Pricing Suffering: Compensation for Human Rights Violations in Colombia and Peru

Although transitional justice (TJ) has been used to mobilize substantial financial resources with the aim of compensating victims of civil conflict, little is known about how countries come to drastically different reparation sums. In Colombia, the budget for compensation is $2.5 billion and started to be implemented during conflict, while Peru adopted compensation after conflict allocating only $37.4 million. This project investigates the following questions: 1) how do states monetarily value suffering caused by civil conflict? 2) How, if at all, does the compensation of suffering that occurs during civil conflict, as in the Colombian case, compare with compensation that occurs after civil conflict, as in the Peruvian case? This dissertation employs theories of reparation and cultural-economic sociology to examine how each country valued suffering and why they followed different paths to compensate victims. Combining newspapers, official documentation and interviews this project reconstructs the history of each compensation strategy and establishes the different forms that compensation for civil conflict can take.