

MEMORY AND LANDSCAPE: REPRODUCING REGIMES OF TRUTH IN
GUATEMALA CITY

by

CHRISTIAN LELAND PETTERSEN

(Under the Direction of Amy J. Ross)

ABSTRACT

1996 marked the putative end of Guatemala's 36-year internal armed conflict. During the conflict, an estimated 45,000 persons were detained-disappeared, 200,000 killed, and over 1,000,000 persons were forcibly displaced. Today "sites of memory," or places of commemoration that link the past and the present, are beginning to appear around Guatemala. The sites are an attempt to come to terms with Guatemala's past. Using a series of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis guideposts on the landscape, I analyze three sites of memory in Guatemala City: a series of posters by the activist group H.I.J.O.S., the Guatemalan army's military museum, and the new *Casa de la Memoria* ("House of Memory"). I show that while sites of memory as a political project *against* history may purport to provide alternative versions of the past, that they may be reproducing particular ways of knowing that are linked to instances of power, and the status of "truth".

INDEX WORDS: politics of memory, representation, Foucauldian Discourse
Analysis, internal armed conflict, post-conflict, Guatemala

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DEDICATION

A tod@s l@s guatemaltec@s que perdieron sus vidas durante el conflicto armado interno guatemalteco y para l@s que sueñan y tienen esperanza en un futuro mejor.

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Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“De vez en cuando camino al revés, es mi modo de recordar. Si caminara sólo hacia delante, te podría contar cómo es el olvido.”

“Sometimes I walk backwards, it is my way of remembering. If I were only to walk forward, I could tell you about forgetting.”

-Humberto Ak’abal, as cited at the *Casa de la Memoria*, Zone 1, Guatemala City.

In recent years, there seems to have been a memory “boom” (Winter 2006). This “boom” almost exclusively uses the mantra of “*nunca más*” or “never again,” to make claims against the state that mass-executions, tortures, and forced disappearances by military regimes of the 70s and 80s must “never again” occur. The “boom” is evident in myriad forms, from the visual: museums, monuments, memorials and counter-memorials (defined below), to the judicial, which includes trials for former military generals. In Guatemala, a country that only recently ended a 36-year internal armed conflict and years of military rule, places of memory are slowly beginning to appear on the landscape. One of the places within Guatemala where sites of memory are most evident is Zone 1 of Guatemala City, the political hub of Guatemala.

In this thesis, I draw from fieldwork to make two main points. I show that particular representations of the past that sites of memory present as ‘true’ often flatten

ways of knowing about the past, obscuring the scope and dynamism of particular groups and individuals' political participation in a set of material conditions. I propose that discourse analysis on the landscape allows researchers to question common-sense assumptions of the 'truth' of the past, to *denaturalize* those assumptions, and to understand 'truth' as attached to specific effects of power.

As a case study, Zone 1 provides limitless possibilities for engaging with discourse analysis, and for understanding the politics of place making. Posters with headshots of persons disappeared during Guatemala's internal armed conflict are scattered throughout the Zone, which is approximately 21 blocks by 21 blocks. The posters ask: "Where are they? 45,000 detained-disappeared persons" and line several of the streets around the Presidential Palace. Some of the posters refute a narrative by the current president of Guatemala, Otto Pérez Molina, that in Guatemala "*no hubo genocidio*" or "there was not genocide," (Castillo 2012) by claiming that certain individuals were "victims of genocide" (my translation, from personal database of poster messages). Zone 1 is home to the new *Casa de la Memoria*, literally "house of memory," which presents *ladino* violence against a large indigenous population, as well as [military] brutality against indigenous persons during the internal armed conflict. Several blocks from the *casa*, is the *Museo Militar*, the Military Museum, in which the Guatemalan Army, in what it professes to be the only museum dedicated to the internal armed conflict¹ presents the 'threat' of the indigenous person to the state, and how the state, as part of its defense, protected itself against indigenous guerrilla insurgents. From its position above the city, the museum overlooks much of Zone 1, one of the city's

¹ Notes from guided tour of the *Museo Militar* during summer fieldwork.

largest markets, and a large sculpture of two hands holding a dove: the *Monumento a la Paz* or Monument for Peace.

The sites of memory are part of intense debates in Guatemala around meanings of the violence (*see, for example:* Oglesby 2007). In 1999, the Commission for Historical Clarification reported an estimated 45,000 detained-disappeared persons, and an estimated 200,000 persons killed during the Guatemalan internal armed conflict. The Commission estimated that 83% of victims were Mayan indigenous, and that an estimated 93% of crimes of the conflict were conducted by state forces (Comision para el Esclarecimiento Historico 1999b, 25). The Commission determined that certain acts of violence against the “primarily Mayan [indigenous] civil population” in the Maya Ixil region (in the municipalities of San Juan Cotzal, Santa Maria Nebaj, and San Gaspar Chapul, Quiché), Maya Achi region (in the municipality of Rabinal, Baja Verapaz), in the K’iche’ region (in the municipality of Zacualpa, K’iche’), and the Chuj and Q’anjob’al areas (in the municipalities of Nentón, San Mateo Ixtatán and Barillas, Huehuetenango), between the years of 1981 and 1983, constituted acts of genocide (CALDH 2015b). My own understanding of the sites is also influenced by news reports that show the current president refuting claims of genocide during the internal armed conflict, and by a trial of former general and head of state Efraín Ríos Montt for crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Interest and participation in struggles concerning the meaning of the violence of the past seems to be growing. The Day of the Army, June 30th, has, since 2008, been pushed off the streets of Zone 1 by the social movement known as The Day of Memory, in which social activists and families of Guatemala’s disappeared march along the streets

of Zone 1 holding large banners with printed portraits of their family members who were forcibly taken by the army during the conflict (Ramos 2014). 2014 marked the first year of a new event, the *Jornadas de la Memoria* or “Days of Memory” which is a collaboration of scholars and activists in Guatemala holding commemorative events to the victims of the conflict. The *Jornadas* meets in Zone 1. Recent films, including *The Burden of Peace* (2015) and *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* (2011), are other examples of the turn to memory in Guatemala, that highlight the active struggle for justice in Guatemala’s social and political landscape.

In an effort to understand these diverse efforts to commemorate, and following a call by Steinberg and Taylor (2003) for increased research on Guatemala’s “post-conflict landscape,” I began research for this thesis. With support from the Tinker Foundation and the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Institute at the University of Georgia, I traveled to Guatemala City from May to July 2014, to learn from and observe museum creators and docents, conduct archival research, and to analyze different sites of memory in Zone 1.

Locating my work at the nexus of memory studies (see, for example: Kaplan 2007, Halbwachs 1992, Calveiro 2006), literature on landscapes of memory (*see, for example:* Inwood and Martin 2008, Till 2005), and urban geography (*see, for example:* Holloway 2000, Lefebvre 1974 [1991]), I am interested in the way “memory,” and in particular “memory” as a political alternative to “history” appears on the landscape. While I find the term “memory” troublesome, I value it for 1) creating a link between my work and memory studies literature, and 2) understanding memory as Pierre Nora (1989) does: “a bond tying us to the eternal present,” that takes some element of the past and

represents it in the present. Accordingly, I use the term “site of memory” carefully. I do not wish to reify a binary between “memory” as a subjective representation of reality and “history” as a ‘true’ truth, an absolute truth. Instead, I consider that all places that take the past and *represent* it in the present, including museums, monuments, memorials, and other places of commemoration, to be sites of memory.

When I began my research, I wanted to know how places of memory in Zone 1 formed narratives about the past. I was especially interested in how impressions of “culpability” and “victimization” might, or might not, appear in these sites of memory. While working in Guatemala, my research objectives evolved. I recognized that violence on the landscape was complex, and that places presented different messages that did not necessarily form cohesive narratives. I began to see sites of memory as constructing social actors in myriad ways. The ways these constructions occurred reflected politics, or ways of naturalizing or problematizing particular ways of knowing about the past.

I began to understand the ways sites of memory present groups and individuals to be *discourses*. As Marianne Jorgensen and Louise Phillips write (2002): “discourse... is a particular way of talking about, and understanding the world.” In this thesis, as a way of analyzing particular “understanding[s] of the world” I use Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. FDA differs from discourse analysis in that it does not “investigate a linguistic unit per-se,” and instead examines the underlying power relationships behind text, and the production of text (Wodak 2009). FDA is a way of *denaturalizing* common-sense assumptions about texts. Following Fairclough (1989), it encourages analysts to consider the social conditions of production and interpretation both when the text was produced, and in the moment of its presentation.

Discourse Analysis, including FDA, is typically used with written texts. My understanding of sites of memory is that they combine text, image, sight and sound to present a particular story or set of stories about violence. Jiau Wang (2014) suggests expanding the scope of Discourse Analysis by applying it to *multimodal studies* of discourse, studies that understand discourse as formed by text and visuals. Adapting Wang's work, I suggest that by enrolling a series of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis questions to a multimodal study of the landscape allows scholars to denaturalize the social phenomena behind the creation of particular sites of memory, and to understand the messages sites of memory present to be reflected in both the images and text they present.

In my research, I found that the different sites in Zone 1 constructed and presented groups and individuals as social actors, with diverse and sometimes contradictory politics ascribed to them. I found that even when the stated objective of the site, or group presenting the site, was to subvert "history," that in many cases they reproduced particular ways of knowing about the past. In Chapter 5, I show that discourse analysis on the landscape provides political opening for understanding the processes by which social landscapes are produced, reproduced, and contested. I show that discourse analysis, and in particular Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, helps to complicate the stories sites of memory present, and helps to highlight the social conditions of memory production.

In this thesis, I am receptive to Maxwell's (2013) and Whittemore's (2001) post-positivist critique that researchers locate themselves within the research process, and to

the call by discourse analysts Norman Fairclough (1989) and James Paul Gee (2010) to recognize how positionality influences the research process. I locate myself as a young scholar with access to particular sets of theoretical frameworks, and ways of understanding the world. I have experience living and working in Guatemala. I recently completed my 7th trip to Guatemala City. My perspective on Guatemala's past is based largely on a political commitment to understand groups and individuals as dynamic, as not operating within a 'perpetrator-victim' binary, but at once involved in myriad and complex political, economic, and social structures.

My objective in this thesis is twofold: 1) to move against a "truth" of the past, and instead understand the politics behind particular representations of a set of material conditions, and 2) to show how, by reflecting on a particular methodology and understanding of the past, researchers can "read" the way sites of memory present social actors on the landscape and understand the constituent conditions by which sites of memory are produced, reproduced, and contested. I look to how representations of social actors are a way for sites of memory to naturalize or problematize the past. I understand the diverse ways sites of memory frame their relationship to a set of material conditions to be reflected in the ways they present particular groups and individuals, and how sites often present those groups and individuals along a highly porous, socially-constructed political continuum of 'good' and 'bad'.

