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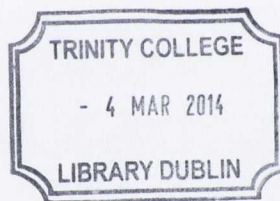
UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

*Meaningful Practices of Citizenship in
Urban Middle-Class Peru
The Case of Political Blogging*

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By
Franka C. Winter

August 2013

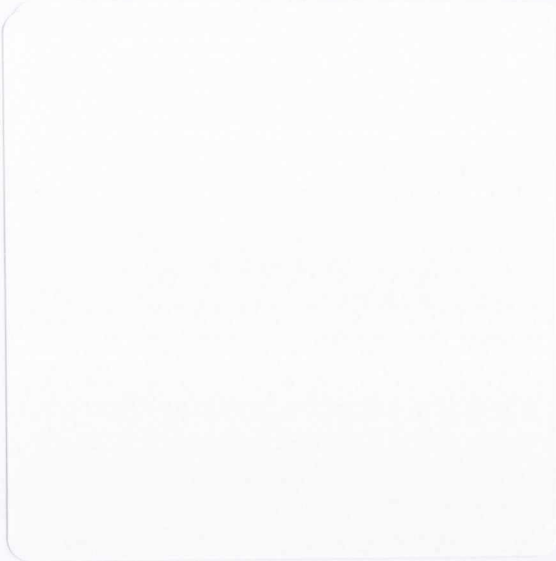


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SUMMARY

This thesis discusses political blogging as a meaningful praxis of citizenship among members of the (traditional) urban middle classes in post-transitional Peru. It examines the meanings political bloggers attach to citizenship and the ways in which these meanings translate into practice, taking into account the historical, social, and political context of post-transitional Peru. The thesis asks:

- What do political bloggers (as members of the urban middle classes) understand by “citizenship” and where do they draw the limits of citizenship?
- How do these meanings relate to and are shaped by the post-transitional context?
- How do they see blogging as citizenship in “real life”?
- What are the exclusionary practices resulting from the “limits of citizenship”?

The thesis argues that Peruvian bloggers’ notions of citizenship emphasised vigilance and deliberation, rather than rights and inclusion. In the historical context of post-transitional Peru, memories of mass media corruption and perceptions of structural and cultural continuity played an important role in shaping the meanings and practices of citizenship.

Vigilant and deliberative citizenship assumed a link with marginality, which formed a crucial precondition for being a “good” and credible citizen. It was furthermore linked to a specific mindset and understood in terms of “remembering the past/interpreting the present differently”, keeping checks on “the powerful”, and “correcting” collective memories that idealised the Fujimori government. In relationship to the wider public sphere, many bloggers perceived the blogosphere as such a “marginal” space, where deliberative and vigilant citizenship could be practiced.

However, others felt that the “real-existing” blogosphere was not a suitable space for either deliberation or vigilance: because actual bloggers “lacked marginality” and used power against other bloggers (restricting their vigilant and deliberative activities); because the blogosphere was too homogenous for meaningful deliberation; or, as others argued, too polarised and aggressive.

Examining practices of “exclusion through citizenship”, the thesis finally argues that the construction of deliberative citizenship went along with the construction of its “constitutive outside” (Butler 1993): that which doesn’t count as civic. I call these boundaries the “limits of deliberation”. Overstepping these limits could result in being branded a “troll” (essentially a non-citizen, who can be excluded and subjected to abuse, becoming the object, rather than subject of vigilant citizenship) and being excluded from deliberation. While bloggers were eager to stress that the limits of deliberation referred to offensive speech only and should not affect political dissent, I shall show that in praxis drawing the line between the political and the offensive was not always easy. This was particularly true in struggles over collective memories and the interpretation of the recent past and its legacy in contemporary Peru.

The thesis draws on qualitative and quantitative data, including semi-structured interviews, observational data, debates from the Peruvian blogosphere, and biographic surveys. These were analysed using tools of Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis.

From a disciplinary focus of political sociology, the thesis contributes to the wider field of citizenship studies by studying the meanings, practices, and restrictions of citizenship “on the ground”. More specifically, it contributes both to citizenship studies and to wider sociological issues in Peru by focussing on notions and practices of citizenship among the (traditional) urban middle classes, a sector of Peruvian society which to date has received very limited scholarly attention.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"It takes a village to write a thesis"

(Traditional North-Belfast Proverb)

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that no doctoral thesis can come to completion without the contributions of many people in addition to its author." (Austen 2013, p.1, slightly amended).

I am very grateful indeed to my supervisor, Dr David Tombs, for his outstanding supervision and support. I am equally obliged to the many people who were willing to talk to me, shared their experiences and points of view, and supported my research during my fieldwork in Lima. Without their collaboration, I would not have been able to write this thesis. Likewise, I am indebted to Dr Iain Atack and Dr Trevor Stack who, in their function as internal and external examiners, took the time to read my thesis and provided helpful comments, which have contributed to making this a better work.

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It is also true that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (Woolf 2001, p.6), and what are the social sciences other than “historically specific storytelling practices” (Haraway 1986, p.79)? The Irish School of Ecumenics in Belfast kindly provided the room, while Trinity College Dublin generously awarded a four-year research studentship to cover the cost of everyday life, as well as a travel grant to carry out fieldwork in Lima.

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INTRODUCTION

In the early days of my doctoral research, I attended a workshop on doing research in the “developing world”. The event, seemingly, targeted people like me – PhD students who were about to embark on a research project in the “developing world” and/or topics related to human development. I went, I explained my research proposal. I was told that this was all very interesting, but that if I wanted “The Real Thing”, I would have to go to the countryside and live among the rural poor. This anonymous academic was not alone in his disdain for the urban middle classes as a research topic.

The Social Sciences and the Peruvian Middle Classes

In a working paper published in 1998, the Peruvian sociologist Liuba Kogan wrote that “both the upper middle classes and the world of non-profit organisations in these sectors have been almost invisible realities to the eyes of social scientists” (Kogan 1998a)¹. In 2000, her colleague Javier Díaz-Albertini joined her, arguing that “in general we can see that there are few elements of middle-class identity which have been analysed systematically” (Díaz-Albertini Figueras 2000, p.30). Kogan explained this lack of interest with the necessity, felt by her colleagues, to justify their choice of research object morally and ideologically (Kogan 1998b). Faced with the relative numerical insignificance of this social sector compared to the vast numbers of urban and rural poor, she argued, focussing on the relatively accommodated middle classes felt just wrong.

Fifteen years after Kogan’s statement, and in spite of the Inter-American development Bank now considering Peru “one of the most stable middle-income economies of the region” (Jaramillo & Zambrano 2013, p.1) with a middle class of between 40 and 50 percent of the population, little has changed in the social sciences: a bibliography relating to the Peruvian middle class, published in late 2012, listed only six works (Parker & Walker 2012, p.220). While this list is certainly incomplete, it is fair to say that in contrast to other, more traditionally “middle-class” South American countries, such as Chile and Argentina, the landscape of sociological and anthropological research on the contemporary Peruvian (upper-) middle classes continues to be sparsely populated. Instead, as Toche put it,

“The dominant tendency in social research [in Peru] has been to examine those groups who are positioned at one of the extremes of the social scale (the poor and the extremely poor), leaving aside both the middle and the dominant upper sectors,

¹ Unless stated otherwise, all translations are mine.

whose study as an elite has been limited to the role of entrepreneurs and to their relationship with central power.” (2010, p.299)

Paradoxically, this observation applies even to the limited body of research on the Peruvian middle classes. One of the recurrent themes in the literature refers to the internal heterogeneity of the Peruvian middle class, which has become increasingly diversified during the second half of the 20th century as a result of the social transformations which anthropologist José Matos Mar termed the “popular overflow” [desborde popular] (Matos Mar 1985). For this reason, social scientists now prefer to speak of the “middle classes”, in plural (Zolezzi Chocano 2003; Toche et al. 2003; Pedraglio 2003), containing at least two groups: the “traditional” and the so-called “emergent” middle classes. Much of Peruvian middle-class research has concentrated on the latter (e.g. Pedraglio 2003; Zolezzi Chocano 2003). Consisting largely of internal migrants, these sectors have attracted much more interest from researchers of the middle classes than their more traditional, culturally (if not necessarily economically (Toche et al. 2003)) established “white” or “mestizo” counterparts.

Furthermore, due to the often difficult access to research funding for social scientists in Peru², much of the research on the Peruvian middle classes draws on big surveys conducted by market research companies or the state, often complemented by a limited number of focus groups (see for example Pedraglio 2003). As a result, these studies tend to concentrate on patterns of consumption, “attitudes”, and quantifiable characteristics, such as household income, occupation, and education (e.g. Pedraglio 2003; Arellano 2010; Arellano & Burgos 2010), trying, as best they can, to draw conclusions about the more “subjective” aspects of being middle-class.

The findings of these studies are certainly helpful, and I shall draw on them throughout this thesis, in particular in chapter III. However, they have their limitations, too. These have been spelled out by several Peruvian social scientists, most notably Portocarrero Maisch, who contrasted two ways of approaching the middle classes:

“We have two ideas about the middle class. The first arises when people define their own social identity and it therefore refers to their beliefs and customs. The second one appears when we try to account for social differentiation and stress the distances between income levels and access to power, leaving aside – or losing sight of – the community of values, sentiments, and customs. An approach to social differentiation restricted to classifying people according to their income or occupation (...) leaves aside the importance of the imaginary and of its effect on identity (...). In fact, what brings people together and makes them act together, as Anderson has pointed out, is

² Kogan has pointed to the problem of funding. She links social scientists’ lack of interest in the “dominant sectors” of Peruvian society to the circumstance that international research funding is more readily available for topics which are perceived to have an impact on human development (1998b).

the feeling of being part of a defined collective (...). In turn, coinciding economic interests will hardly on its own create the foundations of the loyalties needed for collective strategic action.” (1998, p.15)

Clearly, the former approach is preferred both by Portocarrero and those who built on his contribution. For example, Zolezzi Chocano claims that “the social classes in Peru (...) cannot be truly understood if the only thing we do is stressing patterns of consumption, income, access to credit or other more traditional criteria, such as status or education” (2003, p.189). Similarly, Toche argues that:

“We need more qualitative approaches, which would allow us to fathom the supposed identities which these sectors recreate, and the social project which they aspire to construct or maintain on the grounds of their patterns of consumption, their conduct and their narratives [imaginarios].” (2010, p.292)

Toche’s reference to identities and social projects is immediately relevant for this study of urban middle-class citizenship. Drawing on a notion of citizenship as a meaningful praxis – something we do in order to be “good citizens” and in ways which reflect our understanding of what it means to be a citizen (see chapter I) – this thesis combines a focus on narratives with one on practices. However, these practices are not (or at least, not exclusively) located in the realm of consumption, but in the field of everyday politics and citizenship.

Middle-Class Citizenship

The general scarcity of research on the urban (upper-) middle classes of Peru mirrors the situation in citizenship studies. In the Peruvian case, most works in this field concentrate on marginalised sectors of society, such as indigenous, peasant and poor urban communities (Cárdenas et al. 2005; Diez 1999; Garcia 2005; Malengreau 2009; Molinari Morales 2008; Neuser 2009; Pomar Ampuero 1997; Reátegui 2009; Ríos Barrientos & Armas Alvarado 2006; Tanaka & Ames 1999; Vigil & Zariquiey 2003), internal, rural-to-urban migrants (Rodríguez Robles 1997; Mendoza Gallo 1997; Degregori et al. 1986), rural and “popular” urban women (Villanueva Díaz 2006; Durand Guevara 2006; Chávez Pais 1997; Pieper Mooney 2010; Cueva & Millán 2002), urban youth (Rosas 2010; Herrera et al. 2000; Macassi Lavander 2001; Hiraoka & Gordillo 2005), children (Liebel & Martínez Muñoz 2009), mental health (Pimentel Sevilla 2009) and HIV patients (López 2011), popular movements (Escárzaga 2009; Schönwälder 2002), LGBT (Bracamonte Allain 2001), domestic workers (Ojeda Parra 2005), or human rights activists (Drzewieniecki 2002). As in the case of rural women or young migrants (Rosas 2010; Villanueva Díaz 2006; Durand Guevara 2006), many studies also take an intersectional approach, focussing on the marginalised among the marginal. In addition, citizenship research on the – largely urban middle-class – feminist movement has tended to focus on the marginalising aspect of gender, rather than the privileging aspect of class (Vargas & Olea

1999). In spite of the middle-class extraction of these women, they can thus be considered part of a body of research on “marginal citizenship”.

