de Justicia y Paz, Un modelo de desaciertos y falsas promesas,' in *Aristas del conflicto colombiano*, ed. María Victoria Uribe and Ana María Forero (Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario, 2014); María Victoria Uribe, 'Asimetrías en el proceso de Justicia y Paz en Colombia,' in *Aristas del conflicto colombiano*, ed. María Victoria Uribe and Ana María Forero (Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario, 2014); Kai Ambos, *Procedimiento de la Ley de Justicia y Paz (Ley 975 de 2005) y*

ordinary justice, exceeds in its functions the simple imputation of crimes since it must prioritize both the representation a country has of its past abuses and atrocities, as well as offer society the possibility to express the pain that underlies a long history of violence and exclusion.[6]

Law 975 created and defined the mandate of CNRR. Article 52.2 of the Law mentions a provision for this Commission that should have given the GMH its *raison d'être*: 'to present a public report on the reasons for the appearance and evolution of illegal armed groups.' Subsequent articles detail the task entrusted to the GMH; for example, Article 7 mentions 'the right to truth' and the research and public dissemination of the magnitude and systematic nature of serious violent crimes. Additionally, it stipulates that this is a right of victims and of society more generally, explicitly mentioning 'the non-judicial mechanisms for the reconstruction of truth,' such as truth commissions. Article 56 addresses the 'duty of memory,' or more precisely 'the duty of the State to preserve historical memory.' Articles 57 and 58 mention the collective dimension of truth, the conservation of archives to guarantee the right to memory and the measures to make these accessible. Finally, Article 58 speaks of the state's obligation to investigate and the right of victims to access judicial records so as to participate in processes of truth telling. Despite these normative provisions, the reports of the GMH have had no judicial implications, although judges and prosecutors have used the information from some of them.

The GMH comprised lawyers, historians, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, social workers and photojournalists without executive or judicial powers, as the GMH was not a truth commission.[7] The GMH was able to take on its mandate to Colombian society mainly because it structured itself as a well-respected space for reflection, endowed with an academic, research and operative autonomy. An innovative aspect of the GMH's work was that it made space in the public sphere for a different set of narratives on war in Colombia in which victims' voices and perspectives were given a central place.[8] This freedom of thought and expression, the possibility to dissent and to question the historical record, in sum, to produce an analysis that efficiently contributes to unravelling the history and dynamics of the internal armed conflict, is significant for a working group of this nature.

It is paradoxical that the group was created and developed during the right-wing government of Alvaro Uribe, who during his presidency forbade the use of the term 'armed conflict,' arguing that the insurgent groups in Colombia were terrorists

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Derecho Penal Internacional (Bogotá: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbei, 2010); Rodrigo Uprimny and María Paula Saffón, *Usos y Abusos de la Justicia Transicional en Colombia en Justicia y Paz, ¿Cuál es el precio que debemos pagar?* (Bogotá: Intermedio Editores, 2009).

6   See, Centro de Memoria Histórica, supra n 5.

7   Similar to truth commissions, the GMH was a temporary body established to investigate human rights violations. The major differences between the GMH and truth commissions are that the GMH did not have any executive or judicial powers; its mandate was focused on investigating the origin and causes of the armed conflict in contrast to having a broader mandate to document past atrocities and patterns of violence; and it was not created as a postconflict transitional measure, as has been characteristic of most truth commissions, but took place in the midst of ongoing conflict.

8   Jefferson Jaramillo-Marín, *Pasados y presentes de la violencia en Colombia: Estudio sobre las comisiones de investigación, 1958–2011* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Javeriana, 2014).

threatening a pluralist democracy.[9] Some critics have interpreted the government's support of the GMH as a strategy to present itself as sympathetic to victims and to evade its responsibility for state crimes. What is clear is that this state model of solidarity – and not of responsibility – has been harmful, as it has generated confusion with respect to the responsibilities of the state in the Colombian conflict.[10] The GMH received the support of the vice president despite the majority of the group's reports documenting the diverse forms of direct and indirect complicity of state security forces with crimes and human rights violations against civilians. In contrast to other countries that have created similar commissions for clarifying the historical record in postconflict contexts – which makes research and intervention much easier – the GMH arose in a complex scenario of open conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, or FARC) and ongoing dialogues or peace talks with the National Liberation Army. Simultaneously, in some cases there was a relative transition to a 'postconflict' scenario with other demobilized guerrilla groups – such as the M-19, the Popular Liberation Army and the *Corriente de Renovación Socialista* (Socialist Renewal Current) – and with the paramilitary groups associated under the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, or AUC), as well as the emergence of new forms of paramilitaries known in Colombia as 'emergent criminal bands' (or BACRIM).

This article interrogates the dynamics and reasons that served as the basis for the GMH's unique form of advancing its investigative work with a focus on victims' narratives; the notions of victim implicit in the research work, with its inclusions and exclusions; and the dilemmas faced in implementing the group's vision and mandate. Exploring broader questions on how to construct complex and plural narratives about past violence that are inclusive of the diverse experiences of those impacted by war, we argue that the GMH became an agent of knowledge production about a violent past that was able to articulate comprehensive and plural narratives about violence in Colombia, but that this work was limited by state and institutional dynamics which sought to domesticate and instrumentalize the voices of those that had been systematically silenced and excluded. We examine three critical dilemmas constraining truth-telling mechanisms that seek to foster victim-centred investigations of the past: the dilemma between truth telling and safety for those providing testimony when the process of reconstructing historical memory of past atrocities takes place in the midst of war or ongoing violence; the tensions around whose victims' voices gain authority in the documentation process and final reports; and the risks of institutionalizing a discourse around victims that gives narrative capital to state and societal institutions. After discussing the notion of 'victims' and discourses on victimhood in TJ and historical memory literature in the context of the Colombian conflict, we describe the work and operation of the GMH. The remainder of the article reviews the three dilemmas evidenced in the GMH's work and discusses their implications for

9   'Uribe da 10 razones para no hablar de conflicto armado,' *El Espectador*, 7 May 2011, http://www.elespecta dor.com/noticias/politica/uribe-da-10-razones-no-hablar-de-conflicto-armado-articulo-268116 (accessed 21 November 2015).