I ask: **1) How do places of commemoration define their relationship to the past?** and **2) What are the complex politics of these relationships?**

This thesis is organized in six chapters. In Chapter 2, I use the Commission for Historical Clarification's report *Memory of Silence* (1999) to describe Guatemala's historical relations of power and inequality. I use the Commission's report to demonstrate that the Guatemalan internal armed conflict was complex, and to suggest that the analysis they provide creates an opening for political possibility. In Chapter 3, I contextualize my evolved understanding of the sites of memory in Zone 1 by synthesizing literature on memory studies, the production of urban space, and landscapes as text. I propose that sites of memory enroll politics to present diverse and sometimes contradictory framings of particular social actors' relationship to the past. In Chapter 4, I explain the methods I used to gather and synthesize information at three sites of memory in Guatemala City. In Chapter 5, I analyze three sites of memory in Guatemala City's Zone 1, the center of Guatemala's political activity. In the conclusion, Chapter 6, I argue that discourse analysis allows us to see "history" and "memory" as emerging from the politics of truth making, where deliberate presences and absences are attached to specific effects of power.

CHAPTER 2

GENEALOGY

To write about the history of Guatemala is a difficult task. The purpose of this thesis is to critique the notion of “truth” and “reality” about the past; if my objective is to complicate something called “history,” then calling this section a “history of Guatemala” seems counterproductive. The approach I propose instead is one that Foucault suggests, among other works, in *Security, Territory, Population* (1978 [2007]) and in *Discipline and Punish* (1979): genealogy. Genealogy is a history of the present, rather than an history of the past. To Foucault, genealogy is a tool used to deconstruct the relations of power inscribed in present social conditions, and is a way of *denaturalizing* places and events that seem commonplace or taken for granted. This approach has been present in other historical work about Guatemala (*see, for example:* Grandin 2004, Weld 2014), and has provided insight into social conditions of inequality. Since my objective in this thesis is to highlight the social tensions surrounding “history” and “memory” and to demonstrate how, as I discovered in my fieldwork, those tensions are linked to questions of power, I find genealogy to be a useful approach.

Consider the milieu of Zone 1, Guatemala City. The new *Casa de la Memoria* presents military brutality against Mayan indigenous persons during the internal armed conflict. Several blocks away, the *Museo Militar* presents how the state, as part of its *defense*, protected itself against indigenous guerrilla insurgents. What are the

relationships of power that underlie the formation of these sites of memory, and that frame a history of the present? How can understanding particular moments of power in Guatemala's past influence the ways we interpret sites of memory in Guatemala City?

In Guatemala, as in other places around the world, history, and the effects of power attached to something called 'history' are the subject of intense debate (*see, for example: Oglesby and Ross 2009*). These debates intensified in 1999 with the publication of the Commission for Historical Clarification's report: *Memoria del Silencio* or *Memory of Silence*.

The Commission for Historical Clarification was a project of years of negotiations. In June 1994, an accord was signed in Oslo, Norway that mandated the creation of a "Commission for the Historical Clarification of Human Rights Violations and Other Acts of Violence that Have Caused the Suffering of the Guatemalan People." The accord was part of the Guatemalan peace process, which was designed to negotiate the issue of accountability for human rights violations. Shortly after the conclusion of the Guatemalan peace process on December 29, 1996, three commissioners were chosen to make up the Commission for Historical Clarification. The commission was comprised of Christian Tomuschat, a German law professor, and two Guatemalans, Edgar Alfredo Balsells Tojo, a former Constitutional Court Judge, and Otilia Lux de Cotí, "an indigenous teacher, considered a political moderate, but active within the Mayan movement" (Ross 2006, 76). The United Nations was responsible for overseeing the establishment of the Commission's 15 field offices, staff hires, and research methodology. During its peak, the Commission employed over 250 persons, divided almost evenly between Guatemalans and international personnel (*ibid*). Between

September 1997 and February 1998, the Commission collected over 8000 testimonies. On February 25, 1999, the Commission presented its 3500-page report, declaring that particular instances of violence between 1981 and 1983 against certain indigenous groups in the Maya Ixil, Maya Achi, K'iche', and Chuj and Q'anjob'al regions, had constituted acts of genocide.

Perhaps part of the strength of the Commission's report is that it does not define the "victims" of genocide as passive. As Elizabeth Oglesby and Amy Ross write "...the CEH avoided framing Mayans as passive 'victims' of state violence. Mayans *were* victims of horrible crimes, but at the same time, thousands of people in the hard-hit communities were also participants and protagonists in broad struggles for political and social change" (Oglesby and Ross 2009, 30).

The Commission's report, *Memory of Silence*, defines Guatemala as a heterogeneous society, polarized by sharp economic differences. According to the report, 10% of Guatemalans hold approximately half of the country's wealth (1999a, 78). Race and unequal race relations between *ladinos* (mixed-race Guatemalans) and *indigenas* (indigenous Guatemalans) form the backdrop of a landscape of wealth differentiation. The Commission's report, "Memory of Silence" points to conflict in Guatemala as the product of asymmetrical relationships of race and wealth, as well as social exclusion, and illiteracy. In explaining the conditions for conflict in this way, the Commission challenges an understanding of the internal armed conflict as simply the result of a coup d'état, or even Cold War geopolitics, and more toward a complex structural understanding of relationships of power and inequality. The Commission presents the internal armed conflict as a war between the army and the guerrilla movement, as well as

“groups of economic power, political parties, and diverse sectors of civil society. The entire state with all of its mechanisms... [and] the Church” (Comision para el Esclarecimiento Historico 1999a, 80 my translation). It highlights Guatemala’s “racist, exclusionary state, that protected the interests of a privileged minority” (CEH 1999b, 21 my translation).

Of the estimated 45,000 detained-disappeared persons from the armed conflict, and an estimated 200,000 deaths, the Commission attributes 93% of the violence to state forces, 3% to insurgent groups, and the remaining 4% to unknown sources. The involvement of these diverse sectors can be linked to the Spanish colonial legacy, and, through unequal race and class relations, traced up to and including the time of the internal armed conflict from 1960-1996.

My own understanding of present social inclusions and exclusions locates their inception in 1524, with the arrival of the Spanish in Guatemala. As Martínez Peláez notes in his seminal work *la Patria del Criollo* (1970), racialized violence in Guatemala dates first to the arrival of the Spanish, and later to *criollos* (‘pure blood’ Spaniards born in the New World) who forced indigenous populations, through coercion and violence, to become part of a productive labor force. These *criollos*, who would later be called *ladinos* (ibid.), viewed Guatemala’s indigenous population as the object of violence (Adams 2011, 133), and discursively presented indigeneity as beneath the condition of being an elite *criollo*.

In 1871, Guatemala underwent a Liberal Revolution. The revolution, designed to “develop” Guatemala, saw the construction of opera houses, railroads and ports. During this time, a recently strengthened *ladino* army did little in the way of changing the

“inferior” condition of “the Indian” (McCreery 2011, 118). During the time of the Liberal Revolution the Guatemalan government built a modern national capital in Guatemala City. This capital was an important part of how the government marketed itself, and how it presented itself in relationship to domestic and international actors (ibid.). This presentation, however, was a presentation of *ladino* governance; indigeneity did not have official representation.

Violence against Guatemala’s indigenous population continued. During Jorge Ubico’s administration of 1931-1944, the size of the Guatemalan military was increased, the military became more prominent in public education, and laws were enacted to ensure cheap, often unpaid labor from plantations where indigenous people often worked (Grandin 2004, 48). As J.T. Way (2012, 37) writes: “The Ubico state mobilized modernist discourses and fascist forms of corporate socio-political organization while promoting a racist lord and peon economy. In short, totalitarianism, the agroecconomy, the exploitation of Mayan and mestizo workers, and imperialism, itself steeped in racist ideology, all became written upon the landscape and embedded in the Guatemalan culture of development.”

A decade later, in 1944, a period began which was intended to change social and economic divisions that had previously separated indigenous and *ladino* Guatemalans. This period, that came to be known as the Ten Years of Spring, saw two democratically elected presidents issue a series of reforms geared toward middle and lower class Guatemalans. In 1952, the second of the two presidents, Jacobo Árbenz issued Decree 900, an agrarian reform law. The idea behind the law was to take large landholdings that had laid fallow for over five years, pay the owners of that land its declared tax value, re-

appropriate it under the state, and later re-distribute those lands to landless Guatemalans (Way 2012, Schlesinger, Kinzer, and Coatsworth 2005).

At the time, and because of policies of the Ubico administration, the largest landowner in Guatemala was the U.S.-based United Fruit Company (UFCO). Upon learning of Árbenz's agrarian reform, UFCO, declared Guatemala's government "communist." Thus began a US-backed overthrow of Árbenz, who was replaced by Carlos Castillo Armas. On July 3rd, 1954 the Guatemalan Newspaper *El Imparcial* was one of many newspapers to publish an article congratulating Castillo Armas on his "triumphant arrival" as new leader after the "victorious revolution." "He arrived with the heroic senior leaders of the movement," read one headline (1954), highlighting the role of the "good Guatemalans" who had made the revolution possible. The "victorious revolution" would, six years later, become the start of the Guatemalan internal armed conflict (Poitevin 2004).

The conflict, of course, was fraught with the tensions of previous racialized violence, violence both discursive and physical that had separated the *indígena* from the *ladino* elite. In 1960, several junior officers revolted against the autocratic government. When they failed, they fled to Mexico where they joined forces with the EGP (*Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres* or "People's Army of the Poor") and moved back into Guatemala, heading to the highlands².

As a way of combatting what the Guatemalan army understood to be the 'threat' of communism and of insurgency, the Guatemalan army, in conjunction with the National Police, executed a series of counterinsurgency attacks. As George Lovell (Lovell 2013,

² http://www.guatemala.se/?page_id=175

204) notes, in 1966, the National Police were the first in Latin America to use the political “disappearance” of suspected subversives. Designed to promulgate fear, the Guatemalan government used forced disappearances to create uncertainties as to the whereabouts of family members³ and to dissuade dissidence.