The predominant focus on marginalised sectors of society has had an impact on the notions of citizenship that have been discussed in Peruvian citizenship studies. As I shall argue in chapter I, citizenship is often defined in terms of rights, inclusion, and participation, and appears as a desideratum (e.g. Reátegui 2009) that has yet to be constructed, rather than as a meaningful praxis in everyday life – it is thus studied in its own absence. However, some evidence suggests that notions of citizenship and the practices through which they are expressed are not uniform across society, but differ between societies (Turner 1997) and along the lines of difference and inequality that shape each society more broadly (Cárdenas et al. 2005; Kogan 1998a; Loveday Laghi 2002; Marquardt 2012; Portocarrero Suárez et al. 2004; Rousseau 2009; Ríos Barrientos & Armas Alvarado 2006; Sanborn 2001; Schild 2000; Stepputat 2004; Theidon 2003; Yezer 2007).

In highly unequal societies (such as the Peruvian), studying marginalised groups and their claims to and notions of citizenship is without doubt important and insightful; however, inequality by definition involves both the marginalised and those who are not, those who have relatively easy access to services, decisions, and agenda-setting as much as those who do not enjoy these privileges to quite the same degree. If we accept the assumption that citizenship differs along the lines of social inequality in both quantitative and qualitative terms, then I believe that we can learn a lot from paying as much attention to the (upper-) middle classes as to the marginalised sectors of society. Not least because it is often urban middle-class people who develop and carry out citizenship-related policies and programmes, it is important to critically examine what they understand by citizenship and how these understandings translate into praxis. With respect to these citizens, “The Real Thing” cannot be found in the countryside, but rather in certain spaces within the city of Lima and the metropolises of the global North, including, as I shall argue in this thesis, its political blogosphere.

This thesis thus addresses notions of citizenship among political bloggers from Lima, a community whose members belong mostly to the (upper-) middle classes. Examining their narratives of blogging-as-citizenship, I found that they stressed mainly the vigilant and deliberative aspects of being a citizen³, rather than rights and inclusion. Many of them saw

³ While their notions and practices of citizenship allow us, to a certain degree, to “generalise” in relation to their peers, the heterogeneity of the Peruvian middle class mentioned above is an important limiting factor. At the same time, others have pointed out that there is substantial diversity even within one and the same family (Arellano 2010; Arellano & Burgos 2010). The scope of my conclusions is limited by this diversity.

blogging as a way of practising this particular notion of citizenship. However, at the same time, their narratives of deliberative and vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere were highly sceptical, and their practices of citizenship sometimes seemed to clash with their democratic discourse. Focussing on citizenship as a meaningful praxis can help us make sense of these apparent “contradictions” by taking into account their specific context.

The Argument

This thesis examines the meanings and practices of citizenship among members of the urban middle classes in post-transitional Peru, using the example of political blogging as a meaningful praxis of citizenship. The thesis asks:

- What do political bloggers (as members of the urban middle classes) understand by “citizenship” and where do they draw the limits of citizenship?
- How do these meanings relate to and are shaped by the post-transitional context?
- How do bloggers see blogging as citizenship in “real life”?
- What are the exclusionary practices resulting from the “limits of citizenship”?

I shall argue that in the case of Peruvian bloggers, notions of citizenship emphasised vigilance and deliberation, rather than rights and inclusion. In the historical context of post-transitional Peru, vigilance and deliberation took on specific meanings and were linked to a strong democratic discourse.

Following the experience of the Fujimori regime (1990-2000), which was characterised by blatant media corruption and manipulation, many political bloggers felt that little had changed after the transition and that the wider public sphere continued to be corrupt, manipulative and politically biased. Bloggers’ collective memories of recent historical media regimes and their shared perceptions of structural and cultural continuity played a particularly important role both in the definition of citizenship in terms of vigilance and deliberation and in the ways in which these meanings were translated into practice.

In this context, the civic practices of vigilance and deliberation assumed a link with marginality, which formed a crucial precondition for being a “good” vigilant and deliberative citizen. Deliberative and vigilant citizenship was linked to a specific mindset and understood in terms of “remembering the past/interpreting the present differently”, keeping checks on “the powerful”, and “correcting” collective memories that idealised the Fujimori government. In relationship to the wider public sphere, many bloggers perceived the blogosphere as such a “marginal” space, where deliberative and vigilant citizenship could be practised.

However, in praxis, many bloggers felt that for several reasons, the “real-existing” blogosphere was not a suitable space for either deliberation or vigilance: because actual bloggers “lacked marginality” – a crucial precondition for remembering history and interpreting the past “differently” and for keeping checks on “the powerful”; because they used power against other, “truly marginal” bloggers in order to restrict their vigilant and deliberative activities so they would not be heard; because there simply were not enough different opinions available in what some bloggers perceived to be a highly politically homogenous space; or, as others argued, because the blogosphere was a highly polarised and predatory environment and bloggers lacked a true commitment to debate, instead reacting aggressively to dissent.

Picking up these criticisms, the thesis finally examines practices of “exclusion through citizenship”. By “exclusion through citizenship”, I mean the exclusions that happen *as a result of* vigilant and deliberative citizenship in praxis, rather than simply exclusion *from* the status of citizenship. As several theorists of citizenship have argued, exclusion is an intrinsic element of citizenship, “since that which includes must by definition exclude” (Isin & Turner 2002, p.5). I shall argue that the gap between bloggers’ democratic discourse and their experience of the “real existing blogosphere”, between their narrative and their praxis of blogging, can be understood by focussing on the “constitutive outside” (Butler 1993) of deliberative citizenship. In the case of deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere, the constitutive outside of citizenship was constructed along the lines of what I call the “limits of deliberation”: a tacit consensus between bloggers regarding what constitutes deliberation – and is thus a legitimate praxis of citizenship – and what is beyond its limits. While bloggers were eager to stress that political dissent was protected, in praxis the line between “the offensive” and “the political” was not always easy to draw and needed to be constantly negotiated. These difficulties were particularly pronounced when it came to problems relating to the post-transitional condition, such as struggles over remembrance and the interpretation of the legacy of Fujimorism. Overstepping the “limits of deliberation” meant risking one’s status as a citizen. The figure of the “troll” represented this “constitutive outside” of the deliberative citizen. As a non-citizen, who could legitimately be excluded from participation and submitted to abuse, without threatening the validity of the equally important democratic discourse of blogging as a praxis of citizenship, the “troll” became the object of vigilant citizenship.

Thesis Outline

The thesis is structured as follows: starting out from a discussion of theoretical approaches to vigilant and deliberative citizenship, Chapter I introduces my approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis – something we do in order to be good citizens and in ways that reflect our

understanding of what it means to be a citizen (and also where the limits of citizenship are). This approach is inherently empirical, as it focuses on people's views about, and ways of doing and restricting, citizenship. As a result, it is also inherently sociological, as it necessarily situates and explains notions and practices of citizenship within and in relation to a particular historical, social and political context, rather than aspiring to universal concepts.

My approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis places my work within a wider field of citizenship research, in Peru and elsewhere in Latin America, which emphasises both the discursive and the practical aspects of citizenship. However, as mentioned above, much of this research has concentrated on marginalised sectors of society, as a result stressing inclusion-based and rights-based notions of citizenship. As notions and practices of citizenship are not uniform across society, these are not necessarily the most relevant aspects of citizenship for more privileged sectors of society. Examining Peruvian bloggers' narratives of blogging-as-citizenship, I shall argue that to them, vigilance and deliberation were more salient than rights and inclusion.

This opening chapter is followed by a discussion of the philosophy and methodology that informed my research and of the methods I used in collecting, processing, and analysing my data (Chapter II). My theoretical approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis has been most strongly shaped by theorists located within the post-structuralist tradition of interpretative sociology, a background which finds its expression in my interest in narratives and the discursive construction of citizenship and its outside.

Chapter III addresses the demographics of blogging, arguing that as a praxis of citizenship, blogging belongs to the political "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977) of urban (upper-) middle-class people – in Peru as elsewhere. I shall argue that this is not only a question of access, but also one that reflects the importance of vigilance and deliberation in the political subjectivities of members of the urban middle classes. In demographic terms, I found that the most influential bloggers were highly educated and had attended universities which were traditionally associated with and preferred by the "traditional" upper middle classes. As journalists, columnists, academics, politicians, lawyers, political cartoonists, civil servants and trade unionists, a substantial part of them also had relatively privileged access to the public sphere, independently of their blogging activities. There was also a strong gender imbalance, with 91.7% of the most influential political bloggers in the studied blogging directory being men. Although as socially constructed categories ethnicity and "race" are hard to define (let alone "measure"), most of these bloggers would likely be considered "whites" by most Peruvians. Almost all of them lived in Lima.

The following three chapters address blogging as a meaningful praxis of citizenship. Chapter IV offers a historical contextualization of notions of citizenship in post-transitional Peru, from the perspective of bloggers' memories of the Fujimori regime (1990-2000) and their perceptions of contemporary Peru. As an alternative medium and praxis of vigilant and deliberative citizenship, the meanings of blogging-as-citizenship have been constructed in dialogue with the wider public sphere and with a locally-specific understanding of the role and position of mass media in the political field. The experience of a recent media history of political violence, authoritarianism, and corruption, as well as of the current structure of the Peruvian media landscape, played an important role in how this understanding was constructed, and even though by the time of my fieldwork, ten years had passed since the democratic transition, many bloggers felt that the past was anything but over. The chapter therefore pays particular attention to bloggers' narratives of historical and contemporary media regimes. Both as an object and as a source, mass media played an important role in the way bloggers' collective memories of Fujimorism were constructed.

I suggest that both the corrupted mass media of the 1990s and continuities in media corruption networks constitute a counterpoint or negative other against which bloggers can construct their own political subjectivities as vigilant and deliberative citizens. At the same time, being a blogger-citizen meant addressing cultural continuity by engaging with popular historical narratives. In practice, this translated into what I call "corrective strategies": faced with a heroic narrative of Fujimorism (Barrantes Segura & Peña Romero 2006) and aggressive media representations similar to those presented during the Fujimori regime, bloggers felt that critically "deconstructing" these narratives and "remembering history/interpreting the present differently" was an ethical imperative – an expression of "good citizenship".

Chapter V explores my interviewees' narratives of blogging and the Peruvian blogosphere as a possible space for the construction of vigilant and deliberative citizenship. I identify two different narratives, both of which draw on a counter-public normative framework, but differ in their assessment of the "real-existing" blogosphere as a space for the construction of vigilant and deliberative citizenship. The first, "idealistic" narrative shares certain elements with a wider discourse on blogging in the global South that exceeds the Peruvian context. It constructs the blogosphere as a marginal space in relation to the wider public sphere and stresses bloggers' ability to publish and discuss alternative information and ideas. In this sense, the "idealistic" narrative of blogging imagines the blogosphere as an empowering space, where the construction of vigilant and deliberative citizenship "against the state" becomes possible.