10   Jaramillo-Marín, supra n 8.

memory and justice processes that seek to be victim centred and include multiple and divergent versions of the past.

VICTIMS, MEMORY AND TJ

Although Colombia is a country suffering from long-lasting and chronic conflict, the idea of 'victims' as a recognized social collective and as a concept has only recently become accepted. Jefferson Jaramillo-Marín explains this in his study of investigative commissions in Colombia.[11] The 1958 commission, created by a governmental decree to study the causes and dynamics of the internal civil war known as *La Violencia* (1946–1958), resulted in two volumes entitled *La Violencia en Colombia.* This study of the bipartisan war offered a focus on perpetrators and some statistics on the consequences of the violence; the 200,000 victims of the war received only scant mention.[12] The 1987 commission of experts, funded by *Colciencias*, the official funding body for research in science and technology, produced the book *Colombia: Violencia y Democracia.*[13] By this time violence had diversified with the eruption of drug trafficking and new social actors. The authors of the book were academics and experts, each with their respective theses which did not address the topic of victims.

The generalization of a discourse on victims and the attention given to issues of memory, repair and reconciliation in Colombia since the mid-2000s are better understood at the convergence of global TJ trends, the universalizing of human rights discourses and the pressure on nation states from supranational institutions such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court. According to Ruti Teitel,[14] the wave of political transitions that took place in the late 1970s and the 1980s in Latin America and Eastern Europe and the emergence of truth commissions as emblematic instances to 'deal with the past' brought a shift in TJ responses from a focus on prosecution of perpetrators to a focus on victims, collective restoration and reconciliation. This shift, Iván Orozco argues,[15] was also informed by the growth and empowerment of victims and human rights groups that took place in the second half of the 20th century, with their discourse on the need and duty of memory and punishment to deal with past atrocities. The notion of 'victim' that informs contemporary TJ processes is largely based on such rights discourses and is associated to someone (individual or collective) who has been wronged and has suffered loss (material, cultural, human losses or freedoms).[16] Notions of victims in this period also became increasingly demarcated by those of trauma and by moral and psychological discourses on suffering and victimhood[17] that see the model of truth commissions as a response to victims' needs, and

11 Ibid.
12 Germán Guzmán, Orlando Fals Borda and Eduardo Umaña Luna, *La violencia en Colombia: Estudio de un proceso social* (Bogotá: Taurus, 2005 [1962]).
13 Comisión de Estudios sobre la Violencia, *Colombia: Violencia y Democracia* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional, 1987).
14 Ruti Teitel, *Globalizing Transitional Justice: Contemporary Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Ruti Teitel, 'Transitional Justice Genealogy,' *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 16 (2003): 69–94.
15 Iván Orozco, *Sobre los límites de la conciencia humanitaria: Dilemas de la paz y la justicia en América Latina* (Bogotá: Editorial Temis, 2005).
16 Ruti Teitel, *Transitional Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
17 Teitel, *Globalizing Transitional Justice*, supra n 14.

testimonial truth-telling processes as a means for victims and societies to heal from past trauma.[18]

TJ literature has extensively analyzed truth commissions as justice models that allow for victims' increased participation in truth-seeking processes. Truth commissions are seen as adequate forms of building more inclusive and comprehensive histories and of offering opportunities to correct national narratives established in the collective memory of a society.[19] However, the focus on victims in truth-seeking approaches, as noted by Kimberley Theidon, can be their main strength but also their main weakness.[20] Several of the foundational premises of this recognition in the theory and praxis of TJ can therefore be problematized. Theidon analyzes the ways in which the truth commission in Peru implemented a gender perspective. She observes how certain categories of victims, such as children and the women survivors of sexual violence, became narrative capital to these commissions.[21] If indeed these commissions mobilize narratives that defy official versions of the past, Theidon's work shows that the emphasis on certain kinds of victimization and certain imaginaries of suffering creates new silences, as these assume a homogeneous experience for victims of certain crimes (e.g., sexual violence) and impose a testimonial framework limited to suffering.[22]

Antjie Krog, Nosisi Mpolweni and Kopano Ratele analyzed the apparently incomprehensible testimony of Notrose Nobomvu Konile, the mother of one of the seven youths murdered in the event known as 'the Gugulethu Seven,' to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Their analysis reveals the ways in which testimonies that do not project the sense of an 'innocent victim' facing a brutal and powerful actor, and which distance themselves from the testimonial format of the Commission, tend to be marginalized and perceived as incoherent.[23] The authors interrogate the limitations for listening and interpreting on the part of the commissioners and interpreters of a testimony firmly anchored in other cultural frameworks. Likewise, their analysis suggests limitations to building comprehensive narratives when the unintelligibility of the testimony itself signals the limits of this project and some victims' resistance to the truth-telling formats. The forms of knowledge production and the *mise en scène* of pain, privileged in historical memory institutions, are also questioned by Alejandro Castillejo-Cuellar, who discusses the inherent contradictions in a framework that speaks of centring victims but scarcely considers their narratives in the knowledge produced by truth commissions. Castillejo-Cuellar remarks on the notable absence of testimonies in the findings sections of these commissions' reports, or their use to merely support the ideas of their authors.[24]

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18 Naomi Roht-Arriaza and Javier Mariezcurrena, eds., *Transitional Justice in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Truth versus Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

19 Martha Minow, 'What the Rule of Law Should Mean in Civics Education: From the "Following Orders" Defense to the Classroom,' *Journal of Moral Education* 35(2) (2006): 137–162.