In 1974, the Guatemalan newspaper *Diario Impacto* published an article with the title (translated): “Alarming wave of disappearances, in the list of victims two well-known businessmen from the capital.” In the article (1974) they write:

“...yesterday at 9am on 12th Avenue and 9th Street in Zone 1, ten armed men carried out the kidnapping on board two vehicles. One of the cars stopped in the middle of the road to block traffic, while the other group forced themselves into Mr. Factor Vega’s car... several [onlookers] commented that it could have been a government kidnapping, for the spectacle the kidnappers made. Some 100 meters away two police officers saw [the events] but did not intervene. It seemed as if “they did not notice” according to witnesses. Yesterday when our reporters asked police sources, they were told that no report had been received and therefore they [the police] were unable to comment.”

In Guatemala, the disappeared became an example of the political stance of the state; corpses that reappeared were a public warning against dissidence, others that did not reappear left families in a state of unknowing (Garrard-Burnett 2010).

By 1980, murders and disappearances had become more frequent (Manz 2004). In April 1982 the army began a strengthened counterinsurgency campaign, a campaign that directly targeted communities in the Guatemalan highlands. As Jennifer Schirmer (Schirmer 1998, 48-49) illustrates, the Guatemalan army was sent to different communities in the highlands on “sweep operation[s]” to attack and destroy villages, and to kill men, women, and children either by bombardment or by troops opening fire on the civilian population. Using the counterinsurgency plan “Victoria 82,” the army planned to

³ <http://www.fafg.org/Ingles/paginas/ForcedDisappearances.html>

“make the people feel as the authority [the army] is for the service of the people, and not the people at the service of the authority,” “recuperate individual and national dignity,” and “achieve individual security and tranquility with a complete respect of human rights” (Estado Mayor General del Ejército 1982).

“Plan Victoria” was designed to defeat the insurgency and pacify the rural population. As a manual, it trained soldiers to “defend the population” through security, development, and ideological warfare. Soldiers were instructed by the Army high command to “trick, encounter, attack, and annihilate” the enemy (Estado Mayor General del Ejército 1982).

The objective of military operations was to “*quitarle el agua al pez*” or “take the water away from the fish” – take the support base away from the guerrilla often by destroying entire Mayan communities (CCOO 2014).

Important in Plan Victoria, as well as “Operación Sofía” - a series of documents from the army high command to foot soldiers - is that they provide evidence that the military head of state, Efraín Ríos Montt, was in direct communication with ground soldiers who were acting on orders given to them by the high command (see “Operación Sofía”⁴). Other documents, including the Diario Militar, show that the military was keeping detailed records of political disappearances, using photographs and biographical sketches to record the ‘dissidents’ they had kidnapped (see, for example, the Diario Militar⁵). As the Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras writes, the violence of the early 80s against subversion became synonymous with violence against Guatemala’s indigenous population; the Guatemalan government identified indigenous persons as

⁴ http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB297/Operation_Sofia_lo.pdf

⁵ <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB15/dossier-color.pdf>

being part of the possible support base for the guerrillas, the water to the fish (CCOO 2014)⁶.

In 1986, under president Cerezo, Guatemala's newly civilian government announced that it would end political violence (CIDH 1987). In 1991, the move toward a truth and reconciliation commission began (Ross 2006). Over the next three years, the Guatemalan government and the armed insurgents unified under the umbrella of URNG - Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity – began negotiating. In 1994, the government and URNG signed an accord establishing a Commission for Historical Clarification.

In 1999, the truth commission proposed by the peace process, the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH), published their report thereby declaring that in Guatemala there had been direct targeting of indigenous persons. The report found that acts of state violence between 1981 and 1983 against particular indigenous groups constituted acts of genocide. The CEH described the systematic violence as “a repression against popular movements that challenged Guatemala's exclusionary political, economic and social structures” (Oglesby and Ross 2009).

At the ceremony where the Commission presented the report, Elizabeth Oglesby notes that as Christian Tomuschat [the director of the CEH] “described the acts of genocide perpetrated by the state against the Mayan majority in the early 1980's” then president Alvaro Arzú “declined to step to the podium to accept the commission's report” (Oglesby 2007, 77). President Arzú was not willing to recognize the Commission's findings.

⁶ <http://www.pesgalicia.org/almacen/Documentos/Quitando%20el%20agua%20al%20pez.pdf>

In 2012, Guatemalan president Otto Pérez Molina, himself a general during the time of the armed conflict, publicly announced that in Guatemala there was never genocide (Castillo 2012). Thus, there is a struggle over how the violence during the internal armed conflict can be remembered, forgotten, or denied. There is denial of the past, or at least of telling a particular *version* of that past. This *version* is contrasted with myriad narratives, several of which are present at sites of memory in Guatemala City's Zone 1.

How to remember the past? How are presences and absences written into the landscape? What are the politics of memory and commemoration in Guatemala City? How do sites of memory, especially the three sites I have chosen, speak to this tension over how to remember the past?

Oglesby argues that there is a “double movement” in Guatemala post-Peace Accords, and post-CEH report. This movement has simultaneously opened political space to talk about the internal armed conflict, while narrowing the terms by which many groups and individuals articulate the conflict. In my own research, I have found this to be true in terms of 1) unequal race relations and 2) narratives of “victim” and “victimizer” in narratives of memory. In an essentialized version of many “memory” narratives, a poor, often indigenous person is a “victim” of unequal race relations and genocide while a *ladino* Army is the perpetrator of egregious crimes against indigenous persons, and diverse communities labeled under the umbrella term of “Maya.” In this thesis, my aim is not to make claims as to what constitutes a “victim.” Instead, my role is to understand

how places frame past social actors by calling certain social actors “victims,” and to understand the politics of those framings in terms of a genealogy of space and a genealogy of landscapes of memory.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this thesis, I am interested in the ways organizations that label their work as “memory” and in particular “collective memory” present particular narratives at sites of memory, and how they leverage “memory” as an alternative to official versions of the past. Like other scholars, including Michael Steinberg and Matthew Taylor (2003), I argue that sites of memory, much as the landscapes of which they are part, can be read as texts. Sites of memory present ‘texts’ about particular persons and institutions. Like many other scholars who study landscapes, I found that discourses that are inscribed upon and reflected in landscapes of memory render myriad readings. In this chapter, I will discuss relevant memory and landscape scholars.

In *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, Elizabeth Jelin (2003) notes a general distinction between two kinds of memory: individual memory, which involves an individual’s capacity to remember names and dates or to recall a lost relative, and group or community memory, which is based on shared understandings of particular moments in the past. It is in this second form of memory which Jelin takes most interest, and which I use to shape my own understanding of what memory in the context of memory studies literature means – historical memory that reconstructs a version of the past. In this light, memory is a way of understanding history, it is “a bond tying us to the eternal present” (Nora 1989).

Within memory studies, there is considerable debate. Some scholars argue that memory is a collective phenomenon, while others highlight the active role of the individual in creating and sustaining individual memories. Pierre Nora (1989), a memory scholar, has said that collective memory arises out of necessity; collective memory arises when collective identity is not as noticeable as it once was. Jorgé Colmeiro (2011) and Martin Murray (2013) argue that collective memory is an emancipatory project, in which identities that have been left out of government-sanctioned narratives of official history have a place to express themselves in new, national narratives. Work by Karen Till (2005) and Steven Hoelscher (2008) has further advanced the notion of collective memory and the formation of [new] national narratives, with the idea that collective memory can shape new identities for past social actors (*see also*: Hatcher 2009, Murray 2013). Following Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy (2011), in this thesis, I take the perspective that collective memory tends to revolve around individual subjectivities with a shared understanding of the past, but that shared understandings of the past can vary, particularly as they relate to *how* and *what* to remember.

In this work, narratives become a site to present a particular ‘truth’ about the past. This work looks to how memory presents, or in some cases hides, particular actors’ complex social involvement in relationship to a set of material conditions. In my analysis, I am attuned to what the existing scholarship has identified as collective memory, but choose the term “memory” as an umbrella term for a phenomenon that revolves around a shared tension on *how to remember* and *what to remember*, and as a “bond tying us to the eternal present.”

As another possibility for presenting new narratives, Katherine Hite (2011) discusses counter-memorials. To Hite, counter-memory and counter-memorials are collective ways of remembering that exist to leverage *new* narratives that speak out about a state's egregious past, that actively work against narratives that show the state as always beneficent. Examples of counter-memorials include graffiti images of Argentine detained-disappeared persons' bicycles in Rosario, Argentina, and memorials in post-Nazi Germany: memorials designed to never forget past atrocities.

Within Hite's distinction, I would characterize two of my sites, the posters from H.I.J.O.S. and the *Casa de la Memoria*, as speaking out *against* the state. My own interpretation of "memory" as a political project, or a project that *problematizes* an 'official' version of the past, is that it deliberately constructs and presents particular sets of material conditions in certain ways in order to speak out against a hegemonic version of the past called "history." Thus, within my own engagement, memory and counter-memory are relatively commensurate projects that revolve around how to represent violence. As Betina Kaplan (2007) writes: "If the discourse about violence is ubiquitous, if it can change signs depending on the person who is narrating it, the question of *how* to represent violence is crucial."

In considering memory's capacity to represent violence, I look to Pollak's assertion that studies of memory are not about "dealing with social facts as things, but of analyzing how social facts become things..." (Pollak 1989, *my translation*). I see memory as not necessarily providing *an* alternative to *an* history. Instead, "memory" or rather "memories" provide a space to construct and present identities as part of alternative versions to the past. As a series of projects, "memory" allows for identities

that have been left out of official or government-sanctioned narratives have a place to express themselves (*c.f.* Murray 2013) and a political project through which to do so.

Yet how does “memory” present its story?

As part of the process of commemoration, many memory scholars have identified ‘remembering’ and ‘forgetting’ as constitutive of the politics of memory (*see* Auge 2011, Colmeiro 2011, Hoelscher 2008) and as part of the politics of presenting identities for past social actors. To them, memory exists as a constant set of questions to what memories present (remember) and do not (selectively forget). Speaking to this, Elizabeth Jelin (2002) proposes that instead of “forgetting” or “collective amnesia” that it is more productive to think of “*memoria contra memoria*” or “memory against memory,” whereby certain memories get privileged over others, for political purposes. In a similar vein, Hugo Vezzetti (2002) argues that there is not a difference between memory and forgetting if not a conflict of “diverse and contradictory meanings” (my translation) in reconstructions of the past. The past becomes a site of contestation around which “diverse and contradictory meanings” are produced, each with the objective of presenting narratives that are rooted in politics. Maurice Halbwachs (1992) argues that instead of thinking about collective memory as a singular phenomenon, scholars should understand the multiplicity of meanings and shared production that collective memories, plural, can have. To Halbwachs, collective memories provide insight into societies; he suggests that it is within societies, within group contexts, that individuals situate their memories. Different social relationships happening in space provide the ontological frameworks, and often material conditions, through which to recall.