This narrative is challenged by a more sceptical account, which questions the degree to which vigilance and deliberation are possible within the Peruvian blogosphere. Sharing its idealistic counterpart's normative emphasis on marginality, this narrative nevertheless criticises the "real-existing" blogosphere for maintaining close links with the wider public sphere, a discursive moment which I call "lack of marginality". Bloggers with links to "power" were seen as poor citizens, as marginality constituted a crucial precondition for both vigilance and deliberation. This "critical" narrative furthermore denounced unequal power relations within the blogosphere, which led to the marginalisation of less influential bloggers, as well as a lack of debating culture in what was perceived as an aggressive and predatory environment. For these reasons, the "critical" narrative of blogging considered the blogosphere unsuitable for either vigilance or deliberation, describing it as a hierarchical space governed by dynamics of exclusion, marginalisation, and violence, rather than inclusion, empowerment and peaceful dialogue.

Finally, chapter VI picks up these criticisms by examining vigilant and deliberative citizenship in the context of the Peruvian blogosphere regarding its practices of exclusion. Drawing mainly on observational data, I shall show that in the Peruvian blogosphere, "deliberation", while embedded in a pluralist discourse, had clear boundaries; I call these boundaries the "limits of deliberation". Many bloggers did not perceive these restrictions to be at odds with democratic narratives of blogging and freedom of speech, but stressed that the "limits of deliberation" referred to abusive speech and should not affect political content. However, I shall show that this line is not always easy to draw.

Bloggers have various ways of policing the blogosphere in order to ensure that these limits are not violated, or otherwise to sanction those who do violate them. This meant that vigilant citizenship was not always and not only directed against "those in power", e.g. politicians, the government, or big companies, but also took place within the blogosphere and among its bloggers and commentators.

Addressing the regulated subject, I shall argue that those who are excluded from participation in public discourse for overstepping the "limits of deliberation" can be conceptualised as "non-citizens". Using the case of the Facebook group "No a Keiko", whose aim was to prevent Fujimori's daughter Keiko from winning the 2011 presidential elections, I shall show in detail how the "limits of deliberation" were coupled with a strong democratic discourse which valued freedom of speech and plurality. Initially restricted to abusive speech, these limits became progressively tighter and were soon used to govern dissent more broadly. I shall discuss the figure of the "troll", which I approach as the "constitutive outside" or "abject"

(Butler 1993) of the vigilant and deliberative citizen. As a “non-citizen”, the “troll” was excluded from the practices of deliberative citizenship and became the object of vigilant citizenship. I shall argue that the construction of the “troll” as a non-citizen included a dehumanising discourse, which cast it as vermin and prompted members of the group to suggest and engage in measures akin to “pest control”.

I shall finally conclude by pulling together the strands of this thesis, reflecting on the benefits of studying citizenship as a meaningful praxis and taking context into account.

CHAPTER I: CITIZENSHIP AS A MEANINGFUL PRAXIS

In this chapter, I shall develop an approach to studying citizenship as a meaningful praxis: not simply a status that people “have”, but something they “do” or “perform” in ways that are meaningful to them and that reflect their understanding of what “being a (good) citizen” means. This approach reflects a notion of citizenship that stresses political and moral subjectivity over other dimensions discussed in citizenship studies. By choosing this approach, my thesis joins a growing body of research on the meanings and practices of citizenship, in Peru and elsewhere.

However, research on citizenship as a meaningful praxis in Peru has tended to focus on marginalised groups in society, highlighting as a result notions of citizenship that stress rights and inclusion. Nevertheless, some research suggests that notions of citizenship are not uniform across society. Not least because of the important role the urban (upper-) middle classes play in developing policy, both in the public sector and in NGOs, we can learn a lot by diversifying the focus of citizenship research in Peru and elsewhere in Latin America and including these more privileged sectors into the picture. Throughout this thesis, I shall explore political blogging as an urban middle-class praxis of citizenship. In the final part of this chapter, I shall argue that political blogging enacts notions of citizenship which highlight vigilance and deliberation, rather than rights and inclusion.

Why Citizenship?

In its early stages, this study was not about citizenship. I initially set out to study political bloggers in post-transitional Peru, the meanings they attached to blogging, and the political uses they made of blogs and social media within the context of post-transitional Peru. Reflecting my earlier research on the social construction and performance of truth in the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this early version of the project put much stronger emphasis on the post-transitional condition, as well as on the praxis and meanings of blogging within this context. However, already at that stage, one of my more specific research questions referred to bloggers’ own understanding of their activities, to their ethics, and their moral and political subjectivities. I discussed these topics with my participants during our interviews, and they grew increasingly important as my thesis developed.

As an analytical category, the notion of citizenship was introduced later, when I returned from my fieldwork and began to work through my data. I decided to use the concept of citizenship

as a theoretical lense through which to approach my data. This was both an analytical choice and one that emerged from my interviewees' narratives of blogging: the notion resonated with my interviewees' accounts of blogging, which often framed blogging in terms of citizenship, either explicitly or implicitly, by using a language and imagery which is usually linked to citizenship.

It was also an analytical choice in the sense that it responded to my growing interest in my participants' political subjectivities, which called for a concept that could adequately describe these subject positions. As a political and moral subjectivity that is constructed through the act of relating the self to a wider political community and the state, citizenship appeared as a particularly useful notion to achieve this aim. This analytical interest also shaped my use of the term citizenship. As I shall argue on the following pages, citizenship is an elastic term, which has been filled with many different meanings and combines many different, equally important aspects. I do not aim to do justice to all of these "ingredients", but shall instead focus on one particular aspect by approaching citizenship as a political and moral subjectivity, which I shall discuss at greater length later in this chapter.

Multiple Notions of Citizenship

Citizenship is a notoriously imprecise term. Not only are everyday "meanings of 'citizenship' (...) shaped over time and through cultural struggles" (Knight Abowitz & Harnish 2006)¹; even in scholarly discourse, a multiplicity of different conceptions of and approaches to citizenship coexist. In Joppke's words, literature in the field suffers from

"A high degree of segmentation, as a result of which citizenship is many things to many people. In fact, the notion of citizenship studies (...) suggests the existence of a joint (if naturally contested) frame of reference, which in reality does not exist." (Joppke 2007, p.37)

Heater even describes citizenship as "a 'Humpty-Dumpty' word, in danger of crashing into fragments while asserting that it means just what it chooses to mean" (2004, p.vii). Monge, in his concluding remarks on a series of papers presented at a 1998 conference on *Democracy, Citizenship, and the Autonomy of Politics in Peru*², makes a similar observation: he identifies citizenship as one of the "analytical categories which have been used repeatedly throughout

¹ A growing body of research in the social sciences and humanities focuses on the contextual negotiation of meanings of citizenship. A substantial part of this research explores the meanings of citizenship in the context of struggles for inclusion and rights, e.g. (Idris 2012; Rasch 2011; Harewood 2008; Earle 2012; Holston 2008). These studies thus tend to focus on historically marginalised groups in society.

² The full original title of this conference was "La democracia, la ciudadanía y la autonomía de lo político: tres entradas para repensar lo político en el Perú".

the debate, but without clarity over what they mean, nor what relations are being established between them" (1999, p.367). He adds:

"It would be necessary to reach a minimum consensus about what is meant by citizenship, civil society, or rights, among other things. (...) In many cases, dialogue is complicated to the degree that [contributions] don't start from the same suppositions when treating these subjects." (1999, p.380)

This diversity of approaches and concepts is partly due to the multiple facets of citizenship in different contexts, which, as Taylor and Wilson caution, "is not reducible to a single definition; rather it requires and encourages interpretation, thus making the idea both exciting and useful for a wide range of people precisely because its meanings are fluid and flexible" (2004, p.155).

Political theory offers a number of different notions of citizenship, which are not always easy to reconcile (Joppke 2007). As a general rule, however, these different notions can mostly be assigned to one of two overarching notions, often referred to as the "liberal" and "republican" traditions of citizenship theory. Kymlicka and Norman describe these two notions as "citizenship-as-a-legal-status, that is, as full membership in a particular political community; and citizenship-as-a-desirable-activity, where the extent and quality of one's citizenship is a function of one's participation in that community" (1994, p.353). Delanty summarises this distinction as follows:

"In the first case what is usually intended is nationality, while in the second sense what is normally meant is a more active kind of citizenship, not in the sense of the conservative discourse of the 1980s but of participation and democratization." (Delanty 2000, p.9)

These two conceptions are complemented by an overarching dimension of citizenship, namely citizenship as "identity, an expression of one's membership in a political community" (Kymlicka & Norman 1994, p.369).

Citizenship-as-a-legal-status and citizenship-as-a-desirable-activity can furthermore be distinguished according to their emphasis on either of two common attributes of citizenship, namely rights and responsibilities. While the liberal approach to citizenship-as-a-legal-status emphasises "the formal capacities and immunities connected with such a status" (Joppke 2007, p.38), the republican notion puts more emphasis on civic virtue and active participation.

In this thesis, I use the term citizenship to describe a *political and moral subjectivity*, and I approach this subjectivity by studying it as a meaningful praxis: something people do or perform in ways that reflect their understanding of what it means to be a citizen. This take on citizenship is closer to the "republican", activity-based model than to the "liberal" idea which stresses rights and memberships. On the following pages, I shall first clarify my use of the term

citizenship as a political and moral subjectivity; following this, I shall discuss my approach to studying citizenship as a meaningful praxis.

A Political and Moral Subjectivity

The way I use the term citizenship in this thesis refers to *a political and moral subjectivity, through which an individual relates to a wider political community and constitutes him- or herself as a member of this community*. This process implies consequences (discussed in the literature mostly in terms of rights and responsibilities), and grappling with these consequences (accepting, rejecting, or renegotiating them) forms an important part of the continuous construction of citizenship as a subjectivity.

The term “continuous” in the previous sentence points to an important aspect of my use of the term citizenship: a subjectivity-centred notion of citizenship is different from one that stresses status³, in that the former describes a phenomenon in flux and an active relationship. We can understand this difference better by briefly discussing the notion of subjectivity and distinguishing it from the concept of identity: while the latter implies sameness (a stable “I”, a description of who we are), the concept of subjectivity refers to our ever-changing and contextual relationship with ourselves, constructed in the process of relating to a wider community. This notion thus stresses both relativity and fluidity: in terms of identity and legal status we are citizens or not, while in terms of subjectivity we are citizens inasmuch as we understand ourselves to be citizens, relate to others from this subject-position, and act according to our understanding of what it means to be a citizen. This also means that the consequences (or attributes) of citizenship, such as rights and responsibilities, cannot be defined once and forever, but are constructed, reconstructed, or changed precisely in the act of relating to them.

Finally, above I referred to citizenship as a political and *moral* subjectivity. While the term “moral” rarely appears explicitly in this thesis, it plays an important part in pinpointing my particular focus: much of my argument throughout the chapters of this thesis refers to the normativity of my interviewees’ notions of citizenship and its implications for their civic praxis. These questions are impossible to avoid when we look at citizenship as a political subjectivity: because the notion of subjectivity entails the co-construction of a double relationship (by relating to the wider community we also figure out who and what we are), it is potentially an intensely intimate and emotional process, which is inextricably linked to our understanding of the good life, our values, our sameness, and our difference. This moral condition of citizenship

³ This does not mean that citizenship as a status is an obsolete concept. However, it is a different notion, which helps to shed light on different questions.

as a subjectivity is best captured in the notion of “good citizenship”, and it has implications both for the meanings and for the praxis of citizenship. For this reason, I chose to study these subjectivities by approaching them as meaningful practices. I shall discuss this approach on the following pages.

