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de Waardt, M.F.

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SUMMARY

This study explores transitional justice practices in the aftermath of the internal armed conflict (1980-2000) in Peru. An attempt is made to move beyond the national level of the state and intermediate level of development and human rights organizations (NGOs) by taking organized victim-survivors' objectives, claims, actions, successes and failures as the starting point for analyzing social reconstruction. The study reveals actual ideas and needs of organized victim-survivors, their experiences with transitional justice mechanisms, and their views and expectations vis-à-vis such mechanisms. This study also gives insight in the effects of the wider politics of aid and the political economy of development cooperation on local civil society groups that strive for the implementation of transitional justice measures in post-conflict societies.

Data were gathered by means of participant observation and structured open-ended interviews. The fieldwork lasted 20 months and was conducted in different places during six different periods, beginning in 2008 and ending in 2013. For 10 months, I participated on a daily basis in a wide variety of activities that were organized or attended by members of three victim-survivor associations. In Lima, I focused on *Reflexión*, an association of persons who had been unjustly incarcerated and accused of terrorism; in Ayacucho on ANFASEP, an association of relatives of persons who had been kidnapped and were never accounted for; and in Huancaayo on ARDCP, an association of internal refugees. I conducted structured interviews with two types of respondents. One group comprised 61 victim-survivors who were members of three associations and another group of 35 employees of NGOs and governmental organizations that belonged to the networks of the three associations. Furthermore, various informal interviews were conducted with leaders of other victim-survivors associations and local and foreign experts of the Peruvian conflict and the social reconstruction process.

The thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter discusses the contextual, theoretical, and methodological foundations of this research. It provides a short overview of Peru's internal armed conflict, and a first glimpse of Peruvian victim-survivor associations. It demonstrates that the country's structural social inequality, which is based on ethnicity, class and gender and that has dominated Peruvian society during most of its history, was reflected in the backgrounds of the people who fell victim to the violence. I argue that a basic understanding of social, cultural, economic and ethnic cleavages is important for studying organized victim-survivors in post-conflict Peruvian society. The chapter also reflects on current theories on post-conflict reconstruction. "Transitional justice" has become the global standard for characterizing a nation's approach to legacies of human rights abuses during violent conflicts or repressive regimes. I demonstrate how, despite the fact that it has become a global standard, until recently multi-level understandings of transitional justice were not typically part of the approach employed by investigators of the phenomenon. I propose to explore the actual and potential role of grassroots victim activism in post-conflict

Peru in expanding a multi-level understanding and actor-oriented approach to transitional justice.

In addition, I suggest that three central processes derived from social movement studies enable to analyze grassroots victim activism. These processes are: 1.) framing, and its attendant processes of vernacularization of global discourses; 2.) external and internal modes of identification; and 3.) the political, economic and sociocultural opportunity structures that either facilitate or inhibit these three processes. In the chapter, I also reflect on how my own prior experiences have exerted a considerable influence on the focus of this research. These previous experiences influenced the choice of actors for this research, but also my choice to directly approach organized victim-survivors, instead of contacting them through NGOs or experts of the Peruvian conflict and the social reconstruction process.

The second chapter contextualizes the controversy in Peru vis-à-vis human rights by identifying the political, economic and sociohistorical conditions before, during and after the armed conflict. I argue that a chronological analysis of these conditions is important for enhancing the understanding of the possibilities and limits of Peruvian civil society organizations today to raise awareness regarding human rights violations. I demonstrate that tensions arose between NGOs and successive Peruvian governments for two important reasons: First in the 1980s, mainly because of competition between them (i.e., because NGOs rather than the government were recipients of donor subsidies) and— beginning around the second half of the same decade— because NGOs confronted the government with incontrovertible evidence of human rights violations of various kinds. Transnational linkages have therefore been indispensable for the survival of domestic organizations. However, this situation also made NGOs heavily reliant on international funds. This second chapter also reflects on the pejorative connotation that the term “human rights” holds for so many Peruvians. Protesters asserting their rights are seen by some powerful actors as subversive forces threatening the economic development and the sociopolitical integrity of the nation. I conclude that meaningfully engaging in a debate about human rights in Peru would necessarily involve accepting that certain groups ran a higher risk than others of falling victim to violence.