There are two key points from this literature that relate to this thesis. First, much of the existing literature on history and memory has treated history as verifiable fact, and memory as an individual, subjective “truth” (*see* Calveiro 2006). It has also tended to treat history and memory as a dualism between past and present. As Pierre Nora (Nora 1989, 8) writes: “Memory is perpetually actual phenomenon...history is a representation of the past.” As demonstrated above, history is often considered either as a set of material conditions out of which the need to remember emerges or as a hegemonic representation of the past against which other claims to “truth” are leveraged. “Collective memory” is offered as 1) an engagement with the past that ties the past to the eternal present and 2) a different (and explicitly political) version of “history.” A key contribution that I highlight is that “collective” can have diverse and contradictory meanings, but that those meanings are a political project that offers an alternative to “history.”

Second, I would like to highlight Maurice Halbwach’s idea that the frameworks through which we are asked to recall, and through which sites of memory are produced, reproduced and contested, are products of social configurations, and interpretations of those configurations. I find this last point particularly useful 1) in framing memory within a genealogy of particular spaces, and 2) for the way it suggests that the production, reproduction, and contestation of memory happens at particular moments for particular reasons.

As an early career geographer, I am interested in processes of landscape production – in this case landscape of memory production – and how “memory” appears on the landscape. The existing literature has made important contributions to this end.

Karen Till in *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (2005) discusses the role of presences and absences in the formation of new national narratives. Examining different sites of memory, Till discusses how places are imbued with social tensions of how to remember and what to remember, and how those tensions are reflective of social memory and national identity.

Michael Steinberg and Matthew Taylor in “Public Memory and Political Power in Guatemala’s Postconflict Landscape” (2003) discuss alternative memories to official versions of the past, and propose that scholars can “read” the postconflict landscape and can understand the absence of certain sites of memory as a deliberate effort by governments to silence alternatives to the past. Exploring images and text in Guatemala’s “postconflict” memorial landscape, Steinberg and Taylor examine how the past is a site of struggle. They write: “In Guatemala, the ‘creators’ of the landscape continue to struggle and compete with one another regarding what is presented to the public, or ‘reader.’” These presentations-both subtle and obvious landmarks and memorials...offer radically different memories of the recently concluded civil war, with the Catholic Church emphasizing the victim and the military emphasizing victory and power” (Steinberg and Taylor 2003, 465).

Steven Hoelscher (2008) suggests landscapes can be products of “institutionalized forgetfulness,” and that photography, grounded in urban space, can create alternatives to hegemonic narratives. He writes: “Historical memory is always in conflict with equally powerful forces to forget, especially in the wake of authoritarian repression, where policies of oblivion are often in place. Here, at the highly charged intersection of memory

and forgetting, is where ghosts [(photographs)] do their important work. People frequently invoke ghosts when they feel burdened by the past, when they feel that someone or something is missing. Ghosts of the past remind their viewers of things that some would prefer to forget: traumatic memories...” (Hoelscher 2008).

My approach to landscapes of memory involves challenging assumptions of “institutionalized forgetfulness” or the formation of new national narratives. I suggest that landscapes of memory construct groups and individuals in ways that naturalize or problematize particular versions of the past, and that different representations of the past *select* (as opposed to “forget”) moments of the past. I am interested in what Foucault (2010) might call a “dividing practice,” whereby sites of memory construct social actors in ways that simultaneously include and exclude access to particular sets of politics. Following Verdery (1999, 23), I see the politics of constructing and presenting the dead as providing avenues for “...making policy, justifying actions taken, claiming authority and disputing the authority claims of others, and creating or manipulating the cultural categories within which all of those activities are pursued.” I suggest that landscapes of memory provide what Steinberg and Taylor (2003) identified as “radically different memories,” and what Lefebvre (1974 [1991]) would call “overlapping instructions” for understanding the formation of social space. I would suggest that that the “overlapping instructions” landscapes of memory provide are based on deliberate presences and absences, as opposed to “silences” or moments of “forgetting,” and that those presences and absences are designed to provide political possibility for particular groups and individuals.

It does not seem surprising that a military site construct and present social actors in different ways than a site built by a human rights activist group, or that the site built by the human rights activist group try to subvert a dominant narrative. Accordingly, I see my work as acknowledging the existing literature (see, for example, Steinberg and Taylor's work on diverse narratives on the landscape), and *enhancing* it. I see my contribution as examining the ways sites of memory often 'flatten' ways of knowing about the past, and as critically examining the effects of power attached to something labeled as the 'truth' of the past.

Drawing on selections from the existing literature (including Steinberg and Taylor's work (2003) that suggests that monuments on the Guatemalan landscape can be read as texts), I propose that places of commemoration 1) enroll discourses to present a politics of the past and present and that 2) those discourses are reflective of, and may reproduce, the tensions that contributed to the production of social space. Linked to memory studies in that each considers the link between social context and production, I engage with literature on the production of urban space to enrich the way I conceptualize history and memory, and in particular, the ways physical manifestations of history and memory appear on the landscape.

I draw on Richard Schein's work (1997) that points to landscape "as symbolic...and as gendered, class-based, politicized, and central to the (re)production of social life" and as part of a dialectic of spatial production, a process of constant transformation that is mediated through social, economic, political, and cultural meaning. As Schein writes "The cultural landscape, as discourse materialized, is simultaneously disciplinary in its spatial and visual strategies and empowering in the possibilities

inherent for individual human action upon the landscape. The cultural landscape thus is continually implicated in the ongoing reconstitution of a discourse, or set of discourses, about social life..." (Schein 1997, 664).

Holloway (2000, 199) suggests, "social practices and processes are embedded within geographic contexts...society and geography are mutually constitutive." In conjunction with Elizabeth Jelín's work (2002) on "memory against memory" and Hugo Vezzetti's assertion of (2002) "diverse and contradictory meanings [in memory]," I see landscape as implicated, constitutive, and reproductive of a "set of discourses about social life," or, in the case of Zone 1 Guatemala City, discourses about the "truth" of the past.

In conjunction with these definitions, I draw on Henri Lefebvre (1974) and Neil Smith's work (Smith 2008 (1984)) on how ideology influences spatial practice. Lefebvre's notion that "spatial practice is subjected to political practice – to state power" (1974, 8) and that "physical space has no 'reality' without the energy that is deployed within it" (ibid., 13) is crucial to understanding the social processes by which landscapes of memory are produced. If the processes which produce space – as gendered, racialized, and class-based – are mediated by political practice, state power, and unequal power relations, it shifts the ways we think about the landscape. Commemorative practices become a site of reproduction and/or contestation of processes which produced the city.

To Harvey (1996):

"Places are constructed and experienced as material ecological artifacts and intricate networks of social relations. They are the focus of the imaginary, and of beliefs, longings, and desires... They are an intense focus of discursive activity, filled with symbolic and representational meanings, and they are a distinctive product of institutionalized social and economic power. The dialectical interplay across these different moments of the social process... is intricate and confusing. But it is precisely the way in which all these moments are caught up in the common flow of the social

process that in the end determines the conflictual (and oftentimes internally contradictory) process of place construction, sustenance, and deconstruction (Harvey 1996, 316).

Central to these contributions is the notion that social practice influences spatial form. In this thesis I focus on the idea that places of commemoration are products of the social tensions that underlie the formation of space, and that underlie particular social processes which contributed to, and are called upon in the politics of places of commemoration. I am interested in how particular places *present* narratives that the groups producing them label as “history” or “memory.” I use the perspective that sites of memory are physical manifestations of a contested past, and that the way sites of memory commemorate are reflective of tensions and inequalities past and present.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

As a way of understanding the narratives on the landscape, I use Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. Adapting work from Jiayu Wang (2014), I argue that the “texts” landscapes provide are multimodal, and that different elements – in this case text and image – come together to tell a particular story. I use the term “multimodal texts,” to describe the way places of commemoration present political or ideological images that fuse text and image to provide a particular version of the past. Adapting work from Calveiro (2006) and Hirsch (1992), I argue that places of commemoration provide multimodal texts, and that those texts present diverse, and sometimes contradictory stories that trigger particular kinds of remembrance and that call on a politics of the past and present. In the case of my research in Guatemala City, these multimodal texts present *faces*, they construct particular groups and individuals’ relationship to a set of material conditions of the past as a way of problematizing, and in some cases naturalizing, ways of knowing about the past.

I argue that multimodal FDA helps to disclose and *denaturalize* relationships of power and inequality that are present in texts. I suggest that by enrolling FDA, scholars can “read” the landscape and understand it as product, producer, and reproducer of particular instances of power. The readings rendered by FDA can be diverse, and, based on the post-positivist critique of researcher reflexivity and positionality, are heavily

influenced by the lived experience of the researcher. My analysis is based on the Commission for Historical Clarification's report *Memory of Silence*, and its explanation of violence in Guatemala, by my own political commitments to show social actors as complex, and by my commitment to understand the politics behind representations of the past.

As a methodology, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis encourages researchers to engage in an open-ended and reflexive process. Guiding my engagement with the "texts" of the landscape are three key works: James Paul Gee's *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (2010), Norman Fairclough's *Language and Power* (1989), and Gordon Waitt's "Doing Foucauldian Discourse Analysis – Revealing Social Realities" (2010).

Gee's approach revolves around grammar and language as tools that allow its users to comprehend, participate in, and construct different social situations. "Grammar is the toolbox from which [unique] discourse is created" argues Gee (2010). Gee suggests seven tools to understand how particular texts enroll discourse, and its constitutive grammar. These include: significance (words that qualify), practices (ways of combining actions), identities (how language constructs identities), relationships (through language structure), politics (that either naturalizes or problematizes the distribution of social goods) and connections (association or linkages of individuals with particular groups). According to Gee, the ways we communicate, and the ways in which we understand discourse are influenced by our "figured worlds," or subjective ways of understanding what is "typical or normal" (*ibid*, 71).