Citizenship as a Meaningful Practice

The overarching approach to citizenship I shall adopt in this thesis frames citizenship as a *meaningful praxis*: something people “do” or “perform” in ways that reflect their understanding of what it means to be a citizen, rather than simply a political status, a set of rights, or a feeling of belonging. This theoretical choice is based on the observation, expressed by Isin and Turner, that:

“Rather than merely focussing on citizenship as legal rights, there is now agreement that citizenship must also be defined as a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming, expanding or losing rights. Being politically engaged means practising substantive citizenship, which in turn implies that members of a polity always struggle to shape its fate. Such developments have led to a sociologically informed definition of citizenship in which the emphasis is less on legal rules and more on norms, practices, meanings, and identities.” (2002, p.4)

Unlike in the case of citizenship as rights or status, an approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis cannot draw on a “quantitative” assessment: it looks neither for a lack, nor an expansion of citizenship, but asks *how* citizenship is understood, enacted, and limited on an everyday level. This approach draws attention to two interrelated aspects of citizenship: the aspect of praxis, and the aspect of meaning. The former is expressed in Procacci’s definition, according to which

“Citizenship has not been synonymous with belonging to a community, it rather expresses a practice of such belonging; it consists less in a way of being, than a way of acting. The political issue under citizenship is not communitarian identity, but public activity.” (2008, p.342)

Similar approaches have been used in studies of citizenship in Peru and elsewhere in the Andean region and Latin America. For example, Ciurlizza argues that “citizenship cannot be exhaustively described by its judicial-political definition, but acquires sense in its daily exercise. The praxis of citizenship permanently feeds into the concept” (1999, p.302). Stepputat, in turn, argues that “more than a status, we may regard citizenship as a set of practices of state–citizen relations, since state institutions treat *de jure* citizens in differentiated ways according to hegemonic imaginations and standards of ‘proper citizens’, as civilised and virtuous members of the polis” (2004, p.244, f.). A very similar definition is offered by Lazar, who frames citizenship as:

“A bundle of practices that constitute encounters between the state and citizens, rather than simply a legal status accorded to those who are ‘full members of a community.’ Key to this are the processes and practices that make someone a full member of a given community, rather than the end result itself. Historically, citizenship has always been understood in part as a project to work on the self in order to create good citizens, and this ethical dimension is central also to contemporary understandings.” (2008, p.5)

Discussing citizenship in the “indigenous” city of El Alto in Bolivia, she concludes that:

“Experiencing citizenship is not only about a legal status and the ownership of a set of rights and responsibilities associated with that status; in fact, it is highly physical, having to do with participation in a whole series of practices that can encompass the sharing of alcohol, attendance at a meeting, the mediation of a conflict in the central federation office, a dance, a parade, a demonstration, passing on a rumor about the corruption of a leader, and more. It is also highly moral, such that people often feel themselves to be citizens in opposition to the state when it is in the hands of a particularly corrupt group of custodians, the politicians.” (2008, p.264, f.)

Stepputat’s reference to “hegemonic imaginations and standards of ‘proper citizens,’” Lazar’s emphasis on the ethical and moral dimensions of “good citizenship,” and Ciurlizza’s mention of “sense” point to the discursive element of citizenship: its “meaningfulness”. These approaches suggest that practices of citizenship reflect contextual understandings of citizenship or “citizenship norms” (Dalton 2008). In the words of Papacharissi, citizenship “captures the state of mind from which individuals report to civic duties at hand” (2010, p.81). In other words, citizens perform certain praxes in order to be good citizens, because these praxes resonate with their understanding of citizenship. How we “do citizenship” thus reflects the particular meanings citizenship holds for us: citizenship-as-belonging, citizenship-as-rights, and citizenship-as-duties are all performed in different ways, for example by participating in patriotic rituals (Stepputat 2004), by sending letters of complaint (Barnes et al. 2004), or by voting and serving as an electoral assistant (Schudson 1999), respectively.

However, an approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis, which emphasises notions of “good citizenship”, also implies an “outside” of citizenship: behaviours and activities which are considered “not civic” and which may be sanctioned and can result in exclusion. The exclusionary aspects of citizenship have been discussed in citizenship theory. For example, Isin and Turner have argued that “while cast in the language of inclusion, belonging, and universalism, modern citizenship has systematically made certain groups strangers and outsiders” (2002, p.3). They conclude that the exclusionary character of citizenship is “a generic problem, since that which includes must by definition exclude” (2002, p.5). However, the exclusions inherent in meaningful praxes of citizenship have received relatively little attention in citizenship research in and on Peru, where exclusion has mostly been approached

as exclusion “from” citizenship. In this thesis, I shall take a different approach to exclusion, by trying to understand its logic within notions of citizenship. I am thus interested in “exclusion through citizenship”. In chapter VI, I shall discuss the exclusionary practices of vigilant and deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere in detail, drawing on Butler’s notion of the “constitutive outside” (1993), in order to understand the production of “non-citizens” as a product of meaningful practices of deliberative and vigilant citizenship.

The meanings and practices of citizenship are also contextual: “Emerging practices of citizenship surface as reactions to power struggles, economic imbalances and social inequalities (...). Citizenship flexes and adjusts, to correspond to the historical context that it inhabits” (Papacharissi 2010, p.89). One of the most influential theoretical works on citizenship is Marshall’s essay on *Citizenship and Social Class*, in which he defined citizenship as “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed” (2009, p.149). In stressing the importance of contextual understandings, my approach is contrary to Marshall’s definition, as the discursive element necessarily implies that citizenship is context-dependent and in flux. Social and political contexts do not only condition the particular aspects of citizenship that are perceived as most fundamental, but also the way these aspects are interpreted: for example, vigilance can mean very different things and target very different agents in different social and political contexts. In consequence, context also shapes the different practices of citizenship.⁴ In Chapter IV, I shall argue that the post-transitional condition of Peruvian society has influenced the way in which Peruvian bloggers perceive the wider public sphere and the possibilities and limitations of blogging as a way of engaging with society.

The contextual character of citizenship means that it cannot be defined “once and for all”, as it will necessarily change as circumstances and interpretative frames change. In this sense, Jelin cautions that:

“Citizenship (...) [is] always in the process of (...) construction and change. This implies warning against the danger of identifying citizenship with a number of specific practices – be it voting in elections or enjoying freedom of speech, receiving social benefits from the state or any other specific praxis.” (1996, p.260)

Bardález similarly argues that:

⁴ For example, Stepputat (2004) mentions a fortnightly ritual performed in rural highland villages during the internal armed conflict in Peru, where local communities would hoist the flag and sing the anthem under the watchful eyes of the army, while other rituals of belonging were suspended. This ritual expressed citizenship as allegiance to the state, in a context of precarious relationships with the state and constant suspicion of terrorism (for a similar case see also Yezer 2007).

“Citizenship is an ‘open’ condition. Even though it is de facto limited at any time by the entirety of rights that are recognised by the state, this entirety is subject to changes by the influence of social agents and transformations. But this change is only effective if it is registered by the state itself: when a right-as-aspiration turns into a right that is recognised (by the state, and therefore enforceable against it).” (1999, p.293)

However, unlike Bardález’ definition, my approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis does not require the state as an immediate counterpart. While she describes citizenship as a “mode of belonging to the state, through which influence and control over the functioning and course of the public are exercised” (1999, p.293), my approach suggests a more flexible link with the state: citizenship can be exercised in relation to the state, but can also express belonging to society or other communities. This approach reflects more recent debates on citizenship beyond the state, which respond to the multiplication of frames of reference in a globalised world, on the one hand, but also to the insight that people often identify with a number of different communities and are granted or refused rights and participation at various sub-, supra- and trans-national levels (Balibar 1996; Holston & Appadurai 1999; Isin 2007; Linklater 2002; Ong 2006; Sassen 1996; Sassen 2002).

These debates have influenced research on citizenship in Latin America (Gordon & Stack 2007; Lazar 2008; Loveday Laghi 2002; Sanborn 2001; Stack 2012a; Stack 2012b). For example, Stack has noted that “citizenship is not necessarily a relationship with states – there are other ways of thinking about citizenship” (2012a, p.871). His research on history and citizenship in Mexico showed that people considered themselves citizens of both Mexico and their respective towns, and that these different citizenships meant different things to people (2012b). Lazar equally found a range of interrelated levels of belonging, including local, urban, and national citizenships:

“The issues at stake here are what it is that makes someone into a ‘full member of a community’ and what (political) community we might be talking about in any one instance. Whereas Marshall assumed (...) that the community could be straightforwardly equated to the national community (...), I have argued that political communities at the local level are equally important for *alteños*’ citizenship (...). Most individuals belong to several overlapping communities and some choose not to belong to any.” (2008, p.259)

Research on voluntary work in Peru has found that people tend to volunteer with organisations on a local level, particularly in the poorer sectors of society. In these cases, citizenship in practice reflects the social reality in which it takes place and is oriented towards alleviating a lack of access to public or commercial services (Sanborn 2001; Loveday Laghi 2002).

Indeed, the praxis of blogging is not necessarily located in the realm of the nation-state. As will become clear throughout the thesis, in the context of the Peruvian blogosphere, citizenship and participation are negotiated in relation to a variety of different communities of reference, such as “Society”, the blogosphere, or a specific group on Facebook, which are often surprisingly local (see Chapter II). Later in this chapter, I shall discuss three case studies of blogging as a meaningful praxis of citizenship, two of which (the Facebook group “Vigilant Vote”, and the campaign “Adopt a Member of Parliament”) relate to the state from the perspective of a vigilant notion of citizenship, while the third (“Half-Mast the Flag – An Initiative by Everybody”) relates to the national community, taking a more deliberative approach to citizenship.

However, the fact that citizenship is constructed in relation to a range of different communities is not the only reason why it is necessary to question the link between citizenship and the state that is so often taken for granted in citizenship research. Lazar makes an important point when she stresses that the people she met during her fieldwork in El Alto “are collectively imagining themselves as *citizens despite the state*, rather than citizens that are constituted through a positive relationship with the state” (2008, p.110, emphasis added). As will become clear throughout the thesis, narratives of marginality and distance from “powerful agents”, such as the state, played a central role in Peruvian bloggers’ notions of deliberative and vigilant citizenship. In chapter V, I shall argue that in my interviewees’ narratives, marginality constituted a crucial precondition of vigilant and deliberative citizenship – so much so, that the blogger-citizen could be described as a *citizen against the state*.

Citizenship and Citizenship Research in Peru: Belonging, Inclusion, and Rights

In approaching citizenship as a meaningful praxis, rather than simply as a status, my research joins a growing body of scholarship on the different ways of “Doing Citizenship” in Peru and elsewhere in Latin America (Lazar 2008; Marquardt 2012; Pine 2010; Stepputat 2004; Theidon 2003; Yezer 2007). Yezer, for example, focuses on what she calls “citizenship rituals” (2007) – ritualised performances of national belonging, such as parades and marches (see also Stepputat 2004; Theidon 2003). In her study of citizenship in a rural highland community, Yezer links performances of citizenship to the community’s local understanding of its historical context. She argues that the militarised performance of citizenship in the so-called *formación* – a display of “soldierly uniformity and discipline, standing proudly and patriotically at attention, shouting commands and mechanizing bodies” (2007, p.123) – harks back to the armed conflict, when rural and marginal urban communities organised in *rondas* (civil defence committees) to defend their communities against incursions by insurgent groups. The

performance thus “counteracts the community’s earlier stigmatization as a treasonous place of rebel support” (2007, p.130), drawing attention to their fulfilment of civic duties instead. Theidon makes a similar argument for understanding militaristic and gendered rituals in the Andes as meaningful practices of citizenship:

“The heroism of the campesino resistance appears as a central component in the construction of individual and local identities. It is an identity that offers these men recognition and pride in a society sharply marked by social, linguistic, and ethnic differences and allows them to present themselves vis-à-vis the state and the greater society as the legitimate ‘defenders of La Patria and democracy.’ In their public representations, these men perform the same militarized nationalism that they narrate. (...) It is precisely during these performances that the concept of the nation—the *perception* of a nation in which they participate as citizens rather than as ‘Indians’—is incorporated. (...) These *ronderos* live their nationalism and make present their glorious past via (...) *techniques du corps*, embodying the nation with each high-stepping march and right hand raised to salute the flag” (2003, p.77).