20 Kimberly Theidon, 'Gender in Transition: Common Sense, Women, and War,' *Journal of Human Rights* 6(4) (2007): 453–478.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Antjie Krog, Nosisi Mpolweni and Kopano Ratele, *There Was This Goat: Investigating the Truth Commission Testimony of Notrose Nobomvu Konile* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009).

24 Alejandro Castillejo-Cuellar, 'Knowledge, Experience and South Africa's Scenarios of Forgiveness,' *Radical History Review* 97 (2007): 11–42.

Other authors locate victims' testimonial truths in relation to the ways in which people and communities confront the daily legacies of violence and atrocities. Such is the case of Veena Das and her studies on violence against women in contexts of war. In her article 'Language and Body,'[25] Das takes up the issue of the violence during partition by asking: How do women inhabit a world that has become foreign due to violence and loss? As indicated by her research on local communities in India, women's traumatic memories are incorporated into their daily lives, so allowing them to reinhabit the world and engage with what Das calls 'poisonous knowledge.'[26]

The relationship between victims and trauma and testimony and trauma has been amply explored by Holocaust survivors such as Giorgio Agamben and Primo Levi, and by researchers like Das, Dori Laub, Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Jenny Edkins.[27] The questions generating this recognition in scholarly work and in the reconstruction of historical memory have not been sufficiently explored. The issue is doubly problematic if we consider the rifts left by traumatic experiences in those who have experienced war first-hand. Caruth, who has explored the relation between history and trauma, considers that as traumatic events imply a fundamental breach in experience, they are in and of themselves a challenge to the idea of history as a register of comprehensible and linear events. In this sense, trauma is a problem for history and the experience of trauma questions the structure of history itself, leading to re-thinking the project of clarifying and giving a linear order to the past so as to give it meaning.[28] For her part, Edkins argues that victims and their testimony are depoliticized in attempts to reinscribe trauma in linear narratives that are expected to relieve traumatic stress. For Edkins, the gap marking the experience of a traumatic event is reinscribed in daily life through an ensemble of actions, transforming trauma into political action.[29] In this article we hope to problematize this issue through discussing the dilemmas that became visible in the GMH's work of historical clarification.

INVESTIGATIVE WORK, VICTIMS AND THE GMH

In accordance with normative guidelines, the initial objective of the GMH was to design, produce and disseminate rigorous research on the 'reasons for the emergence and evolution of illegal armed groups,' based on specialized knowledge and fieldwork.[30] The investigative work's basic objectives were to collect, process and integrate victims' narratives into various reports and to contribute to the knowledge of different truths and memories of violence in Colombia. To this end, the GMH approached victims to collect their testimonies, to legitimate the process of

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25 Veena Das, 'Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain,' *Daedalus* 125(1) (1996): 67–91.

26 For examples of women's capacity to incorporate traumatic experiences in their daily lives, see, Grupo de Memoria Histórica, *La Masacre de Bahía Portete: Mujeres Wayuu en la mira* (2010); Grupo de Memoria Histórica, *Mujeres y guerra: Víctimas y resistentes en el Caribe colombiano* (2011); Grupo de Memoria Histórica, El Placer, *Mujeres, Coca y Guerra en el Bajo Putumayo* (2012).

27 Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

28 Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

29 Edkins, supra n 27.

30 Taken from the general plan of the GMH, National Centre for Historical Memory archives.

reconstructing historical memory narratives and to activate or support local processes of truth telling.[31] In its most political sense, this process created a favourable space for the expression of demands of truth and reparations for victims. The GMH assumed that transforming historical memory narratives into an authentic social memory of violence depended as much on the rigour of investigative work as on generating spaces of dialogue with diverse social and political actors. The task of reconstructing historical truth was understood as an epistemological issue, but also as a social process, resulting in the creation of mechanisms through which victims and local communities could participate in the construction of the historical narrative.

The inclusion of victims' and civil society voices in the construction of historical memory narratives was associated with the reparations goals defined by the CNRR, and later (2013) by the National Centre for Historical Memory. Sentence C-370/06 of the Constitutional Court analyzed if Law 975 fulfilled the requirements of a TJ law. Through this ruling, the Court clarified the relation between memory and reparations in defining that the preservation of historical memory is one of the central components of symbolic reparations owed to the victims of the armed conflict. The ruling outlined the reparative character of historical memory preservation, the public acceptance of responsibility and the request for forgiveness, actions which facilitate the reestablishment of victims' dignity.

Given the long duration of the conflict (more than five decades), the multiplicity of actors and processes[32] and the spatial range of violence in Colombia, certain choices had to be made in terms of what should and could be documented. After many discussions, the GMH chose to work with 'emblematic cases of violence' which exemplified systematic and generalized patterns of human rights abuses. The forms of victimization chosen as emblematic were massacres, not only for their gravity, magnitude and impact but also because they marked a return to the forms of extreme violence typical of *La Violencia* in the 1950s. Once focusing on massacres as an object of study, cases in different regions were chosen to contrast and compare a variety of massacres: Bojayá in the Middle Atrato River of the department of Chocó, Trujillo in the department of Valle del Cauca, El Salado in the Montes de María region in the department of Bolívar, Segovia in northeastern Antioquia, La Rochela in the department of Santander and Bahía Portete in the department of La Guajira.