For Fairclough (1989) texts co-exist with processes of production and interpretation, and both define and are defined by the social contexts in which the

researcher's engagement with production and interpretation happen. Fairclough suggests three stages of what he terms Critical Discourse Analysis: description (understanding the text), interpretation (understanding text as a production), and explanation (understanding social contexts out of which texts are produced and interpreted). Similar to Maurice Halbwachs, for Fairclough texts are located within a larger context of social conditions of production and interpretation, and interactive processes of production and interpretation. Fairclough identifies these three stages as inherently laden with power relationships, emphasizing the crucial role that Members' Resources, or the various positionalities inhabited by the researcher, play in the interpretation of texts. To Fairclough, "...language power enables personal and social goals to be achieved" (1989). As a way of adapting Fairclough's contributions to my own work, I present a framework visualization below (see Fig. 1)

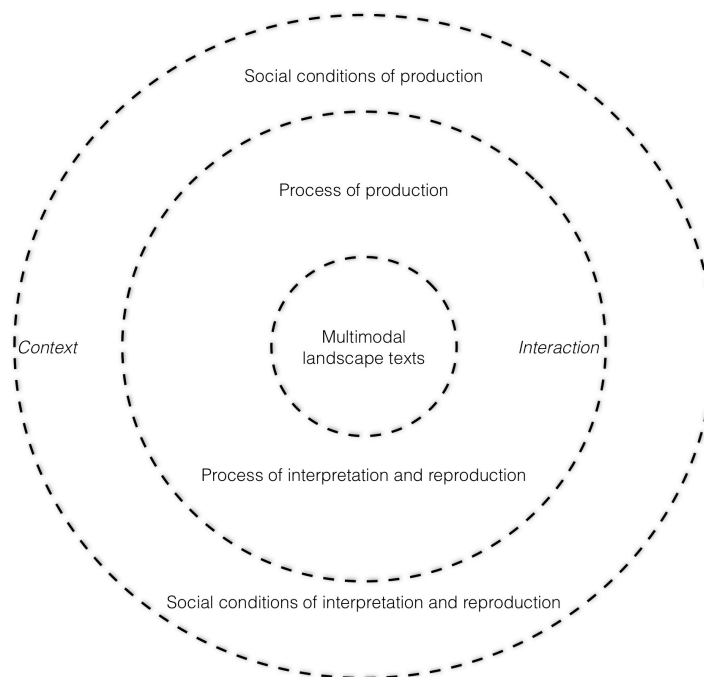


Figure 1: Multimodal Landscape Texts

In this figure, multimodal landscape texts exist as the center; multimodal landscape texts are the object of research. Surrounding the center circle are two porous, concentric circles. The outermost circle is the context in which sites of memory are happening. For the purposes of my work, I consider context to be comprised of material conditions, and subjective representations of those conditions. There are two components: the social conditions of production (of the sites of memory), and the social conditions of interpretation and reproduction. The social context – which can include gender, race, economics, and politics, and other, highly interrelated categories – forms the basis for interaction with a landscape text. Interaction involves the processes of memory construction and production, as well as processes of interpretation and reproduction. Processes within circles represent part of the dialectic of production, interpretation, and reproduction. The highly porous nature of the circles allows for new kinds of knowledge and influence to permeate throughout the interpretive process of multimodal landscapes of memory. This framework, which could provide an area of inquiry on its own, forms the basis for how I approach sites of memory in Guatemala City: as influenced by context and interpretation.

Following Waitt's suggestions (2010), Foucauldian Discourse Analysis is useful for: "1) all meaningful statements or texts that have effects on the world;" 2) "a group of statements that appear to have a common theme that provides them with an unified effect;" and 3) "the rules and structures that underpin and govern the unified, coherent, and forceful statements that are produced."

Wait suggests that discourse analysis should be reflexive and use authors' suggestions for discourse analysis as *guideposts*, or as an open-ended, iterative project

that uses a flexible methodology to understand the power relationships produced in, and reflected by texts. Following Gee and Fairclough, he encourages thinking about the social contexts in which texts are produced. To do this, he proposes researchers create a list of questions that point to the social, technological, and context questions of production and interpretation.

As a way of limiting the scope of my research to the *presentation* side of the dialectic of knowledge surrounding the past, and following Waitt's suggestion (2010) to create a series of guideposts, I created a list of questions to explore relationships of power happening in landscapes of memory.

I include the list (from suggestions by Fairclough (2010), Gee (1989), and Waitt (2010)) below:

Social

- Who made the site of memory?
- When was the site made?
- Who has access to the site now?

Technological

- How is the site displayed?
- What are the mediums used to depict 'the past'?

Grammatical

- How do the sites present groups and individuals?
- Do the sites provide relationships/connections between the groups and individuals they present?
- Do the sites frame groups and individuals with passive or active language?

Ideological

- Who are the actors presented at the sites?
- Who are the actors *not* presented at the sites?
- Do the sites present actors as "victims" or "perpetrators"? If so, how?

I wanted to see the ways text, image, and context form *multimodal discourses*, or discourses of image and text produced within the dynamics of power of presentation, reception, and interpretation. In the next chapter, I explore these discourses.

CHAPTER 5

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON THE LANDSCAPE

I traveled to Guatemala City from May to July 2014, to take extensive photographs and field notes on three sites of memory in Zone 1. The three sites were: a series of posters that line several of the streets in Zone 1; the new *Casa de la Memoria* “House of Memory”, located on 13th Street and 2nd Avenue; and the military’s *Museo Militar*, located across the street from the national bank. I chose the sites based on their relative geographic proximity (they are all within 15 blocks of one another, and in Zone 1), and because they all explicitly make reference to the violence of the past. I call these places “sites of memory” because they take some element of the past and “tie it to the eternal present.”

In the following section I describe each of the sites using multimodal Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. I begin with the posters, then move to the *Museo Militar*, and end with the Casa de la Memoria.

H.I.J.O.S.-

The posters are created and affixed by H.I.J.O.S. H.I.J.O.S., whose long form name *Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio* translates to: Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Forgetting and Silence. H.I.J.O.S. is the self-described human rights activist group that affixes the posters. The group was

founded in 1999 and is comprised of “young people who were forced into exile, or who lost family members due to state repression during the war...who are students, workers and professionals of *ladino*...and indigenous descent” (McVicar 2009, Centro de Medios Independientes 2014). H.I.J.O.S. members are often children of persons who were disappeared or murdered during the internal armed conflict, or “Guatemalans who stand in solidarity with the group” (ibid). H.I.J.O.S. engages in numerous forms of public art throughout the city, including painting murals, and affixing posters (McVicar 2009). H.I.J.O.S. puts their messages in highly trafficked areas, including Zone 1 of Guatemala City (ibid). As Kevin Gould and Alicia Estrada write: “Guatemala’s *Centro Histórico* [Zone 1] represents a strategic location [for H.I.J.O.S.] to create and spatialize the historical memory of the disappeared. The zone is filled with buildings and organizations such as the Presidential Palace, the National Cathedral, and the Central American General Archive that are implicated in enforced disappearance. Paramilitaries disappeared people as they walked through the *Centro Histórico* on their way home from protests...”(Gould and Estrada 2014). H.I.J.O.S.’ work is political, and the spaces where they produce their work are also political.

According to one of their websites, hijosguate.blogspot.com, H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala affiliate themselves with an “international network of H.I.J.O.S.” including H.I.J.O.S. Argentina. H.I.J.O.S. Argentina claims to create “spaces of memory” that promote memory as a political project “...that is active, that involves society” (H.I.J.O.S. Argentina 2015). My own reading of the H.I.J.O.S.’ landscape of posters in Guatemala City points to spaces of memory as politicized, that “involves society” by 1) holding

protests, 2) creating forms of public art and 3) fostering political consciousness of an alternative version of the past.

H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala puts up the posters, or “empapeladas” under the premises of “unity, brotherhood, rebellion, love, solidarity, democracy, equality, social consciousness and critical thought” (H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala 2015a). The social conditions when the sites were made were “post-conflict” and post-CEH report. Since the group’s inception in 1999, H.I.J.O.S. has been putting up posters and engaging in other forms of street art around the city (H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala 2015b). H.I.J.O.S. claims they are trying to clarify “the [story of] 45,000 cases of forced disappearances and more than 250 thousand deaths during the internal armed conflict” (Centro de Medios Independientes 2014). To H.I.J.O.S., “It is concerning that a large sector of Guatemalan society and in particular the youth *ignore* the *true history* of Guatemala, *the unofficial history*, accordingly, it is necessary for the youth affected by the repression to express our experiences of pain so that they always remain alive in the *memory* of Guatemalan society and so that the practices and crimes against humanity never again repeat” (HIJOS 2015, my translation, emphasis added).

The posters are created and displayed by H.I.J.O.S. due to what it claims is the need to “clarify.” I see the social conditions that frame the production of the posters as the atmosphere of some sort of denial concerning the violence of the internal armed conflict against which H.I.J.O.S. feels it needs to tell the “truth.” Today, passers-by in Zone 1 (and the other Zones where there are posters) have access to the sites – which are in the space of public streets, on the sides of abandoned buildings, and around a concentration of buildings implicated in the violence of the internal armed conflict. In

my observations of the urban space around the posters, I noted that passers-by would often glance at the posters. Others would stop and look at the posters, taking more time to read the posters to look at the faces of the individuals the posters portray.



Figure 2: Calling on Politics: Awakening Memory
Man pausing in front of posters of Guatemala's Disappeared, Zone 1 Guatemala City
Photograph by author ©2014

The posters are displayed as a series of individual papers, glued to buildings alongside other posters. Individual posters almost always feature a portrait of a person's face or head in black and white, with the person's name at the bottom of the poster, and some sort of message or claim in a strip of text along the top edge of the poster. The messages the posters contain vary. In some cases they read: "Where are they? 45,000 detained-disappeared persons" in other cases, they add another clause "Where are they? 45,000 persons detained-disappeared by the army" (*emphasis added*). Others read "Nor

amnesty, nor pardon,” or “Massacred by the army.” These three elements: photograph, name, and question or statement, form the general structure of nearly all of the posters.



Figure 3: Empapelada de HIJOS. The image above is an example of one of the HIJOS’ posters I photographed during my summer research. Along the top of the poster is a statement “Nor amnesty, nor pardon,” followed by a photograph, and the person’s name. The image above also shows another message, along the bottom of the poster, which reads: “H.I.J.O.S. *Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia Contra el Olvido y el Silencio* For memory, truth and justice.”