Stepputat, too, approaches public rituals in a rural highland community celebration as practices of citizenship, arguing that “we may (...) expect the ritualized remembrance of the birth of the district to be a privileged site for studying how participants and intervening institutions imagine, represent, practice and mould citizenship” (2004, p.244). For him, participating in marching competitions is a means to becoming a citizen for those who are currently not fully-fledged citizens: “The discipline as a discipline, the competition of goose-step marching, is only for children, adolescents, and women, the citizens-to-be” (2004, p.255).

In the examples quoted above, the civic practices described reflect understandings of citizenship as belonging, inclusion, and duty, and were performed in ways that responded to their specific context. A different notion of citizenship that has been described in studies of citizenship in Latin America refers to citizenship-as-rights. Taylor and Wilson note that in Latin American contexts, the idea of citizenship was crucially developed during the democratic transitions of the 1980s, where it was embedded in a language of human rights and re-conceptualised to include historically excluded parts of the population (Taylor & Wilson 2004, p.154). Schönwälder also notes this emerging link between the language of rights and the language of citizenship, which differentiates citizenship from other political subjectivities in Peruvian history. Comparing the *ciudadano* (citizen) identity with other historical categories of belonging used by urban popular movements in Peru since the 1950s, he draws attention to the importance of a language of rights in the former:

“After the return to democratic rule, the growing importance of institutional politics and the opening up of ‘new democratic spaces,’ particularly the democratization of local governments, paved the way for the emergence of a *ciudadano* identity. Material benefits, which the *poblador* [settler] considered favors to be bartered for from a

patron and which the *vecino* [neighbor] had come to demand from the state, the *ciudadano* now increasingly perceived as rights. In addition, there was now increasing pressure for greater participation in the institutional decision-making process, particularly at the local level.” (2002, p.27,f.)

The historical context of democratisation has had an important impact on Latin American narratives of citizenship-as-rights, which continue to be of utmost importance in contemporary discourses, especially those referring to the citizenship of historically marginalised groups (see above). These debates around citizenship as rights and inclusion are thus important, particularly in a context of great social, political and economic inequality, since, as Schild cautions, “in the case of Latin America there is a vast distance between formal rights of citizenship and meaningful citizenship in practice, particularly in the dimensions of civic and political rights” (2000, p.280; see also Mortensen 2010, p.69).

Citizenship under the Second García Administration: From Rights to Obligations

As a political claim, notions of citizenship-as-rights have furthermore acquired particular importance during the second García administration (2006 – 2011), the historical setting of my study, which saw a surge in new social conflicts over the exploitation of natural resources and indigenous rights in Peru (Bebbington 2009; Hughes 2010; Rénique 2009). Scholars of citizenship have pointed out “a broad shift from rights-based concepts of citizenship to obligation-centred notions” (Fuller et al. 2008, p.157) under recent neo-liberal regimes, not only in Latin America. In such a framework, the rights of citizenship are increasingly tied to the prior fulfilment of citizen duties and thus re-conceptualised as earned rights:

“In essence, only the citizens who fulfil their duties – as defined by (...) official institutions (...) – are then eligible to have their demands prioritised and respected by those same institutions, or, ultimately, to exercise their rights as (...) citizens.” (Marquardt 2012, p.187)

According to Mortensen, in the Peruvian case, such an obligation-based notion of active citizenship was adopted as state policy during the early post-transitional period, in part reflecting the Toledo government’s (2001-2006) aim to distance itself from the previous, populist administration. The new government aimed to move away from the Fujimori regime’s clientelistic⁵ relationships with marginalised people to one that would “foster a different mentality among the poor” (Mortensen 2010, p.109). Marquardt similarly argues that:

⁵ This does not mean that clientelistic relationships with poor populations have disappeared. As Drinot points out, President García (2006-2011) “opted for a sort of politics of (infrastructural) spectacle” (2011, p.185), not unlike that of Fujimorism: “Fujimori channelled extensive resources through the Ministry of the Presidency with which he was very closely identified (including through the use of a particular colour of paint – orange) in order to set up physical testaments to his rule in the shape of

“The language of participation is not entirely new to Peru; it was converted into everyday currency through a complex trajectory of governmental aid policies designed by highly centralized governments, particularly those of Juan Velazco (1968 – 1975) and Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000). However, (...) the contemporary democratic model is distinguished by the explicit incorporation of citizen responsibilities and duties. These unequal responsibilities are carefully evaluated within municipal decisions about the allocation of finite resources.” (2012, p.176)

Marquardt’s study of differential citizenship in participatory security programmes in the Peruvian city of Huamanga stresses “the way in which current models of governance tie democratic responsibility to the twin concepts of *derechos y deberes* (the rights and duties of citizenship)” (2012, p.174), establishing the fulfilment of the latter as a prerequisite of access to the former: “Only after participating in these particular ways are marginal communities able to demand and receive the attention of the municipal security apparatus” (2012, p.175).

The García administration continued its predecessors’ neo-liberal project, but, as Drinot argues, developed “a project of rule characterized by the privileging of sovereignty over governmentality” (2011, p.191), that is, discipline through repressive measures over what Foucault called “the conduct of conduct”⁶, or the coupling of technologies of the self with technologies of power (Pieper & Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2003).

In a series of controversial essays (García Pérez 2007a; García Pérez 2007b; García Pérez 2009), García developed a narrative that tied good citizenship to economic productivity and a positive attitude towards what Drinot calls “projects of ‘improvement’ and national ‘progress’” (2011, p.186). García’s rhetoric uses the term “citizen” almost exclusively in contexts of such activities. The citizen in García’s narrative is always either building, or, if unable to do so, selling their property to others who will be able to make “productive” use of it⁷.

schools and hospitals. García has taken this strategy to a new level in terms of scale and arguably political ability. If Fujimori associated his rule to new schools and public health dispensaries, García associates his to major road projects, huge port modernizations, massive irrigation schemes, and large-scale exploration and exploitation of natural resources” (2011, p.185). Furthermore, Fujimorism in particular has continued to draw extensively on practices of clientelism and assistentialism during electoral campaigns by handing out basic goods to local populations.

⁶ The phrase “conduct of conduct” has not actually been used in English language translations of Foucault’s original text “Le sujet et le pouvoir”. However, it is widely used and ascribed to Foucault, who, indeed, in the French version, used the expression “conduire des conduits” (1999, p.237).

⁷ Advocating for example the reduction of state supervision of investment, García argues that “the risk of the percentage who are unsupervised is compensated by the speed of the citizens who are neither delayed nor discouraged” (García Pérez 2007b). He furthermore suggests that “if the citizen doesn’t receive a response in time, they are automatically authorised to open their establishment or make their investment” (García Pérez 2007b). Aiming to reduce the number of unused resources, he argues that “agricultural areas or wastelands that [the state] does not use should be offered to citizens at public auction, so that they build on them and add value” (García Pérez 2007b). He complains that “the administration, legislators, judges, (...) are all asserting with imperial eagerness their independence from the citizen and the investor, who are condemned to silence and waiting” (García Pérez 2007b).

Simultaneously to the construction of citizenship in terms of economic activity, García constructed a “constitutive outside”⁸ (Butler 1993, p.8) of citizenship. In this version, a lack of economic initiative compromises a person’s status as a full citizen, turning them instead into “second-class citizens”. In García’s conception of citizenship, citizens’ rights are reduced to the right to be “productive” and to “add value”, while rights that clash with these activities are curtailed. In his third essay, entitled “To the Faith of the Vast Majority”, García rarely uses the terms “citizen” or “citizenship”, but refers to “the vast majority” instead⁹, claiming that “the vast majority thinks differently”¹⁰ (García Pérez 2009) from what he calls “anti-system groups”.

Finally, he writes: “In the Highlands, for unused communal lands and for resources such as marble, we will present a bill to allow rural communities to make the decision to sell, lease, or parcel. This may be done by a vote of half plus one of those present at the meeting called for that purpose. It is absurd, Law No. 26505 already permits that in coastal communities decisions are made by 50% plus one of the assistants, but Article 11 requires for communities of the Sierra ‘the vote of not less than two-thirds of all members of the community’, many of whom have emigrated. This must be corrected. It condemns the community members of the sierra to the level of second-class citizens without initiative” (García Pérez 2007b).

⁸ In Butler’s theory of discourse, interpellation – the act of simultaneously naming and bringing into being – opens a “field of discourse and power that orchestrates, delimits and sustains (...)” (1993, p.8). The construction of any object is thus a “differential operation”(1993, p.8), which simultaneously produces a “constitutive outside” (1993, p.8), since the formative ability of discourse depends on the “constitutive force of exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection” (1993, p.8).

⁹ However, “the vast majority” can be read as a synonym of citizenship. In “To the Faith of the Vast Majority”, García evokes the specter of an international communist conspiracy against Peru in the context of “a Cold War in which foreign governments take part” (2009). He subsequently defines his opponents as “those who represent external penetration,” and predicts that after “lasting 10 or more years in power and consolidating the South American Socialist International, they’ll go away, leaving the country in social misery and technological underdevelopment”, hinting, once more, at the foreignness of his opponents and juxtaposing them with the Peruvian people. García doesn’t “name names” in his essay; however, by interspersing his text with hints that allude to the 2009 uprisings in Bagua and the controversy over indigenous communities’ rights to prior consultation about extraction projects that affect their livelihood, he makes it clear who is the target of his attack. Nevertheless, while it is tempting to interpret this text in terms of a racist or ethnicist construction of citizenship, such an interpretation would need to ignore discursive exclusions of non-indigenous agents from citizenship. The following excerpt from “To the faith...” is clearly addressed to the urban middle-class opposition, such as bloggers, NGOs in the human rights sector, among others, who, by alleged association with the “foreign penetration” mentioned above, are on a discursive level equally excluded from citizenship. According to García, “their tactic is to seize the tools of decision and communication. In 1917 Russia, the classic revolutionaries wanted to take the barracks and government offices, but Trotsky understood that it was better to take trains, telegraphs and radios. Today’s revolutionaries know they can’t win elections, nor can they take the barracks, because they killed too many soldiers and police, therefore, they only multiply in blogs, they agitate communicators, they violently take over the news, etc. Their tactic is denial, they repeat, ‘nothing has been done’, ‘everything is worse’, ‘it’s the government of the rich’” (2009). The “racialised” distinction between different groups of “non-citizens” operates, in my opinion, not so much at the level of discursive exclusion from citizenship (where conduct and attitude are more important), as at the level of the state’s particular response to deviance. On this level, indigenous communities are much more likely to be defined as lives that are “amenable to be killed with impunity” (Drinot 2011, p.181), when “order is restored with severity” (García Pérez 2009), as the 153 civilians (La República 2011) who perished as a result of social conflicts during the García administration demonstrate.

¹⁰ “La inmensa mayoría piensa diferente a ellos.”

This statement is not simply “constative”, but to a certain degree “performative” (Austin 1975; Butler 1993), in that it does not merely describe citizenship, but establishes its conditions of belonging – namely a specific political mindset and abstention from political dissent, criticism, and protest. Insofar as the interests and politics of movements and individuals clash with these conditions, their citizenship is called into question.

In their coverage and critical discussion of political events and in social media campaigns, Peruvian bloggers and online activists, too, refer to a conception of citizenship-as-rights, inclusion, and belonging (albeit in a way that is very different from the notions of citizenship-as-rights that inform García’s essays), particularly in their discussions of new social conflicts between the state and marginalised sectors of society. The following example of the civic collective “Ciudadanos de Segunda Categoría” [Second-Class Citizens] is an example of notions of citizenship-as-rights in the Peruvian blogosphere.¹¹ Nevertheless, as I shall show, the equally fluid term of “rights” is filled with political and civil meanings (rather than the more strongly social and economic notions of rights that were under dispute in the riots of Bagua). As I shall argue later in this chapter, these are notions of citizenship which are more frequently found among members of the urban middle classes.