From discussions outlining the contours of macro criminality in Colombia and the long duration of the conflict, the GMH opted to first analyze the emblematic cases before tackling the production of the general report, *¡Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad*.[33] The GMH also identified a series of themes that exemplified nodes and key issues of the conflict, as well as some of the repertoires of

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31 An advisory committee comprised of experts from various countries was created. This expertise permitted the GMH to identify problems, explore potentialities and formulate policy recommendations directed towards clarifying historical truths and reconstructing social memories.

32 More than two armed actors have been involved in the struggle for power and the conflict's victims come from all sectors of society, but particularly from indigenous, black, rural *campesino* communities. Left-wing guerrillas, right-wing paramilitary forces, the Colombian armed forces and organized crime (drug economy) all have records of serious human rights abuses, violations of international humanitarian law, use of forced displacement, land grabbing, disappearances, massacres and violent attacks on civilians.

33 National Centre for Historical Memory, *'Enough Already!' Colombia: Memories of War and Dignity* (2013).

violence employed by armed actors. Among these issues, which were all subjects of GMH reports, are the dispossession of land, sexual and gender-based violence, forced displacement, kidnapping and forced disappearances. The GMH made an important decision in adopting a gender perspective of analysis to guide research. Analyzing events and experiences of violence from a gender perspective allowed the group to broaden its perception on the nature and dynamics of conflict, and to address a differentiated analysis concerning who does what in war, the various repertoires of violence and its impacts on men and women. This approach contributed to promoting public consciousness and sensibility around practices of violence and discrimination that are deeply rooted in Colombian society.

The GMH also discussed where the funding for the research would come from and agreed that their intellectual and operative autonomy would be partly contingent on funders who would not tie funding to the editorial content of reports. Most of the funds for the reports came from international development agencies, guaranteeing the GMH's financial autonomy.[34] With the publication between 2009 and 2013 of 24 reports of emblematic and thematic cases and the general report, the GMH brought into the public sphere narratives about war which until then had not received any public or media attention.

Documenting and Constructing Plural Narratives

The construction of memory always has a place in political struggles as multiple memories compete for social recognition. The GMH therefore renounced any pretension of building a singular or unique truth and instead opted to build a memory that 'unifies' the voices of diverse social actors (armed actors, victims, social movements). This idea came from the consultation and negotiation processes carried out with communities and social groups. The consultations helped to determine what would make a case selected for documentation emblematic and gave clarity over the social groups, leaders and communities that should participate in the process to make it legitimate. The consultations also helped to define the type of local participation that should be carried out, be it in advisory capacities, participating in interviews and workshops or working as local researchers.

The GMH's research was carried out as the state recognized victims under the auspices of Law 975, a then unprecedented policy in Colombia's history. With respect to the positive aspects of this convergence, it is worth nothing that the links between researchers, research and social movements enriched the results of the investigations and also drew the academics out of their niches. They opted to write in a more accessible language, allowing the research to enter into public debates of national interest. For example, for the research for the four reports on women and war in the Caribbean coast, the GMH researchers had lengthy discussions on themes and methodology with civil society and women's organizations such as the Communications Collective of Montes de María, the women of Valle Encantado, the

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34 Among the agencies that contributed funds to various investigations was the Open Society Foundation, the Agencia de Cooperación Española, the Agencia Catalana de Cooperación al Desarrollo, US Institute of Peace, the Swiss Embassy, International Development Research Centre, UN Women, the UN Development Programme and the Ford Foundation.

Women's Association of Magdalena, the Maria Cano Corporation, the Colombian Women's Peace Initiative and regional universities such as the University of Magdalena and Sinú University. Through meetings, fieldwork and workshops with organization members, the team selected the emblematic cases and got to know the expectations of these organizations concerning the documentation of different repertoires of violence. Organizations also provided feedback on the proposed methodology and final recommendations. A similar process occurred for the report on the Bojayá massacre. The research team consulted black territorial entities like the Major Community Council of the Integral Peasant Association of the Atrato, social organizations like the May 2 Committee of internally displaced persons and the missionary groups that have accompanied communities and victims of the regions for several decades.

The register of emblematic cases of violence included documentation of the impacts and harms caused by violent events on communities, persons and their territories. This aspect of historical memory construction included victims as documentary sources and participants in the processes of characterizing these damages. This latter aspect accounted for the ways in which violence impacted people, their bodies and their social worlds according to their gender, age, ethnicity, social class, sexual identity, disability, residence or political affiliation. The participatory construction of the universe of damages caused by violence went beyond quantifying losses in terms of numbers of victims and physical destruction to also include less tangible impacts on people and their social, political and cultural environments.[35] The universe of tangible and intangible damages began to take shape in memory workshops and group interviews that allowed for an account of the emotional, psychological, moral, political and sociocultural damages caused by violence.[36]

Testimony and Reconstructing Historical Memory

To account for individual and collective memories of past traumatic events, and of their diverse interpretations and meanings, GMH's researchers relied on qualitative and interactive research methods as well as on fieldwork. The goal was to document memory initiatives and testimonies as living sources and to complement these with archival work, judicial document review and database consultation and development. Additionally, videos were filmed in which survivors gave testimony, and the memories of perpetrators and other actors with varying levels of complicity were also included.[37] The description of the various repertoires of violence, violent actors and patterns of victimization required a conceptualization of victims in which they are understood as subjects with rights, as citizens and political agents that respond and resist violence.

Viewing victims as subjects with agency implied designing a methodological strategy for the emblematic cases that sought to document both the patterns of violence and the responses of populations, including the ensemble of organized and daily forms of resistance. The GMH also discussed the complexities inherent to historical

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35   National Centre for Historical Memory, supra n 33.