Chapter 3 identifies the opportunities and constraints characteristic of the context under which *Reflexión*, ANFASEP and ARDCP conduct their activities in Lima, Ayacucho and Huancayo. Here, I argue that two entities are indispensable for understanding the conditions that facilitate and constrain the functioning of these associations, and their repertoires of contention: 1.) their interdependent relationships with the NGO sector; 2.) the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The NGOs and the TRC familiarized victim-survivor associations with issues that were high on the national political and international donor agendas, and with the terms in which they needed to frame their experiences in line with those priorities. However, the comparison of the types of activities that were organized for victim-survivor associations also shows that it was never the objective of NGOs or the TRC to advance the general agendas of *Reflexión*, ANFASEP and ARDCP, nor their institutional independence.

A clear-cut definition of the term “victim” is difficult to give. Chapter 4 examines how semantic uses of victimhood are constructed on a daily basis. I argue that

different notions of victimhood emerge, get appropriated, contested, adapted and neglected by actors at different social and power hierarchy levels of networks. The chapter shows that notions of victimhood emerged in part as the result of externally imposed definitions. The conceptualization of victimhood arose in response to the international and national legal obligation to recognize specific rights of certain people on the basis of their particular experiences. It also emerged because national and international humanitarian organizations needed to define “victims” as target-groups in order to organize aid operations that were meant to protect victimized populations. Subsequently, I demonstrate that these external modes of identification of Peruvian victim-survivors influence the self-labelling processes and the collective action strategies of organized victim-survivors during and after Peru’s internal armed conflict. I suggest that the uses of the notion of victimhood influence both the degree to which victim-survivors will receive legal, political and social recognition, as well as the wider society’s acceptance of them as victim-survivors who are able to identify and advocate their own interests.

Chapter 5 looks at how actors represent victimhood for strategic purposes in their relationships among one another and with outsiders. “Representation” can be taken to have two meanings here: the depiction of victimhood and victim-survivors in a certain way in their mutual and external relationships, and also acting on behalf of victim-survivors. Here, I argue that four development cooperation components challenge the interdependent relationships between victim-survivor associations and NGOs: agenda-setting processes; traditions of paternalism; asymmetrical partnerships; and sociogeographical distribution of development intervention. Chapter 5 also demonstrates that finding a unitary representation of victim-survivors among organized victim-survivors is also contentious, and that such a representation is complicated by three factors: the centralistic nature of Peru; generational issues (related to the different ages of the members and different years of existence of their organizations) within and among associations; and organizing in accordance with victim categories. In addition, I point out that there currently is no natural affinity among organizations that share objectives within Peru’s transitional justice context. Relationships among associations of victim-survivors, between victim-survivor associations and NGOs, and among different NGOs are rather fragmented. I show that this is the result of these organizations being embedded in various dependent relationships that reinforce boundaries among organizations.

The sixth chapter highlights the implications of the judicial and political proceedings of the promised transitional justice mechanism of reparations for those who have experienced human rights violations. I show that victim-survivors’ call for reparations is prompted by moral and political motivations, which are rooted in both pre-conflict and post-conflict experiences of individuals and victim-survivor associations. I argue that it is impossible to hold a meaningful discussion about the needs of victim-survivors, their political and private claims, or appropriate transitional justice mechanisms without reference to the social, economic and political situation of victim-survivors in the country where they live.

The last chapter focuses on my findings in relation to what they contribute to current theories on transitional justice. I suggest that transitional justice studies cannot embark on a more multi-level and actor oriented approach without considering the

ways that organized victim-survivors, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations, make sense of victim-survivor associations and their capacities, and also victim-survivors' framing of priorities for transitional justice. These matters are far from self-evident. They are the result of complex interactions with structural social, spatial and economic conditions as well as conditions related to domestic politics and international development cooperation. Contextualization of transitional justice practices is crucial to understanding both the underlying assumptions of such practices, and to identifying the specific social, legal and political strategies of different stakeholders that might encourage the transition. This thesis has shown that the role of victim-survivor associations will be a fundamental condition for such contextualization in future research on transitional justice processes.