“Ciudadanos de Segunda Categoría” was established in May 2010, with the aim to fight government corruption and repression of political dissent under the García administration. The name refers to García’s infamous statement after the June 2009 massacre in Bagua, where, in the context of conflicts over the exploitation of natural resources in indigenous territories, 33 people, including both civilians and police officers, were killed. In a press conference, García, whose government had, contrary to international treaties, failed to consult with affected communities over the extraction of natural resources, stated that “these people aren’t first-class citizens, who can, as 400,000 natives, tell 28 million Peruvians, you don’t have a right to come here!”¹² Although this statement is ambiguous, the juxtaposition of “natives” and “Peruvians”, and the Government’s track record of ignoring the claims and entitlements of indigenous communities, meant that it was widely interpreted as saying that the indigenous protesters were “second-class-citizens,” rather than members of a single category of classless citizens.

While the collective’s foundation statement does not explicitly define their use of the term citizenship, its narrative is one of dispossession and disenfranchisement of common citizens

¹¹ While the collective did not limit its activities to the Internet, social media did play an important role in its communication strategy.

¹² “Estas personas no son ciudadanos de primera clase que puedan decir cuatro cientos mil nativos a 28 millones de peruanos, tú no tienes derecho de venir por aquí”.

under the García administration, summed up under the notion of “second-class citizenship” (Ciudadanos de Segunda Categoría 2010b), and thus suggests a rights-based notion of citizenship. This relationship was more explicitly established during an early press conference, where one of the collective’s founding members framed the lack of citizenship as a lack of rights, and citizens’ activity as directed towards regaining these rights:

“All Peruvians have been branded Second-Class Citizens by the President of the Republic; we have lost our rights, our right to the street, to express ourselves freely, to move about freely, and to demand that our rights be observed. We are second-class citizens until we succeed in taking back our civic rights, which since Fujimori’s dictatorship until today are being seized, expropriated and stolen; until we recover our country, which is systematically being robbed by a corrupt and murderous system, a system that criminalises social protest and rewards thieves and jails the detractors of corruption.”¹³ (Ciudadanos de Segunda Categoría 2010a)

It is remarkable that the collective’s founders assume a position of marginality by likening their situation as urban middle-class citizens in Lima to the situation of native communities in the Peruvian Amazon. This equation clashes with the reality of citizenship in García’s Peru.¹⁴ As Drinot has pointed out, García’s “project of rule” (2011, p.186) was based on a differential treatment of different sectors of society, whereby

“Governmental power is deployed among a minority of the population, [while] sovereign power is used to discipline a majority. (...) Peru, today and in the past, is best characterized by the presence of islands of governmentality in a sea of sovereignty. This configuration reflects the ways in which projects of rule in Peru have focussed not on the management of the population as a whole but rather on the micro-management of sectors of the population in ways that express racialized understandings of the ontological capacity of different population groups to contribute to, and indeed be subjects of, projects of ‘improvement’ and national ‘progress’ more generally.” (2011, p.186)

Equally remarkable, however, is their reference to “our right to the street, to express ourselves freely, to move about freely and demand that our rights be observed”. Although the

¹³ “Todos los peruanos hemos sido marcados por el Presidente de la República como Ciudadanos de Segunda Categoría, hemos perdido nuestros derechos, nuestro derecho a las calles, a expresarnos libremente, a transitar y exigir que se cumplan nuestros derechos. Nosotros somos ciudadanos de segunda categoría hasta que logremos conquistar de nuevo nuestros derechos ciudadanos, que desde la dictadura de Alberto Fujimori hasta nuestros días vienen siendo requisados, expropiados y robados, hasta que recuperemos nuestro país, que viene siendo robado sistémicamente por un sistema corrupto y asesino, un sistema que criminaliza la protesta social y premia a los ladrones y encarcela a los detractores de la corrupción.”

¹⁴ According to the Peruvian human rights umbrella organisation National Co-ordinator for Human Rights, 65 civilians were killed by police or the armed forces in social protests during García’s second government between June 2006 and June 2011 (Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos 2012, p.17). The national Ombudsman in turn registered 195 deaths and 2312 injured in social conflicts between January 2006 and September 2011 (Defensoría del Pueblo 2012, p.52), while socio-environmental conflicts, often related to the activities of extractive industries, tend to be the most violent (Defensoría del Pueblo 2012, p.126). These conflicts usually take place in remote areas of the country and involve marginal sectors of society, such as miners or indigenous communities.

collective's name established a link with the infringement of indigenous populations' right to their territory, life and personal safety, and consultation over decisions that affect their livelihood, the statement quoted above draws attention to a different set of rights, related more closely to freedom of speech and accountability.

Notions of Citizenship in an Unequal Society

As is the case with citizenship research in Peru in general, many of the examples of research on citizenship as a meaningful praxis discussed above refer to marginalised sectors of society. The case of the collective "Second-Class Citizens" strikingly illustrates a discursive link between rights-based notions of citizenship and narratives of marginality. The civic practices described in these works reflect understandings of citizenship as belonging, inclusion, duty, and rights. However, they tell us little about the meanings of middle-class citizenship. There is some evidence (Dalton 2008) to suggest that practices and understandings of citizenship are not uniform across society, but reflect the social inequalities that structure participation in society in general. For example, Theidon and Stepputat both examine gendered and racialised patterns of participation in and exclusion from citizenship rituals. Theidon notes that practices of citizenship in her site of fieldwork were gendered, with men participating in rituals while women sat and watched from a distance:

"The symbolic practice of raising the national flag every Sunday as the *ronderos* stand at attention—this practice by which men affirm a sense of belonging to the state and perform the militarized nationalism forged during the war—is a masculinist spatial practice where women are, quite literally, relegated to the margins." (2003, p.81)

Contrary to Theidon, however, Stepputat found disciplined marching to be a way for those who were lowest on the citizenship hierarchy on a local level to become citizens through a performance of "civilisation", while more established citizens walked around the plaza in a more leisurely manner (see also Yezer 2007):

"The discipline as a discipline, the competition of goose-step marching, is only for children, adolescents, and women, the citizens-to-be. This observation is consistent with the general view of women as a reservoir of ethnicity (...). It is also consistent with Andean racialised geography. Many of the women who march are herders, the ones who stay in the high altitudes for several months at a time with their small children and their sheep. According to the racial logic of the Andes, they are the least civilised, the ones who are closest to nature." (2004, p.255)

Others have pointed to what could be called a "division of labour" in the performance of civic duties along the lines of socio-economic and socio-geographic (centre/periphery and urban/rural) inequality. In one of the few existing studies of the civic practices of the most privileged sectors of society, Kogan (1998a) discussed upper-class and upper-middle-class women's associations in Lima. While her reading of these women's practices does not draw on

a language of citizenship, she does identify motivations relating to “The Good Life” in society, such as charity and “helping others”: “The upper-middle-class women who participate in associations often find, apart from leisure and distance from the routine of their homes, spaces for learning and/or ways to help the community, which makes them feel valued and useful” (1998a, p.13). She found that those associations which were directed towards others (and could therefore be perceived as “civic”) tended to focus on charitable work and teaching. Being embedded in a strongly gendered discourse of the political, as well as a general disdain for politics in Peruvian society, their approaches to these activities were radically “apolitical” (or even “anti-political”), but not therefore divorced from the broader structures of social inequality: neither did the associations studied by Kogan cultivate direct links with the more strongly subsistence-oriented “popular” women’s organisations, nor did they share their practices (and vice versa).

A different approach to women’s citizenship was taken by Rousseau (2009), who contrasted notions of citizenship among members of the (mainly middle-class and upper class) feminist movement in Peru to those of women’s organisations in the “popular” sectors of society. Arguing that “the politics of women’s citizenship is also strongly articulated along class and ethnic lines, leading women’s mobilization to be fragmented into various political identities” (2009, p.6), she found that “the emphasis that middle and upper class women placed on civil and political rights, relative to the emphasis of women from popular sectors on social and economic rights, exposed substantial differences in priorities for the various sectors of the women’s movement” (2009, p.32). She concludes that:

“The *comedores* [collective kitchens] movement put forward a definition of citizenship centered primarily on social rather than civil or political rights. (...) The right to food and to adequate state support for grassroots survival organizations formed the core of its project and claims. In that regard, collective kitchens followed the dominant model of citizenship based on social entitlements developed in Peru in the 1960s and 1970s, and most expressly represented by the military regime of General Juan Velasco.” (2009, p.124)

Marquardt’s study of the politics of participatory security in the city of Huamanga, Ayacucho is another example. Pointing to differences between practices of citizenship among different social groups, she argues that “participatory security programmes (...) project unequal expectations upon diverse urban communities” (2012, p.175), resulting in different praxes of active citizenship among peripheral and centre communities: “The unequal labour of participation expected within Ayacucho’s participatory security programmes results in communities and individuals that embody citizenship differently, both literally and figuratively” (2012, p.176).

In the case studied by Marquardt, communities in the urban periphery were expected to fulfil their civic responsibilities physically through manual labour such as performing night patrols and doing construction works in their local community. Middle-class citizens in the city centre, in turn, exercised their citizenship “through the act of ‘witnessing’ or ‘being present’” (2012, p.184), and through a series of

“Formalized interactions with state institutions: filing continuous official documents in government offices, such as complaints (...) or demands (...), the vast majority of [which] were against specific government officials for not enforcing municipal resolutions and ordinances and for not carrying out official duties. (...) They also launched a powerful campaign for municipal accountability.” (2012, p.185)

These practices reflected a very different understanding of citizenship, which stressed “citizen vigilance (...) as a crucial tool of democratic participation, fulfilling the abstract civil responsibility to hold government authorities accountable” (2012, p.185). Rojas reported similar findings about vigilant citizenship in Uribe’s Colombia, where citizens were offered rewards for informing the state on the activities of other citizens (however, here, vigilant citizenship targeted a different set of agents than in the case described by Marquardt). Peasants in particular were expected to participate in combat as “peasant soldiers” or “soldiers of my Town” (2006, p.2). Examining poverty-reduction programmes in Chile, Schild asks a similar question which points to differential practices of citizenship:

“What are different categories of people being asked to do, and what is being done to people, in the name of this or that programme claiming to address poverty by promoting participation and self-sufficiency? In other words, how are ‘new’ citizens being organized and how is social citizenship being reconfigured?” (2000, p.290)

She finds that the expected active participation of poor communities was mainly limited to manual labour and the generation of funds, while the definition of problems and ways to solve them – although an important part of the rhetoric of participation – was curtailed by the pre-defined goals of the programme: “The fact that [the programme] *Entre Todos* will support a very limited range of initiatives is never fully disclosed to the participants. Instead, the *promotora* must skilfully steer the debate away from certain proposals and toward others” (2000, p.295). The “responsibilities” of citizenship expected from poor citizens as a precondition to receiving state support towards community development projects thus excluded the more discursive and deliberative practices of citizenship.

Researchers at the Universidad del Pacífico in Lima (Loveday Laghi 2002; Portocarrero Suárez et al. 2004; Sanborn 2001) found that while there are no significant differences in the likelihood of Peruvians of different social sectors to carry out voluntary work, the kind of work they would do was highly stratified, making “socio-economic sector the principal variable

which differentiates voluntary practices in Peru” (Loveday Laghi 2002, p.16). Citizens in the socio-economic sectors D and E¹⁵ were most likely to carry out physical labour, “in other words activities which imply physical effort, but no specific educational qualifications” (Sanborn 2001, p.7). Members of the upper-middle and upper classes, in turn, were greatly overrepresented in “activities related to teaching and training, which, due to their characteristics, demand a certain level of specialised knowledge” (Sanborn 2001, p.8).