36   Ibid.

37   See, Grupo de Memoria Histórica, supra n 5.

clarification of a more than five decades old conflict in which the civilian population has been the primary victim. The process of participatory historical memory reconstruction was inhibited by fears and apprehensions, given that research was done in the midst of war. Considering these points, the GMH accepted that the work of historical clarification should recognize the socially contested and controversial nature of truth. Narratives of historical memory should account for disagreements, contradictions and inconsistencies in what is remembered, and should include multiple voices.[38]

These principles and the methodology were applied in diverse ways in different cases. In the case of the massacre of El Salado, for example, the report was built from a review of voluminous judicial and penal records, allowing for the identification of victims and perpetrators. This work was subsequently enriched by victims' testimonies and visits to jails where perpetrators were interviewed. In the case of Bojayá, the methodological approach included the creation of a committee of experts, victims and regional leaders, including six local researchers. The team carried out 20 memory workshops in four municipalities. They also reviewed judicial records and human rights databases and interviewed civil servants involved in government reparations programmes, members of human rights organizations and churches, and leaders from social and international organizations. Fieldwork combined with access to local information and to ecclesiastical organizations allowed for a detailed reconstruction of the number and profile of victims.

The GMH also outlined a thematic line of inquiry that proposed to create a social cartography of nonofficial memory initiatives. The purpose was to document the actions of memory taken by numerous social groups in diverse regions of Colombia, to record what happened and the impact of violent events. The research on this repertoire of initiatives[39] tried to account for memory construction processes directed by civil society throughout the years, the different responses of populations to war and their resistance to armed groups' narratives about what took place. This step towards including victims' memories, from their repertoires of memory and their everyday actions of resistance, was integrated into the research on the emblematic cases and in the general report, which dedicates a section of a chapter to this theme.[40]

The individualization of victims was considered a cross-cutting research variable for all the investigative projects. The GMH decided to individualize victims so as to contribute to historical clarification and to victims' efforts to dignify their dead. This individualization was not about signalling individual culpability, something that, as noted, was not part of the GMH's mandate. Instead, the GMH identified who the victims were and named them, when possible, as a visual and textual strategy to recognize them as people, as social leaders, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters.

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38 Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, *Recordar y narrar el conflicto: Herramientas para reconstruir memoria histórica* (2013).
39 Grupo de Memoria Histórica, *Memorias en tiempo de Guerra: Repertorio de iniciativas* (2009).
40 Ibid. Also see, Grupo de Memoria Histórica, *San Carlos: Memorias del éxodo en la Guerra* (2011).

CRITICAL DILEMMAS IN CONSTRUCTING HISTORICAL MEMORY

The political, ethical and social authority and the knowledge gained by the GMH through recognizing that its mandate was intimately associated with tasks of truth telling and the restitution of identity and reparations for victims, in part explains the strength and impact of its activities. On the other hand, the GMH's intellectual and operative autonomy regarding the CNRR and the national government allowed it increased flexibility to consult and negotiate the terms of historical memory reconstruction with different social groups. This gave its work some legitimacy in the eyes of victims' movements, human rights organizations and broad sectors of Colombian society. However, it is precisely this location between an academic research milieu and a political moral milieu that explains the dilemmas that the GMH endured in its seven years of work.[41] These tensions were of an epistemological, political, ethical and operative nature and were clearly expressed in the implementation of what the GMH understood as the central thesis of its approach to constructing historical truth and contributing to the democratization of the country: the inclusion of victims' voices. We argue that the innovative intent behind including victims' memories in the historical memory account and the means of producing knowledge about the past were limited by state and institutional dynamics that sought to domesticate and instrumentalize these memories. In this section we discuss the inherent challenges of historical clarification and analyze how the process of including plural memories provoked tensions rooted in certain political and social dynamics. These dilemmas ended up weakening the construction of plural narrative threads from social memories. The discussion of these dilemmas provides a critical basis from which to examine the institutional, political and structural tensions and contradictions embedded in TJ mechanisms that seek to be victim centred while operating under the mandate of a law or power of government and/or international authorities.

The Dilemma of Reconstructing Historical Memory in the Midst of War

A general dilemma that historical memory work faces is the silencing of certain memory disputes or stories at the community level in order to avoid security problems, violence or stigmatization. Victims or some community members may choose to remain silent as a protection measure or for a host of other personal reasons. Entire groups of people may choose not to speak about some themes as they may reveal profound social fissures or local tensions. Memory initiatives operating beyond official commemorations often arise and are maintained despite threats and attempts to silence them by perpetrators and their allies. Perpetrators' narratives usually stigmatize victims, labelling them as 'traitors,' 'guerrillas' or 'collaborators' of the enemy. When memory reconstruction takes place in a context of ongoing violence, as was the case for the GMH, this dilemma is heightened by the climate of insecurity and threat present in direct and subtle ways, by the difficulties in assessing risks of truth-telling and testimonial-sharing activities, by the calls from victims and human rights

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41 The GMH completed its task in 2013 when the general report was submitted. By this time, Victims' Law 1448 had come into effect and the National Centre for Historical Memory had been created. Under Law 1448, the Centre was given the task of supporting the GMH to complete the general report and to disseminate it broadly.

organizations for truth and assignation of responsibilities and by the public recognition that the publication of a report on the case grants legitimacy to some local testimonies. An additional factor is the contentious coexistence in local communities of plural memories and political agendas that require a careful consideration of whose memories may have been privileged in documentation processes, as well as the impact of publicizing local memory disputes.