Photograph by author ©2014

As a way of better understanding the elements present in the posters, I created a database of two of the sites where the posters are located in Zone 1. In it, I recorded the following: Image number, Location of image, text (a question or statement before the introduction to the person – for example: *Dónde están?: 45,000 detenidos-desaparecidos*), the person’s name, whether or not the person appeared with a photograph, their phenotype as indigenous or non-indigenous, the gender I perceived them to be, notes on what happened to them according to the biography provided, references to their political participation, who was implicated in the person’s disappearance or murder, and other

messages. I recorded information on 106 posters. Of the posters, 52 were men, 21 were of women, two were of girls, one was of a boy, and three contained images of crosses. I recorded thirty duplicate posters – identical posters that I had captured in another image from the same image location, or from the other location. Of the persons presented in the posters, 23 were persons I identified to be indigenous – based on their name (nine adult females, one girl, nine adult males, one boy, and one person indiscernable) and 56 were persons I interpreted to be non-indigenous (*ladino*) (12 adult females, one girl, and 43 adult males).

Of the 106 posters, the posters I saw most often *implicated the army* in the enforced disappearance or massacre of the person portrayed in the poster. Several examples of the messages I recorded in my notes include: “*Fue capturado y violada por el Coronel Máximo Zepeda y su brutal tropa. Fue tirada desnuda acompañada de 11 campesinos bajo el puente del Río Michatoya en el Camino para Escuintla,*” or “Was captured and raped by Cornel Máximo Zepeda and his brutal troop. Was thrown naked with 11 *campesinos* below the Michatoya River Bridge on the way to Escuintla.” Another: “Was kidnapped by members of the army, several days later her body was thrown on the highway.”

Of the posters I recorded, 11 use the word ‘army,’ 1 uses the word ‘soldiers,’ and 3 use ‘armed men.’ Following Fernando Reati’s work on memory in Argentina (*c.f.* Reati 2007), the posters’ placement next to other posters creates a shared association between all of the posters. Thus, even if individual posters do not explicitly implicate the army or state forces, individual posters’ placement next to other posters creates an imagined connection between the posters. Thinking again to the messages many of the

posters provide: “Where are they? 45,000 detained-disappeared persons” or “Nor amnesty, nor pardon,” many of the posters point to the culpability of state forces, often overtly represented by the army, and apparatuses of the army.

I found that none represent a person as a combatant; that is, no one was dressed as either a member of the armed forces or in a URNG uniform. I noted that I did not see any posters depicting a Guatemalan soldier as victim, with an insurgent considered culpable.

In recording the posters, I found that some posters contain short narratives of the person featured. I found that those narratives would sometimes hide as much as they presented. An example of this is a narrative about Rogelia Cruz, the Guatemalan representative to the Miss Universe competition in 1959. Rogelia’s poster is set up in the format of many of the posters: there is a statement: “Nor Amnesty, nor Pardon” a large picture of Rogelia, and a bottom message that reads “*H.I.J.O.S. Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria, la Verdad y la Justicia*” and in larger letters “For memory, truth, and, justice.” Her biography reads (translated):

“Kidnapped 6 January, 1968. As a student at the Belem Ladies’ Institute, she participated in the days of March and April against the spike in city bus fares. In 1958 she participated as the representative of Guatemala in the Miss Universe in Long Beach.

In December 1967, she was kidnapped by the army command. January 6th, 1968, her body was found with signs of having been raped, and beaten to death. Rogelia was a student of architecture.”⁷

Thinking again to the link between text and context, and how interpretation is based on the knowledge and experience of the researcher, I was particularly drawn to Rogelia’s poster because of a book I had recently read: Daniel Wilkinson’s *Silence on the*

⁷ There are some discontinuities in the dates the narrative in the poster provides, which I have preserved as part of my translation. For the purposes of my analysis, I do not find the discrepancies to distract from the overall narrative about Rogelia.

Mountain: Stories of Terror, Betrayal, and Forgetting in Guatemala (Wilkinson 2002).

In the book, Wilkinson briefly mentions Rogelia, saying that she was politically active in the leftist organization *Juventud Patriótica del Trabajo (JPT)*, and that her boyfriend, Leonardo Castillo Johnson, was the head of another leftist group, the *Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo (PGT)*. According to Wilkinson, Rogelia was most likely murdered because of her connection to Johnson.

This understanding adds complexity to the narrative Rogelia's poster provides. Instead of being a student of architecture and Miss Universe candidate who participated in a protest against an increase in bus fares, and who was raped and beaten to death seemingly *because* she participated in a protest, Wilkinson's contribution shows that she was more politically involved. She was involved in the JPT and her boyfriend was the head of the PGT. As a social actor, this added information makes her more complex. I interpret the *absence* of Rogelia's political involvement in the JPT, and association with the PGT, as a *deliberate absence* meant to *construct* and present Rogelia in a particular way. The set of material conditions – involvement in Miss Universe, the winner of Miss Guatemala, her involvement in the *JPT* formed a set of “realities,” the discussions of, including the presences and absences of which, represent the *politics of memory*. And it is these politics which drive my interest in Rogelia, and the other posters.

And there are more examples. Outside of the general structure of photograph, name, and question or statement, I found that many of the posters do not include written information about the profession, activism, or civic participation of the person featured.

I also found that in many cases the *politics* that H.I.J.O.S. uses to define the persons in the posters constructs a victim of state terror. “Massacred by the army,” “In

the mountains the soldiers followed us, they killed my family,” “Massacred in Río Negro for opposing the construction of the Chixoy dam and defend[ing] his land,” “Was kidnapped by the army, and a few days later her body was thrown onto the highway,” are several examples of what I understand to be poster individuals’ victimization that I recorded in my field notes and photographs.

Nearly half of the posters I recorded contain another message, in addition to the questions or claims of “Where are they?” “Nor amnesty, nor pardon,” or “Massacred by the army.” Examples of these other messages, which, when they are present, appear at the bottom of printed posters, include: “For memory, truth, and justice,” “45,000 persons detained-disappeared by the Guatemalan army, claim memory, truth, and justice,” “victim of genocide,” “no more violence, not in my country, not in my home, [we] women are tired of the iron fist,” and “I was kidnapped, tortured, and executed. My body was thrown impunity. Nor amnesty nor pardon.” These phrases create *relationships* and *connections* between the individuals featured in the posters. The persons in the posters are human. They are made human through their photograph, through the narratives about them, through the relationships that define them as somewhat quotidian.

The posters I examined do not explicitly discuss questions of race of the persons they portray. That is to say, the neither the biographies, nor the additional information provided by the posters, speak to the racial tensions identified by the Commission for Historical Clarification in its final report, namely that the internal armed conflict had largely been a product of asymmetrical relationships of race and wealth, social exclusion, and illiteracy.

In analyzing the posters, I found that my own projections and understandings of what made an indigenous or ladino Guatemalan, based on name and phenotype, were what guided my labeling of the persons portrayed in the posters as “indigenous” or non-indigenous. Gould and Estrada (2014) refer to H.I.J.O.S.’ selection of poster images and text as “...limit[ing] the possibilities of imagining the disappeared as Maya,” because the posters tell a ‘ladino’ version of the past, often through obscuring distinctly “indigenous” identifying characteristics of the persons in the posters. My own engagement with H.I.J.O.S.’ posters acknowledges Gould and Estrada’s work, however I feel reticent to ascribe a ‘ladino’ version of the past to the posters, or to identify what that would mean. I would suggest, however, that more than *not* imagining the disappeared as Maya, the posters obscure race and racial ideology by not talking about it. Instead, it becomes the observer (and in this case, the researcher), who is charged with understanding questions of race in relationship to the past.

The posters often flatten narratives about the past into a binary between “victim” and “perpetrator.” In this, “Was kidnapped by the army, my body was thrown impunity,” and “Victim of genocide,” the persons presented have relatively limited engagement with the set of diverse social actors identified in the Commission’s report. Furthermore, the state, as enforced by the apparatus of the army, is often directly implicated in the violence of the past. I would suggest that H.I.J.O.S. *socially constructs* actors in relationship to interpretations of a set of material conditions of the past. Through this construction, H.I.J.O.S. calls on particular sets of narratives of ‘truth’ (we are going to tell the “true history” of Guatemala, the “unofficial history” of Guatemala), and, following work on

discourse analysis (Wodak 2009) actively *produces* and *reproduces* socially constructed actors who are situated within dynamics ‘victimhood’.

The posters define the persons presented in the posters as “victims” and as part of the “true history” of Guatemala creates a series of *relational* values. The idea that there is somehow a ‘true history’ that, according to H.I.J.O.S. is part of a political project called “memory,” shows that there is not forgetting or silence, if not a voicing of an alternative *version* of the past. Again, many of the sentences in the narratives are passive: “was massacred,” “was detained and disappeared;” the relational values presented construct “victims”. The majority of posters show the military as cruel, and as a perpetrator of egregious human rights violations. According to the posters, the army was not the victim – it was the implicit cause of suffering and violence during the internal armed conflict.

In my work in Guatemala City, I began to realize that sites of memory could present *any* narrative. In a paragraph about Rogelia, for example, H.I.J.O.S. could tell whatever story it felt was necessary to tell to 1) commemorate the person and 2) communicate a set of politics through the message of the person discussed in the poster.

I would suggest that the way H.I.J.O.S. presents *desaparecidos* as victims of the internal armed conflict, reflects a politics of memory, and an act of political resistance. It is grounded in what Maurice Halbwachs would call a present social context that evolved from a set of material conditions – an internal armed conflict - and what H.I.J.O.S. would consider a social necessity of recognizing a version of the past that acknowledges the *innocence* of non-governmental social actors (the “true” history, the “unofficial history” as they claim in their statement) in a time when the president, himself a general during the time of the armed conflict, has said publicly that “in Guatemala there was not

genocide.” It is grounded in a context of acknowledging the struggle of indigenous persons to achieve some form of justice, and at a time when a double-movement has simultaneously opened and closed the political space to talk about the past in particular ways. As Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (2009) would write, H.I.J.O.S. puts up posters as a way of “awakening” memory, or a particular kind of memory: the “true history” of Guatemala.

The *Museo Militar*-

Approximately 12 blocks from the posters, and on a hill overlooking Zone 1, stands the *Museo Militar* or military museum. The museum is one building in a series of buildings in a large military complex in Zone 1 – a complex which today serves as a place of culture and remembrance. What is today the *museo*, was, until 1856, the Castle of San José de Buena Vista. In 1987, the building opened as a museum to address a “need to expand the history of the military” (Servicio de Historia Militar 2000). In 1998, the museum began restoration efforts. On May 25, 1999, restorations ended and the museum was given its present name: Museo Militar (ibid). Today, a branch of the Guatemalan Army called the *Servicio de Historia Militar*, or the Military History Service, runs the museum. A 2000 government accord about the *Servicio de Historia Militar* reads: “...military history is a fundamental part of the existence of the institution [of the government], it is the obligation of the state to protect, conserve, promote and disclose national culture, through the study and investigation that guarantees their permanence, as part of the intrinsic values that constitute Guatemalan culture” (Ejército de Guatemala

2015). The accord calls for the formation of the *Servicio de Historia Militar*, and for the *Servicio*'s active role in preserving military history at the *Museo Militar* (ibid.).