Adding the urban/rural divide and gender to the picture, Steputat furthermore notes that the discursive responsibilities of citizenship in the context of community celebrations – delivering speeches and making “a ‘contribution to public opinion’” (2004, p.252) in radio broadcasts – were performed by men who had left the community and moved to the city. Political responsibilities were also tied to urban citizenship:

“All the leaders, *comuneros* as well as others, live between the city and the district. When they claim leadership and ability to provide a full range of public services for the district, even those who play the rural identity card, base their claim on their education and urban capabilities. The claims, as demonstrated in the speeches, depict the rural district population as good and brave people who nevertheless need the help from educated sons of the district since these know how to deal with public authorities. The rural is constructed as a subaltern constituency to be represented by urbanised citizens.” (2004, p.256)

Defining citizenship (a priori) in terms of vigilance, deliberation and “high-quality participation”, Ríos Barrientos and Armas Alvarado found that peasant communities affected by the activities of mining companies did not participate in deliberative spaces and decision-making in any meaningful way (2006). Similarly, Cárdenas, Makovski, and Rodríguez, who frame citizenship as participation, control, vigilance, fiscalisation, and the ability to claim rights, found little such activity among their participants in rural Cusco and the town of Nauta in Loreto¹⁶ (2005). They identified both a lack of participatory culture, and the linguistic and gendered configuration of the public sphere as a Spanish-speaking and “male” space, as potential reasons.

The studies discussed above disclose a “division of labour” in regimes of citizenship, where different sectors of society perform – and are expected to perform – citizenship in different ways, stressing practical and economic contributions (such as manual labour and the

¹⁵ In Peru, a scale of socio-economic levels, ranging from A to E, is usually used in surveys. This scale is based on a set of variables, including family income, educational level, occupation of the head of the household, number of people living in the household, type of home, area of residence, and ownership of certain goods. Broadly speaking, sectors A and B refer to the upper and upper-middle classes, C refers to the middle classes, and D and E refer to those who live in poverty or extreme poverty (Loveday Laghi 2002). These classifications are contested (Arellano 2010; Arellano & Burgos 2010), but widely used.

¹⁶ According to a 2007 census, Nauta has approximately 16.000 inhabitants.

generation of funds) in the case of poor rural and urban communities, as opposed to the more discursive and vigilant duties such as the development of ideas and proposals to solve social problems, teaching and education others, and holding authorities to account, which prevail in the case of urban middle-class citizenship. This phenomenon seems to exceed the specific context of Peru, as Delli Carpini et al. have noted for the United States that “like other forms of participation, engagement in political talk—especially the more ‘costly’ forms, such as deliberative meetings—appears to be linked to socio-economic status and education” (2004, p.324).

Political Blogging as a Praxis of Citizenship: Vigilance and Deliberation

As terms such as “Citizen Journalism” or “Netizen” suggest, the language of blogging is closely associated with the language of citizenship. Following Max Weber, who described Sociology as “the interpretation of action in terms of its subjective meaning” (1978, p.8), we can call an activity a praxis of citizenship if its agents perceive it as such. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, are thus the site of numerous performances of citizenship. In Chapter III, I shall argue that political blogging belongs mainly to the civic and political “habitus” (Bourdieu 1977) of (upper-) middle-class people. It is thus an ideal field in which to explore notions of citizenship among members of these more privileged sectors of society.

On the following pages I shall discuss three examples of Blogging-as-Citizenship from the Peruvian blogosphere. Unlike the “popular” notions of citizenship discussed in much of Peruvian citizenship research, the notions of citizenship that bloggers refer to when constructing their own political selves as blogger-citizens do not usually draw on a language of rights and inclusion, and even in the case of “Ciudadanos de Segunda Categoría”, the general notion of “rights” was specified in a way that focussed on discursive activity. It is true that bloggers refer to citizenship-as-rights in their coverage and critical discussion of political events and in social media campaigns *about* marginalised sectors of society; however, blogging as a praxis of citizenship, and hence bloggers’ own civic subjectivities, usually draw on a different conception of citizenship. In concordance with the findings regarding middle-class citizenship discussed above, the praxis of political blogging reflects deliberative and vigilant notions of citizenship.

The first example is the social media campaign “Half-Mast the Flag – An Initiative by Everybody” (Bandera a Media Asta - Una Iniciativa de Todos), which was initiated in July 2009 by sociologist, entrepreneur, and blogger Juan Infante, following the riots in Bagua and taking

advantage of Peruvian Independence Day season¹⁷. The campaign asked bloggers and users of social networks either to pick one of several pictures of the Peruvian flag at half-mast which had been designed by Peruvian artists and made available on Infante's blog, or to design their own flag, and then "fly" it on their blog or Facebook profile. Participants were also asked to add the phrase "I fly my flag at half-mast as a symbol of mourning for the Peruvians who died in Bagua"¹⁸ in memory of 25 civilians and nine police officers who had been killed one month earlier during clashes in the Amazonian town.

By initiating the campaign exactly one month after the killings and ending it on Peruvian Independence Day, and by drawing on the symbolism of the flag, the campaign established a direct link between the events in Bagua and the politics of citizenship in Peru. But citizenship was not only the *topic* of the campaign, but also its *mode*; in his appeal, Infante also referred to the campaign as a "movilización ciudadana" (a "mobilisation of citizens"), thus casting blogging itself as a praxis of citizenship:

"If we are successful and many Peruvian users of Facebook and other social networks do it, it's likely that other people will bring themselves to do the same thing with their flags at home. That way we will be able to move from a mobilisation of citizens in the virtual world to one in the real world. But that's the second step, that depends on the majority of us doing it on our Facebook pages. (...) Join in, let's have a mobilisation of citizens! This Independence Day, let's dedicate some time to mourning the Peruvians who died in Bagua, and thereby think of our country."¹⁹ (Infante 2009)

In an interview, Marita Ibañez, professor at the Catholic University's Faculty of Arts and promoter of the campaign, argued that the organizers

"Don't only want to spread the message of protest, but also think about what we can do so it shan't happen again and unite as citizens. We can start doing something, for example get organized, so that our opinions can get stronger. That's why we are using social networks, we started with Facebook, but we have also planned to get into other networks, we are also in blogs."²⁰ (Ibañez & Mercado 2009)

¹⁷ Peruvian Independence Day, called Fiestas Patrias, is on the 28th of July.

¹⁸ "Pongo mi bandera a media asta como símbolo de duelo por los peruanos muertos en Bagua"

¹⁹ "Si tenemos éxito y muchos peruanos usuarios de Facebook y otras redes sociales lo hacemos, es probable que mucha gente se anime a hacer lo mismo con las banderas de sus casas. Así podremos pasar de una iniciativa de movilización ciudadana en el mundo virtual a una en el mundo real. Pero eso es el segundo paso, eso depende que el mayor número de personas lo hagamos en nuestro Facebook. (...) Súmate, ¡hagamos una movilización ciudadana! estas fiestas patrias dediquemos un tiempo a hacer un duelo por los peruanos muertos en Bagua y, a través de ello, pensar en nuestro país."

²⁰ "Queremos difundir no solamente el mensaje de protesta, sino también pensar en qué podemos hacer para que no vuelva a pasar y unirnos como ciudadanos. Podemos empezar a hacer algo, organizarnos por ejemplo, de una manera que nuestras opiniones se puedan ir haciendo más fuertes. Por esto usamos las redes sociales, hemos comenzado por el Facebook, pero también hemos planeado entrar a otras redes, también estamos en blogs."

Other bloggers who wrote about the campaign interpreted it in terms of citizenship, too. For example, in a post entitled “Flags at Half-Mast: Citizens Mobilise in Social Networks”²¹, blogger Diego Peralta Murias writes:

“Facebook allows not only people, but also ideas to meet. Contacts in social networks are achieving new forms of mobilisation of public opinion and new methods of demonstration in the context of protest. The campaign ‘Half-Mast the Flag, An Initiative by Everybody’ demonstrates this. (...) [It’s] a clear example of the fact that people don’t debate ideas at a public square, let alone in a newspaper, but in social networks. In Facebook, not only relationships are cooked up, but also ideas.”²² (Peralta Murias 2009)

It is notable that even though the campaign was prompted by an incident that had resulted from a conflict over rights and inclusion in processes of political decision-making, the notion of citizenship expressed in the statements quoted above refers neither to rights, nor to inclusion. Both Ibañez’ and Peralta’s interpretation of the campaign instead express a deliberative notion of citizenship. While to Ibañez citizenship means *thinking* about ways to prevent future violence and uniting to strengthen *opinions*, Peralta refers to the epitome of deliberative democracy – the “public square” – and identifies social media as its contemporary reincarnation, where ideas come together, are debated and “cooked up”.

These deliberation-centred notions of citizenship were also important to my interviewees and inform many of the intense debates between bloggers. For example, one of the bloggers I spoke to during my fieldwork described the Peruvian blogosphere as:

“Some sort of confluence of ideas, and I feel that in these days where there are no forums any more, where there are no town squares where people have time to go to and discuss and offer an opinion, [raise issues] and give an opinion and discuss, the blogosphere, even though it is very elitist, very small, still very reduced, and has a very, very, very, very small impact, is a first step, no? Towards this kind of political discussion. This interaction in which the citizen with time maybe doesn’t stop in the street to talk any longer, but stops in this public street [the blogosphere], no?”²³

²¹ “Banderas a media asta: los ciudadanos se movilizan en las redes sociales.”

²² “Facebook está permitiendo no solo unir personas sino también ideas. Los contactos de las redes sociales están logrando nuevas formas de movilización de la opinión pública y nuevos métodos de manifestación en torno a una protesta. La campaña ‘Bandera a media asta, iniciativa de todos’, así lo demuestra. (...) Un claro ejemplo que las personas ya no debaten ideas en el marco de una plaza pública y menos de un periódico, sino en torno a las redes sociales. En Facebook no solo se cocinan relaciones sino también ideas.”

²³ “[E]s una especie de confluencia de ideas y siento que en esta época donde ya no hay foros, ya no hay plazas donde la gente se tenga tiempo para llegar y discutir y poner una opinión, [levantar] y opinar y discutir, la blogósfera a pesar de que sea/ es muy elitista, muy chiquita, todavía muy reducida, y tiene un impacto muy muy muy muy pequeño, es un comienzo, ¿no? Para esta clase de discusión política. Esa interacción de que/ el ciudadano con tiempo ya de repente no se para en... en la calle a hablar, pero se para en esta calle pública, ¿no?”

Another blogger similarly argued that “we are citizens, let’s say... to promote democratic institutions one has to promote civic debate, right?”²⁴ Citizenship in blogging thus means deliberative citizenship.

Blogging also enacts notions of vigilant citizenship²⁵. Several initiatives in the Peruvian blogosphere reflect this conception of citizenship. One of them is the Facebook group Voto Vigilante (Vigilant Vote)²⁶, created as a follow-up project to the campaign No a Keiko (No to Keiko, NAK), which aimed to prevent Alberto Fujimori’s daughter Keiko from winning the 2011 presidential elections. During the run-up to the elections, “No a Keiko” supported the candidature of Ollanta Humala, who eventually won. However, many worried that Humala, a retired army officer, had similarly doubtful democratic credentials as Keiko Fujimori, and that his election might have detrimental effects on the Peruvian economy. It was in this context that Voto Vigilante was created. According to its founders, Voto Vigilante’s mission was to “promote citizens’ participation and the supervision [vigilancia] of Peruvian politicians, using Internet and social media as tools and spaces of communication”²⁷ (Voto Vigilante 2011). The site and its users have since concentrated on monitoring both government and opposition activities by posting relevant media content and promoting debate. Voto Vigilante’s predecessor, the group “No a Keiko”, also expressed a vigilant notion of citizenship. I shall discuss this case in greater detail in Chapter VI, where I shall examine the way in which vigilant notions of citizenship translated into practice, creating what I call “exclusions through citizenship”.