The insecurity and continual threats under which communities and victims were living for almost every case the GMH documented presented the researchers and communities with the dilemma of how to balance the need for truth to be told and the safety of those sharing their testimonies. For example, community members often feared the recurrence of violent events or the threat of new spates of violence. In these conditions, circulating or publicly declaring certain 'truths' and responsibilities could and did put people at risk. For example, in a few of the emblematic cases, ample discussion was given to whether to include testimonials that implicated politicians or local authorities as direct collaborators or that described how they were complicit in serious violations of human rights, particularly when several people had named them. In some cases the dilemma was related to the local power and presence these individuals still had, to the impunity they enjoyed and their ties with illegal armed groups, as well as to the difficulty of establishing the full spectrum of local collaborations and the fact that the majority of those giving testimony continued to live in the community. The fragile security situation, and the risks inherent in participating and offering testimony, posed additional challenges for the documentation of silenced memories and plural voices. In fact, various leaders and local research participants received threats, had to go into hiding or look for protection outside their place of residence in a different city, region or in some cases outside Colombia. All of these factors generated dilemmas around what testimonies could be included and published. The strategies adopted by the GMH for each case varied but, in general, decisions to include (or not) certain narratives were made after extensive consultations with local victims and groups, as well as with lawyers and experts about the potential implications of including certain testimonies and after several internal discussions in the GMH. Certainly, the reports published contain silences.

The Dilemma of Selecting and Framing Certain Voices and Excluding Others

Although emphasis was given within the framework of Law 975 to victims' rights to truth[42] and their participation in legal proceedings,[43] it did not provide for what kind of participation victims would have in the various investigations and the general report of the GMH. The GMH defined its mission as to 'produce an inclusive and unifying narrative, *in sync with victims' voices,* about the origin and evolution of the internal armed conflict in Colombia.'[44] To this end, the GMH opted for face-to-face contact with the victims of the selected cases. This was done in order to generate genuine processes of consultation and documentation so as to contribute innovative

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42   Law 975, art. 7.
43   Ibid., art. 51.
44   Taken from the 2008 research programme, GMH archive (emphasis added).

elements to the historical clarification of events and contexts in which these cases took place.

The GMH took into account the plurality of actors and movements that have characterized the Colombian conflict. Given this plurality, the team first broadly discussed the concepts and perspectives that should be used throughout the research. From this came a series of collective, constructed working theses. One, the central thesis, was to recognize how victims' voices had at that point only been given a marginal role in narratives about the armed conflict. The goal was to bring their voices to the narratives of historical memory. Other issues addressed were research strategies, the major research themes, the place victims' narratives would take in different reports, the need to implement a gender analysis and the collective authorship of reports.

The initial mistrust of some victims' organizations towards the work of the GMH had various causes. Victims' social movements, particularly the Movement of Victims of State Crimes, were critical of both the Justice and Peace Law and the Colombian state's refusal to recognize its responsibility in the conflict. These organizations and other regional ones also questioned how victims' testimonies would be used, what type of recognition they would receive and whether there would be any kind of government censorship or intervention in the report. In an effort to build trust, GMH members worked with different victims' associations and generated spaces for discussing who should be included, the methodology, the initial findings and the dissemination of the reports. The criteria used to establish who would be considered victims and what voices to include were applied differently in each case. For example, in the first documented case, the Trujillo massacre, the Association of Family Members of Victims of Trujillo helped facilitate the GMH's work. The voices of victims that had more presence in the report were those of the members of the victims' organization. In other cases, such as the El Salado massacre, there was no recognized victims' collective, and researchers worked through individual contacts such as community leaders and a women's group to collect testimonies and advance consultations on content and recommendations.

The centrality of victims in the work of the GMH was, in large part, a response to a sociopolitical context in which strong national, regional and local victims' and rights groups demanded respect for their rights and publicly denounced abuses. The approach of the GMH to the issue of participation and inclusion of victims' voices was influenced by generalized human rights rhetoric. The centrality of the relation between victimization and activism in the GMH's work operated in a tension between a focus on victims as a plural and heterogeneous group and a 'politically correct' position that tended to work from a homogeneous and idealized notion of 'victim.' These two political and institutional dynamics influenced the reports in that the writers struggled and sometimes abstained from discussing issues like disagreements within communities about the causes or dynamics surrounding violent events, memory disputes or issues like the complicity or various degrees of collaboration of community members with armed groups.

But the GMH also approached this issue as an epistemological problem and sought to engage in a different form of knowledge production. Specifically, the GMH assumed that historical memory research implied a dilemma between memory,

as living and plural narrative, and history, with its pretensions to document events through a common narrative.[45] By deciding to build historical memory narratives that integrated plural memories about war, the GMH understood that the reconstruction should also include the traces and meanings of these events. Therefore, those who lived through the war were considered producers of narratives, histories and interpretations of the past.

The circumstances and limitations of the GMH's mission resulted in the privileging of access and contact with organized victims' groups at a local level and national associations and spokespeople that had some profile in public and political spheres. The victims with whom the GMH worked were mostly members of victims' organizations that work from a human rights platform and that are influenced by a humanitarian discourse. This has specific implications for the narrative thread that organized each report and how the idea of working from a different way to produce knowledge was advanced in each case. The GMH questioned the implications of privileging the accounts of these mediators, who generally were also leading memory initiatives, and the risk that their narratives and explanations would dominate workshops and testimonial spaces. Nevertheless, time constraints and the critical questioning of the work of the GMH posed by victims' and human rights organizations that were 'closest' to the group often defined the dialogic horizon of the reports.