While the museum is accessible to those who can reach the complex in Zone 1, a visit requires government identification, and registration at a *garita* or guard house. On my own visit to the *museo*, I too was asked for my identification. After presenting myself, I walked up the long hill to the museum, where I was greeted by several soldiers holding large guns. One of the soldiers told me that the museum only operated by guided tour, and that I would need to pay a fee of 10 Quetzales to enter. I agreed. When I entered, I was guided into the bottom chamber of the museum, and then asked to join the main tour, which was being led by Coronel Porres, as I will call him⁸, on the upper, outdoor floor of the museum. The Coronel was showing a group of Guatemalan teachers around the museum. Despite my greeting him in Spanish, the Coronel addressed me in English. He said he was excited to have someone with whom to practice English. The teachers were at the tail end of their tour, and when they were done, the Coronel offered to show me around. He led me downstairs, which is where my personal tour started.

The downstairs area of the *Museo Militar* shows coats of arms and different military uniforms. It discusses different moments of Guatemala's past in which the Guatemalan army was involved. Examples of these moments include the Battle of Chalchuapa and the Liberal Revolution of 1871. There is also a jail cell where the Guatemalan army held prisoners. When we reached the cell, Coronel Porres ushered me in, and we walked into the dank cell together to feel how cramped it was. We continued talking, and after 20-30 minutes touring the downstairs area, the Coronel asked me if I

⁸ Even though "Coronel Porres" was acting in his official capacity, in order to protect both his identity and mine, I have decided to change his name.

had ever heard about the “armed conflict” and if I wanted to learn more about it. Not wanting to present a false identity, but wanting the coronel to share his knowledge and understanding of the conflict with me, I said I did not know much about the armed conflict, and would appreciate him telling me more about it. Earlier on, I recorded in my notes that he had said to the teachers that the museum was important in preserving the history of Guatemala. The teachers and the Coronel unanimously agreed that the military museum was an indispensable feature of Guatemalan history, and that all Guatemalans should have access to the museum. I knew whatever the Coronel had to say about the museum and the armed conflict would be particularly interesting.



Figure 4: Jeep at the *Museo Militar*
Behind the jeep, a plaster soldier with a hunting dog stands guard
Photograph by author ©2014

We made our way outside, where Coronel Porres showed me retired military vehicles. The grounds of the museum were somewhat stark; paved paths and patches of grass were dotted with old military vehicles, including jeeps, a military airplane, a tank, and a helicopter. Behind one of the jeeps was a statue of a white soldier, dressed in green and accompanied by a submachine gun and hunting dog (see Figure 4). In front of most of the vehicles was a sign that included the place of origin of the vehicle, and a short description of its use. One of the signs read (translated into English): “Reo Truck, 2.5 tons. M3A2C. Production: North American. Year: 1970. Used to transport combat troops during the time of the internal armed conflict (1960-1996).” A sign in front of a Huey helicopter read (again translated): “UH1H Helicopter (HUEY). Production: North American. Year: 1962. Used to transport troops and equipment, this aircraft was taken by guerrilla fire, which gave the “*Roble de Oro*” and the “*Placa de Combatiente*” medal and badge to the injured and the crew who participated in combat actions.”

I turned to the Coronel. “So what is the story that the museum is trying to tell?” I asked.

“[That] Guerrillas attacked the soldiers,” he said. “I would say that in Guatemala there was never genocide, that there was conflict but that we [the army] were fighting for sovereignty, human rights, and national unity.”

“The role of the museum, then, is to tell this story?”

“Sí” he said. Yes. “Whether it is one child or one thousand children, it is important to disperse the message of the past. It is important that children honor their soldiers. The people build the army, and the army builds the people.”

The Coronel's story is nearly identical to the *Servicio*'s official publication on the museum: "*Servicio de Historia Militar: División de Investigaciones Históricas: Museo Militar*" or "Military History Service: Division of Historical Investigation: Military Museum." In the document, which is available in PDF format online, the *Servicio* identifies the beginning of the armed conflict as the "Controversial decade of the 60's, provided a series of extremist group uprisings that when they failed, became clandestine and acted in an illegal way *against the people and the state of Guatemala*... the situation required the creation of new military organization..." (Presidente de la República 2000, my translation, emphasis added).

Seen in the frameworks provided by Gee, Fairclough, and Waitt, the *museo* provides insight into the way the army tells its story about the material conditions of the past. Thinking of Gee's *identities*, for example, the museum is a manifestation of how the army presented itself in Plan Victoria: as an advocate of 'the people'. The Guatemalan Army was fighting against the threat of the guerrilla, we learn from the Coronel, who is supported by the PDF document from the Historical Investigation Division on the *Museo Militar*. The military jeep and helicopter were used to transport troops. In the case of the helicopter, when it was shot down, the soldiers aboard were given medals and badges for their service.

There are also absences: the written narrative on the plaques at the museum inform visitors that the internal armed conflict happened, but not why. The 'why' comes from the guided tour, when we learn that the army was fighting against the threat of the guerrilla movement. While the Commission for Historical Clarification's report discusses the structural causes of the conflict and the role of the other groups that

participated in the conflict, the *museo* does not present this information. We learn that the jeep was made in 1970, and that it originated in North America (In this case the United States). We can extrapolate that the United States had a role in the conflict (which it did), but this requires external context and a particular political framework.

The museum builds *relationships*. The military has a particular relationship to the rest of the country. There is the physical reality of the space of the museum: it overlooks the city, sitting above the monument for peace, the posters, and the rest of Zone 1.



Figure 5: Looking out over Zone 1: view from the *Museo Militar*
Photograph by author ©2014

According to the Coronel, the *museo* is also responsible for communicating Guatemala's past to the public, and in communicating the role of the Army in

Guatemalan public affairs. As the Coronel told me, and as I read in Plan Victoria: the Army builds the people and the people builds the Army.

Whereas the H.I.J.O.S. posters seemed to leave ‘the government as victim’ or the ‘government as protector’ out of their narrative, the Coronel’s guided tour of the *Museo Militar* did not address H.I.J.O.S.’ concern for acknowledging the state’s role in disappearances. Or, in other terms, the presence of a ‘military as protector’ narrative that does not acknowledge what the Commission for Historical Clarification identified as the “racist, exclusionary state, that protected the interests of a privileged minority” (Rothenberg 2012, 180) leaves a gap for a stories of the disappeared, for persons massacred, for Guatemalan refugees, for indigenous persons. From my experience at the museum, these persons do not form part of the identity of how the Army presents itself, which allows the Army to construct itself as not operating with the ‘other’ social actors in Guatemala.

Additionally, there is a gap race relations; material objects (military vehicles) and narratives (written on plaques and spoken by the guided tour) present an army that has grown, evolved, and triumphed over time, and that does not explicitly discuss the role of race in the formation of the army, the internal armed conflict, the Guatemalan state, or Guatemala as a racially dynamic and diverse country. This obfuscation of questions of race and racial ideology *flattens* the way the *Servicio Militar* socially constructs and presents actors in relationship to the past. It produces a ‘way of knowing’ about the past that shows the army as fighting for a ‘people’ and against a ‘threat’ of an “extremist group uprising.”

As my tour ended, we walked to the edge of the compound and looked down into Guatemala City, onto one of the city's busiest markets, across to the offices of the national bank, and down toward the rotunda where a large sculpture of two hands with a dove perched on one of the fingers: the *monumento a la paz*. I considered the stark juxtaposition between posters of the disappeared, and detained-disappeared persons as sharing the same fate as people massacred, and how in H.I.J.O.S.' articulation of the past the military was not a 'victim' but was directly named as the responsible party for disappearances. Atop this hill, only 12 blocks away, was a story of a military that had fought against what they had called the 'threat' of the guerrilla movement. At the base of the hill was a seemingly different reality, or as I soon began to articulate it: a different *representation* of reality.

The *Casa de la Memoria*:

An alternative representation of the violence was presented at the newly opened "Casa de la Memoria" or House of Memory. Drawn to the idea that "memory" needed its own house that was separate from history, I planned a visit to the museum.

The *casa's* construction is a project headed by the human rights organization: Center for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH), with support from several international non-governmental organizations, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The *casa* was made for, and is available to "students and youth" (Sebastian 2014) and is, according to the Casa's brochure, an effort funded by different national and international organizations "committed to the search for truth and justice" (CALDH 2014). The

brochure is available in print as part of free, guided tours that operate Monday through Friday.

In my search for information about CALDH, I was at first frustrated but then began to come to terms with a general lacuna of internet-accessible information on the organization's structure. What I did find is that CALDH is composed of a "general assembly" of 30 persons, men and women from "recognized political trajectory" from both inside and outside Guatemala, "as well as from distinct ethnic groups in Guatemala" (CALDH 2014). Within CALDH, programs exist for "Justice and Reconciliation," "Indigenous *Pueblos*' Rights," and "Youth Rights," among others (CALDH 2015a). While the organization began during the 1980s, it was not until 1996 that CALDH was recognized as an official organization. Today, they are recognized as an organization that is actively engaged in both promoting and defending human rights "while consciously recognising the historical memory of Guatemala's civil war in its pursuit of basic freedoms" (Peace Direct 2015). These objectives are reflected in a recent YouTube video about the *casa*, where viewers learn that CALDH designed the *casa* "with the objective of studying and constructing what happened in Guatemala...to rebuild the historical memory and a sense of personal and collective identity" (CALDH 2015a).

Entering the *casa*, printed signs tell us what memory means. One reads (translated): "Collective memory, by transmitting to the present the struggles and resistances that we and those that have come before us have had, becomes the community consciousness of the people." At the end of the entryway is a large sign reading: "*De vez en cuando camino al revés, es mi modo de recordar. Si caminara sólo hacia delante, te podría contar cómo es el olvido*" or "Sometimes I walk backwards, it is my way of

remembering. If I were only to walk forward, I could tell you about forgetting,” and is from Humberto Ak’Abal, a Maya-K’iche Guatemalan author.