The majority of the reports were not able to account for the heterogeneity of local voices and memories, or to capture the diverse and differentiated nature of memories of community members that were not a part of these organizations and/or discourses. Efforts were made in the report about the massacre of over 60 people in the community of El Salado to document silences in the victims' memory and the local tensions they suggested. The report of the massacre of six Wayuu indigenous members, four of them women, in Bahía Portete, documented the testimony and memory claims of the daughter of a local indigenous man who collaborated with the paramilitary in the execution of the massacre. But in general, the reports did not analyze in-depth the different and contested memories within groups and communities. As noted by Naomi Roht-Arriaza and Javier Mariezcurrena,[46] the risk of homogenizing victims into an emotional and political community is one of the weaknesses characterizing TJ processes, given the hegemony of human rights discourses and certain implicit hierarchies of victims. The work of the GMH was not able to avoid these kinds of tensions.

A tension related to this dilemma of homogenizing victims' voices is that the ways memories and testimonies were included in each emblematic case also depended on the perspectives, investigative methods, academic background and political horizons of each researcher. Although the group established certain guidelines to understand 'victims' as subjects of rights, working from the principle that their voices were central to accounts of historical memory and that victims' recommendations be included in the reports, certain discourses and ways of understanding the production of history implicitly legitimated the inclusion or exclusion of certain victims or social

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45 Gónzalo Sánchez, *Guerras, memoria e historia* (Medellín: La Carreta, 2006).
46 Roht-Arriaza and Mariezcurrena, supra n 18.

groups.[47] That investigative work should allow for 'memory to become the central axis of the narrative proposed to the public' was one perspective adopted by some of the GMH researchers.[48] However, not everyone in the GMH believed in or made the effort to incorporate this perspective and it is evident that a division existed between those who privileged community consultation, the incorporation of local researchers and the pluralization of memories, and those who worked in the more traditional academic sense of documenting violent events and their patterns, building interpretations and hypotheses about the war and articulating a narrative account in which the voice of the researcher or expert is central.

This difference evidences how the strategy to use memory as a substantive lens in the task of historical clarification was only partially developed within the GMH.[49] In some cases, the testimonies of victims or other civil society actors entered into the text but only as support for the researchers' narrative. In others, testimonies occupied an important space within the reports but the analysis did not consider their narrative or interpretive weight. The general report illustrates the difficulties the GMH had in integrating memory as a cross-cutting lens, and the marginal nature or supporting role in which victims' testimonies appear in the chapters looking at the causes and contexts of the war in a more global sense. Victims' testimonies and their analysis and interpretations of the war were only central in two chapters on damages/losses and memory. In sum, the GMH had difficulty articulating a narrative and unifying thread of victims' memories with respect to the construction of plurivocal accounts that focus less on the authority of the researcher.

The Dilemma of Institutional Embedding versus Legitimation of an Official Victims' Discourse

In several texts, the GMH underlined that victims are social and political agents with rights, but that they make up a heterogeneous universe both in their sociodemographic composition and in the way they identify or name themselves.[50] The GMH emphasized the diverse ways in which people recognize themselves as victim subjects, the rejection of this category by some survivors and the need to recognize and legitimate those who have suffered the impacts of war, including those who are critical of the term 'victim' or its association with a specific event (such as a massacre) rather than with a historical trajectory or an oppressive regime (e.g., colonization or slavery).

Nevertheless, the large impact and massive diffusion of the GMH's written and visual products and investigative work ended up facilitating the instauration of an institutionalized discourse concerning victims, and a certain kind of moral entitlement for those who use this discourse. It is precisely in this period (the second half of the 2000s) that the social discourse around victimization in Colombia acquired a narrative capital of empathy and social and political legitimacy for diverse actors such as the media, state institutions, private foundations, human rights organizations,

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47   Jaramillo-Marín, supra n 8.
48   National Centre for Historical Memory, supra n 33 at 54.
49   See, ibid., chap. 5.
50   Ibid.

artists and business sectors.[51] Undoubtedly, the interest and positive media and institutional response to the reports of the GMH played a role in this shift.

For the first time in the history of the national conflict, the media and private foundations such as *Fundación Semana* appropriated a humanitarian and social enterprise discourse to initiate campaigns 'for' victims of the armed conflict. The first of these campaigns was with the launch of the second GMH report on the massacre of El Salado. The campaign, broadcast on national television and disseminated via the press and radio, invited the private sector and citizens to buy and wear bracelets and postcards for the 'great campaign' of reconstructing the town.[52] These kinds of campaigns gave donors, generally upper-class people and private-sector businesses, the moral satisfaction of having 'helped' victims of war as they capitalized on images of the victim associated with suffering, innocence and distance (someone who lives in a rural, remote and poor town). Over time, the campaign became associated with peace and reconciliation projects and donors were considered to be contributing to the 'reconciliation' of El Salado. In this way, the narrative capital and the mediatic discourse concerning victims was converted into a political capital that erased and depoliticized the ways in which the people who had lived through the violence had taken up social struggles for truth and justice, and their stories of political and everyday resistance to the war.

During this same period, in order to qualify for the judicial benefits of the Justice and Peace Law, commanders and mid-level paramilitaries of the AUC began to narrate their *versiones libres* concerning the violence they were responsible for. The demobilized commanders consistently emphasized that their purpose in confessing the truth was for the victims themselves, a procedure that gave judicial and narrative capital to perpetrators. Most AUC commanders articulated a confessional discourse in which they expressed that they were telling 'the truth' as a reconciliation gesture to the victims – as scripted by the requirements of the Justice and Peace Law process. They were required to address the victims with respect and to ask them for forgiveness in order to benefit from the Law's alternative punishments scheme. Paramilitaries like Edward Cobos Téllez (whose *nom de guerre* was 'Diego Vecino') and Uber Banquéz ('Juancho Dique') were among those who repeated their 'commitment' to the victims, in TJ scenarios and in their public communications and declarations to the media.[53] Cobos' words in a 2014 interview captured the emotional narrative that came to characterize perpetrators' discourse on victims: 'I feel in my heart the pain of each victim . . . this infinite pain . . . that challenges us who have been victimizers.'[54] Éver Veloza García, alias HH, repeatedly framed his declarations

51   Theidon, supra n 20 at 455.
52   See, 'Presentan campaña para ayudar a víctimas de la masacre El Salado,' *WRadio*, 3 September 2009, http://www.wradio.com.co/noticias/actualidad/presentan-campana-para-ayudar-a-victimas-de-la-masa cre-el-salado/20090903/nota/872661.aspx (accessed 22 November 2015).
53   See, 'Los ex paramilitares Mancuso y Diego Vecino piden estar en La Habana,' *Las2Orillas*, 29 August 2014, http://www.las2orillas.co/los-ex-paramilitares-mancuso-y-diego-vecino-piden-estar-en-la-habana/ (accessed 22 November 2015).
54   See, 'La apuesta de "Diego Vecino" por la paz,' *Reconciliémonos Colombia*, http://www.reconciliemonosco lombia.com/2014/09/la-apuesta-de-diego-vecino-por-la-paz.html (accessed 22 November 2015).

during his voluntary deposition as moral and generous acts of truth telling for the victims:

> I express my commitment to the victims to make every effort to attempt that in this process of the Bananero and Calima Blocs [the units under his command] truth for the victims will prevail.[55]

Lastly, state institutions charged with implementing TJ measures or responsible for addressing problems such as forced displacement, organized, justified and described their work with slogans evoking solidarity with victims. Web pages, t-shirts, letterheads and other objects were decorated with institutional messages about their option 'for' victims. The work and programmes of these institutions therefore also acquired a narrative capital and the notion of 'victim' became associated with humanitarian aid, welfarism and vertical solidarity. Although the GMH reports emphasized and extensively documented community members' and victims' capacity for political action through organized and daily responses and political resistance, the image of the victim appropriated by institutional discourses ignored this other way to speak and name victimhood. It is precisely in the everyday institutional operation and in the interactions between victims and the institutions responsible for reparation and/or truth telling, that the silencing of the plural voices and political resistance of those who have been affected by the armed conflict tend to operate.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The work of the GMH was decisive in the creation of new narrative threads about conflict in Colombia. On the one hand, it inaugurated a new way of carrying out research on violence and on forms of collective resistance, incorporating the voices of victims. On the other hand, the GMH implemented group research methods whose collective authorship required extensive discussions and agreements between the members of the group. The academic trajectory of the researchers, GMH members' sensitivity towards working with communities and the political sensibilities of others influenced the content and images of the conflict contained in the reports.[56] The highest reception of the reports has come from the very communities that were studied by the GMH, various national and regional universities that have organized forums and seminars on the conflict and some schools and education centres.

The GMH's research exemplifies the merits and dilemmas facing historical memory work that seeks to be inclusive of the voices of the victims in the midst of war. The dilemmas discussed illustrate some of the critical quandaries common to TJ processes regarding institutional priorities and restricted notions of victimhood. In addition, they highlight the structural and embedded nature of these dilemmas and interrogate the very idea of a victim-centred TJ process of truth telling. The dependence of the institutional process on having the voice of victims to legitimate the

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55   Voluntary deposition of Éver Veloza García to the Office of the Attorney of the Justice and Peace Unit, Medellín, 7 November 2007.
56   Jaramillo-Marín, supra n 8.

process itself risks objectifying victims as a 'resource' and, as we have argued, domesticating their memories into a depoliticized notion of victimhood.

Several conceptual and practical implications arise from recognition of the dilemmas posed by reconstructing historical memory in TJ processes. The dilemmas discussed are to a great extent intrinsic to the processes developed under an institutional framework, particularly but not exclusively to those led by the state. Such dilemmas require further problematization of the concept of 'victim' and the ways in which it can easily become a discourse that grants legitimacy to state, business, nongovernmental organizations and perpetrators as peacemakers or facilitators of reconciliation. The Colombian experience shows that this discourse easily turns into a narrative trope to justify institutionally led interventions and programmes. When the state leads the dialogue with victims, they may end up, one way or another, serving state interests as far as legitimacy is concerned. But when that same state is the administrator of repairs, and does so in the context of poverty and inequality, the victims may interpret it or be forced to see it as a gesture of state benevolence, consequently 'forgetting' that it is the duty and responsibility of state institutions to repair and compensate serious violations of human rights.

Throughout this article we showed ways in which the format and the institutional mechanisms that characterize processes that document the historical memory of war tend to homogenize the notion of victim, and struggle to allow or communicate plural narratives that acknowledge memory disputes and dissenting voices. Despite the instrumentalizing and domesticating effects that the GMH's work had on several victims' groups, the task of incorporating their voices into narratives about the conflict is a practice that should be strengthened, not abandoned, if Colombia truly wants to overcome the chronic polarization and discrimination that has characterized its history. The question on how to incorporate dissenting voices and local silences remains to be explored, but it particularly calls for recognition and support of diverse nongovernmental, grassroots and local initiatives of memory reconstruction that are independent and autonomous.

As of October 2015, the peace talks in Havana between the government of President Santos and the FARC had reached significant agreements in matters of land, victims and justice. The negotiating teams announced the creation of a truth commission, which will begin its work once a peace accord is signed in 2016. The research conducted by the GMH, and its purpose of articulating unifying and plural narratives, will be useful for future truth commissions or other processes of historical clarification because it illustrates in detail, and comprehensively, practices and crimes perpetrated by various actors in the conflict and incorporates victims' voices in the narrative.