The *casa* is set up as a series of chronologically arranged rooms; just as one room leads into the next, one time period leads to the next. The tour starts in a room that discusses the *población Maya* or Maya indigenous population. Through a series of printed diagrams visitors learn where in Guatemala the pre-colonized Maya lived, some of the “contributions of the Maya civilization,” as well as the fact that Mayan textiles tell a story of the history, context, and worldview of the Maya. Continuing along, one encounters graphic symbolism of the Spanish invasion: a hanging labyrinth of plastic swords, with each sword suspended by a long, red ribbon. The swords lead into the next room which shows “indigenous resistance” to Spanish colonization, which involved “continuing to use their own mechanisms of justice” and which allowed the Maya to be “less violent and more oriented toward reparation and reconstruction of social cohesion and the social fabric.” It is in this room that we also learn that mestizos “raped and disrespected” indigenous women, and that whiteness was a construction designed to show the Spanish as superior.

From there, visitors move quickly into the room of the armed conflict. The *casa*’s exhibits present the conflict in terms similar to the CEH report; a reproduction of Diego Rivera’s “Gloriosa Victoria” depicting the Dulles brothers shaking Carlos Castillo Armas’ hand, with Guatemalan Archbishop Mariano Rossell, US Ambassador to Guatemala John Peurifoy, and President Eisenhower as a bomb standing over the bodies of injured Guatemalans immediately meets visitors’ eyes when they enter.



Figure 6: Image of the *Gloriosa Victoria* as seen at the *Casa de la Memoria*
 Photograph by author ©2014

Large vertical banners call on visitors to remember then-president Jorge Ubico's *lay contra la vagancia* and how it obligated poor farmers to work. Visitors are asked remember María Chinchilla for challenging Ubico in a peaceful public protest, and who was assassinated by Ubico's security forces on June 25, 1944. They are asked to remember Jacobo Árbenz with the question: "Communist or promoter of capitalism?"

The sound of recorded gunshots and faded screams beckons visitors into the next room where they see a table and chairs that have been thrown to the ground by an army raid, and silhouettes of soldiers and people in indigenous clothing in the background. The silhouettes are lit by candlelight. The room contains no written narrative, just the sensory presentation of military violence through image, sound and visualization.

The next three rooms provide selections from The Commission for Historical Clarification's report *Memory of Silence*, and the REHMI report *Nunca Más*, a list of

victims of disappearances, a short video reconstruction of the army entering a small Guatemalan town, and an exhibition of famous Guatemalan social actors' quotes that relate to peace. The three rooms are primarily to tell a story of violence against Guatemala's indigenous population, something each of the docents on my visits to the museum confirmed.

In my tours, I noted that indigenous persons were often limited under the homogenizing umbrella term of "*indigenas*" (literally "indigenous [persons]"). In few cases, indigenous persons were identified by their indigenous group (e.g.: Maya Ixil) (from fieldnotes). In my reading of the different displays in the *casa*, I found that the *casa* often portrayed Mayan Indigenous as not actively involved in the broader political struggles happening in Guatemala – including the struggle against Guatemala's racist, exclusionary state – and that, in the narratives provided, indigenous persons were often presented as not fighting back against their aggressors. For example, there is a sign that reads (translated):

"I stayed with my small, six-month old child, they grabbed me and they stabbed me and I still have the scars. I suffered because they raped me, I spent three nights where the soldiers were. They raped me in one night. I could not move because they threw me as if I was a ball. They covered my son's mouth and stabbed him in the back, and blood came out of my son's mouth, nose, and eyes. My son died. They left me with some of their companions and they took care of me and when they saw that I was better I started making them food."

The sign is attributed to an "Ixil Woman, witness at the trial for Genocide."

Similar to the other sites, I would suggest that this sort of narrative *flattens* the stories of indigenous persons. Contrary to a representation that would show indigenous persons as "participants and protagonists in broad struggles for social change" (*c.f.*

Oglesby and Ross 2009), I found that the first rooms of the *casa* often presented a narrative of the indigenous person as a victim of colonialism, and military violence.

The final rooms of the *casa* ask visitors to consider Guatemala's disappeared, and to reflect on the kind of Guatemalan they want to be. One shows black and white photographs of current Guatemalan youth in different settings. Interspersing the images are mirrors for visitors to look at themselves within the context of the museum. The last room contains a large quilt that drapes from the ceiling. The quilt was made by "survivors of the internal armed conflict" who today are part of the Association for Justice and Reconciliation, and contains pieces of fabric that have messages from surviving family members to family members lost during the conflict. Four large, rectangular acrylic prisms hold different colors of corn and beans – red, yellow, black, and white. The colors represent part of a constructed notion of Mayan identity, one in which the four colors point in four directions: north, south, east, and west, and represent attracting love, taking sadness away, cutting out negative energy, calming anxieties, and bringing health. These four colors are also part of the museum's logo⁹.

Returning now to an earlier discussion, the way the *casa* constructs social actors also flattens them; the universalizing story of the indigenous Guatemalan is told as if the indigenous person, from colonial times, was victim of colonial and neo-colonial racism, often enforced through the apparatus of an army presented as *ladino*. While a critical genealogy of space might render a similar reading, the act of constructing and essentializing groups and individuals in this way reduces their political worth as potentially complex social actors, and diminishes the complexity of the social milieu in

⁹ From guided tour fieldnotes.

which they operated and continue to operate. By blaming *ladinos*, the *casa* simultaneously, and relationally, presents *indígenas* as victim. This presentation of victimhood, I would argue, again thinking to Wodak's work on discourse (2009), produces and reproduces an indigenous "victim" and a particular way of knowing about the past.

Similar to the posters, the *casa* places persons disappeared alongside a narrative of massacres, and a larger story of indigenous social exclusion. These stories go together as part of "memory," (thinking again that this is the House of Memory), and as part of opposition to the exclusionary politics that underwrite landscapes of memory, and hegemonic representations of "history." The *casa* provides an opening for the story of innocent indigenous persons during the internal armed conflict, and a closing of the ways in which the complexity of the internal armed conflict is articulated. The 'truth' of the past becomes linked with specific effects of power, with a particular political project.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis I have used a multimodal Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of fieldnotes and photographs to explore how sites of memory present versions of the ‘truth’ about the violence of the past. I have paid particular attention to the ways the agency of groups and individuals is presented or, as I have argued, overlooked in these versions of the past. By ‘flattening’ the narratives about the persons presented, the three sites I examined fail to recognize those actors as *complex*. In particular, the lack of complexity in the narratives fails to account for the participation of diverse social actors in Guatemala, and instead reduces the dimensions of the violence.

The three sites presented the violence during the internal armed conflict (1960-1996) in ways that all seemed to reproduce a similar narrative: the army ‘won’. In the case of the posters and the *casa*, this meant constructing particular social actors as passive ‘victims’, and others (the army) as ruthless. In the case of the *museo*, it meant presenting the army as *defending* the republic, and defending the people. If we consider the sites to follow Pierre Nora’s model (1989) of places that “tie the past to the eternal present,” then Elizabeth Jelin’s (2002) notion of “memory against memory” seems most appropriate: the “collective memory” of the past, the memories presented at the different sites, are diverse and sometimes contradictory, and in constant competition. They are *memories* (plural) against one another.

Furthermore, rhetoric of “in Guatemala there was not genocide” may be a deliberate effort to “silence” the past, but there are groups that are not silenced, and there are “memories” or ways of articulating the past, such as ‘yes there was genocide’ or ‘yes there were disappearances’ that do not go away, simply because the current president or the military says otherwise.

Finally, if space is “symbolic, gendered, class-based, politicized and central to the reproduction of social life,” (Schein 2007) then places of memory are reflective of those relationships. As a contribution to literature on landscapes of memory, I have used a critical methodology to elucidate the ways sites of memory emerge from, and are reflective of, social tensions. I argue that “history” and “memory” are rooted in social tensions. I believe that “history” (as a verifiable fact) and “memory” (as an individual, subjective ‘truth’) may not be as productive an engagement with the past as one that seeks to understand the constituent relations underwriting commemorative efforts: namely, a study of the effects of power and contestation attached to the ‘truth’.

The data and theoretical perspective that I enrolled in this thesis provide a way of accessing particular representations of the past in Guatemala. I was not alive during the long centuries of violence in Guatemala and, particularly, during the counter-insurgency campaign in the Guatemalan highlands in the early 1980s that has been called, so contentiously, Guatemala’s “genocide.” Nor do I consider myself to be any sort of expert on particular events that form the “truth” of Guatemala’s past. Yet I am convinced that studying the polemics of memory making highlights the very active struggle for “truth,” and the ways in which “truth” is tied to the production of social space. I see my research as step in that direction.

The findings I present in this thesis merit further investigation, and application in different contexts. It could be, for example, that the memory “boom” discussed in Latin America is actually a memory “bust”. By that I mean that a growing interest in commemorating the past may be leading to a flattening of narratives about the past, and a reduction in the ways groups and individuals are presented.

It could be interesting to consider the “flattening” of particular narratives the different sites of memory as a variation of what Elizabeth Oglesby (2007) identified as the double movement of the truth commission report. It could be that the sites of memory I have chosen simultaneously open a space to talk about the past, while closing off the ways in which the complexity of the past is addressed, thus limiting different kinds of narratives about the past.

My work has shown that the places that present their work as “memory” are actually presenting simplified and one-sided *political* versions of the past, which I have referred to as a ‘flattening’ of the complexities of the political agency of the social actors depicted at the sites. If the narratives presented by sites of memory are restricted to an evil against a passive victim, rather than an active struggle against social, political, and economic exclusion, then “memory” as a political project may not be a way of truly addressing the exclusionary politics of the state. To this end, it would be useful to contextualize these sites within a study of more sites of memory in Guatemala: those created by the state, and those created in opposition to the state’s official story of a just war. Doing so would enable seeing how different narratives become produced and reproduced on the landscape. It would be useful to analyze the images present at the

different sites of memory for their semiotics, and for their overall image composition, to enhance multimodal landscape studies.

A shortcoming in this thesis is that it does not address what Holloway (2000) would call the “geographic contingency” of particular social movements in the city (in this case, Guatemala City) which caused it to be a place for overlapping instructions, and diverse and sometimes contradictory narratives. To this end, it would be useful to engage in a discussion on particular moments of power relations, including the political possibilities and limitations of social movements in Guatemala City.

Being able to have a discussion about the ways gender, race, and socioeconomic relations are inscribed with, and reproductive of power, and how particular social movements depict social actors as more (or less) complex provides a lifetime of scholarship on which I hope to embark.

My hope is that the discussion I have engaged on sites of memory will lead to avenues of inquiry that highlight the active struggle of memory as sites of political struggle, where sites of memory are physical manifestations of a past and present where ‘truth’ is productive and reproductive of instances of power.

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Map of the Sites of Memory

Guatemala City