The notion of vigilance or monitoring also informs conceptions of citizenship in other Peruvian blogging initiatives, such as the campaign Adopt a Member of Parliament (Adopta un Congresista), which was initiated by blogger Willie Vásquez, following an appeal by political journalist Rosa María Palacios in the wake of a parliamentary expenses scandal (Palacios 2008). The campaign asked bloggers to “adopt” a Member of Parliament of their choice, to

²⁴ “Somos ciudadanos que digamos este... para promover instituciones democráticas hay que promover la discusión cívica, ¿no?”

²⁵ Vigilant citizenship in blogging is similar to Schudson’s notion of “monitorial citizens” (1999), who “scan (rather than read) the informational environment (...) so that they may be alerted on a variety of issues (...) and may be mobilized around those issues in a wide variety of ways” (1999, p.310). However, placing the figure of the monitorial citizen in the context of risk societies (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991), Papacharissi argues that “the monitorial model is a solitary mode of civic engagement. Monitoring is not a collective activity. (...) The monitorial citizen contains the potential for activity, but spends most of the time in the suspended inactivity of monitoring” (2010, p.103). When we observe the dynamic field of Facebook groups such as Voto Vigilante and blogging campaigns such as Adopta un Congresista, discussed later in this chapter, we reach a different conclusion.

²⁶ In August 2012, Voto Vigilante had around 10,500 members.

²⁷ “Misión: Promover la participación ciudadana y la vigilancia a los políticos peruanos utilizando Internet y los medios sociales como herramienta y espacio de comunicación.”

request a statement of expenditures from them, and to publish both the request and responses (or lack thereof) on their blogs. The following excerpt from the campaign blog's first post frames the campaign in terms of citizenship. It also offers a deliberative and vigilant conception of citizenship by defining citizenship as "[exercising] our right to know and to express ourselves" and by calling on "citizens" to debate, discuss and express themselves:

"The civic initiative [iniciativa ciudadana], exercising our right to know and to express ourselves, is growing, therefore we must combine all our efforts into a single one and that's what this space is for. Let us debate, let us discuss, let us express [our opinions]. This blog will serve as our own follow-up to the campaign, and also as a meeting space for all the followers of this initiative. We are citizens who only want to express ourselves, and truly exercise our rights. Nothing else. Spread the word, we are here."²⁸ (Vásquez 2008)

The campaign was criticised by several bloggers, who worried about its lack of representativeness and the possibility that it might encourage the already endemic problem of "anti-politics", rather than strengthening democratic institutions. In spite of these criticisms, it was widely perceived as a "civic" campaign. Other bloggers who participated in the initiative also used the term "citizen" or "citizenship" in relation to the campaign and identified its subjects as "citizens" or "citizenry":

"One of the big problems of bourgeois representative democracies is that political power makes us used to acting only once every five years, and only in order to decide which evil is going to govern us for the benefit of everybody. And that's not right, we should demonstrate, and with these measures we are doing it (even if they may not be optimal), that we are politically active citizens, that we don't shut up, that *they* work for *us*, that **their bills are paid by us, and as payers and mandators, we demand that they give account before us.**"²⁹ (Jomra 2008)

"In reality the campaign exists so that Congress, abiding by the Access to Public Information Act, hands over to the citizens the bills that we demand, that we pay for and that we have a right to inspect. In the end it's we who pay the chicken suppers of our Members of Parliament. (...) The campaign aims to paper Congress with these civic requests to show the expenses accounts of a Member of Parliament. All you have to

²⁸ "La iniciativa ciudadana, el ejercer nuestro derecho a saber, y a expresarnos está creciendo, es por ello que debemos aglutinar todos nuestros esfuerzos en uno solo y para eso es este espacio. Debatamos, discutamos, expresemos. Este blog servirá para hacer nuestro propio seguimiento de la campaña, además como espacio de encuentro de todos los seguidores de esta iniciativa. Somos ciudadanos que sólo queremos expresarnos, y ejercer realmente nuestros derechos. Nada más. Pasa la voz estamos aquí."

²⁹ "Uno de los grandes problemas de las democracias burguesas representativas es que nos acostumbra, el poder político a nosotros, a movernos sólo una vez cada cinco años, y sólo para decidir qué mal nos seguirá gobernando por el bien de todos. Y no pues, debemos demostrar, y con estas medidas lo hacemos (aunque puede que no sean las óptimas), que somos ciudadanos políticamente activos, que no nos quedamos callados, que *ellos* trabajan para *nosotros*, que **sus cuentas las pagamos nosotros, y como pagadores y mandantes, les exigimos que nos rindan cuentas.**"

do is to write your letter, directed to a Member of Parliament who you think should 'justify their bills', and send it by fax."³⁰ (Cisneros Méndez 2008)

"Yes, I join Paki and Ocram and all the others in supporting Rosa María Palacios' campaign, so that we, ordinary citizens, demand, as is our right, to see the expenses of our dear Members of Parliament."³¹ (monich 2008)

The cases discussed above - "Half-Mast the Flag", "Vigilant Vote", and "Adopt a Member of Parliament" – are three examples of "blogging-as-citizenship", which frame citizenship in terms of vigilance and deliberation. On the following pages, I shall discuss the existing literature on these two specific notions of citizenship. This discussion will help clarify the contributions an empirical approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis can make.

Deliberative Citizenship: Normative Theory and Empirical Research

The notion of deliberative citizenship, though etymologically rooted in Roman law, is usually associated with Ancient Greece. Aristotle, for example, defined the citizen in terms of his³² deliberative and judicial authority: "He who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state is said by us to be a citizen of that state" (2000, p.1275b). Likewise, in the History of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides let Pericles praise Athenians for their dedication to deliberation:

"Our politicians can combine management of their domestic affairs with state business, and others who have their own work to attend to can nevertheless acquire a good knowledge of politics. We are unique in the way we regard anyone who takes no part in public affairs: we do not call that a quiet life, we call it a useless life. We are all involved in either the proper formulation or at least the proper review of policy, thinking that what cripples action is not talk, but rather the failure to talk through the policy before proceeding to the required action. This is another difference between us and others, which gives us our exceptional combination of daring and deliberation about the objective - whereas with others their courage relies on ignorance, and for them to deliberate is to hesitate."³³ (Thucydides 2009, p.92, f.)

In consequence, rhetoric, "not just as a political device but as a vehicle for conveying an encouragement of high moral standards" (Heater 2004, p.7), played an important role in Ancient Greek civic education.

³⁰ "En realidad, la campaña es para que el Congreso de la República, acatando la Ley de Acceso a la Información Pública, rinda a los ciudadanos las cuentas que exigimos, que pagamos y que tenemos derecho a fiscalizar. Después de todo, somos los que les pagamos a los congresistas sus pollos y polladas. (...) La campaña trata de empapelar el Congreso con los pedidos ciudadanos de que se muestren las cuentas de gastos operativos de un congresista. Sólo tienes que hacer tu carta dirigida a un congresista que creas debe 'sincerar sus cuentas', y mandarla por fax."

³¹ "Sí, me uno a Paki, a Ocram y a los demás en el respaldo a la campaña de Rosa María Palacios para que nosotros, ciudadanos comunes y corrientes solicitemos, como es nuestro derecho, los gastos operativos de nuestros queridísimos congresistas."

³² The Aristotelian citizen was invariably male.

³³ In some cases, the original text has been translated in terms of citizenship, where "not a quiet citizen, but a bad one" would replace "a quiet life" and "a useless life" (Velasco 2010).

Over 2000 years later, the notion of deliberation regained momentum, particularly among political theorists of “deliberative democracy” (Benhabib 1996; Bessette 1980; Cohen 1997; Elster 1998; Rawls 1999; Habermas 1997, among others). While most of these works discuss democratic decision-making procedures, rather than citizenship, they are related to the latter as the subject of deliberative democracy is the citizen. Although these theories don’t usually discuss citizenship in any detail, it thus makes sense to assume that citizens are thought to behave as such when they participate in deliberative democracy according to its rules as defined in citizenship theory.

Most theoretical concepts of deliberative democracy and citizenship share a number of assumptions and normative propositions. Bohman sums these up as follows:

“Deliberative democracy is a complex ideal with a variety of forms, but whatever form it takes it must refer to the ideal of public reason, to the requirement that legitimate decisions be ones that ‘everyone could accept’ or at least ‘not reasonably reject.’ Above all, any conception of deliberative democracy ‘is organized around an ideal of political justification’ requiring free public reasoning of equal citizens. First, such justifications require that citizens go beyond the self-interests typical in preference aggregation and orient themselves to the common good. Second, such a public orientation must be shown to improve political decision making over aggregation, by making it possible to work out common ends and a fair system of social cooperation without presupposing an already existing social consensus”³⁴ (Bohman 1998, p.401, f.).

As the notion of “free public reasoning of equal citizens” suggests, most normative theories thus stress the importance of *equality* as a crucial precondition of deliberative democracy (Habermas 1989; Habermas et al. 1974; Cohen 1997; Benhabib 1996). For example, Cohen writes that:

“In ideal deliberation, parties are both formally and substantively *equal*. They are formally equal in that the rules regulating the procedure do not single out individuals. Everyone with the deliberative capacities has equal standing at each stage of the deliberative process. Each can put issues on the agenda, propose solutions, and offer reasons in support of or in criticism of proposals. And each has an equal voice in the decision. The participants are substantively equal in that the existing distribution of power and resources does not shape their chances to contribute to deliberation, nor does that distribution play an authoritative role in their deliberation.” (1997, p.74)

This notion of equality accounts for dissent. As Cohen puts it:

“A deliberative democracy is a pluralistic association. The members have diverse preferences, convictions, and ideals concerning the conduct of their own lives. While sharing a commitment to the deliberative resolution of problems of collective choice, they also have divergent aims, and do not think that some particular set of preferences, convictions, or ideals is mandatory.” (1997, p.72)

³⁴ The quotations within this quote are taken from Cohen, J., 1996. Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy. In S. Benhabib, ed. *Democracy and Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 95-119.

However, normative theories of deliberative democracy also describe “limits of deliberation”, which restrict the ways in which free and equal citizens can expect to be allowed to participate in deliberation. These limits are usually established along the lines of common interest and reason. The most famous phrasing of this idea belongs to Habermas, who uses the term “discourse”:

“Discourse can be understood as that form of communication that is removed from contexts of experience and action and whose structure assures us: that the bracketed validity claims of assertions, recommendations, or warnings are the exclusive object of discussion; that participants, themes and contributions are not restricted except with reference to the goal of testing the validity claims in question; that no force except that of the better argument is exercised; and that, as a result, all motives except that of the cooperative search for truth are excluded.” (1975, p.107, f.)

The idea of rational deliberation over topics of common interest has been influential in theories of deliberative democracy and has been repeated many times. For example, Benhabib writes that:

“According to the deliberative model of democracy, it is a necessary condition for attaining legitimacy and rationality with regard to collective decision making in processes in a polity, that the institutions of this polity are so arranged that what is considered in the common interest of all results from processes of collective deliberation conducted rationally and fairly among free and equal individuals.” (1996, p.69)

Of course, what constitutes a reasoned argument has been subject to much debate, particularly in relation to religious argument (Gutmann & Thompson 1998; Cohen 1996; Rawls 1997b; Rawls 1997a; Bohman 1998). Likewise, feminist and post-colonial scholars have criticised the construction of reason and common interest in gendered, classed, and racialised terms (Fraser 1992; Calhoun 1992; Landes 1988; Fernald 2005; Ryan 1992; Hoberman 2002; Felski 1989; Benhabib 1992; Eley 1992; Baker 1992; Eze 1995; Eze 1997).

Finally, theories of deliberative democracy tend to assume that citizenship is a pre-existing and transparent condition, but rarely question the relationship between deliberative praxis and the construction of citizenship. For example, for Benhabib citizenship, or lack thereof, seems to be a reality that precedes deliberation, rather than one that is constructed in the process of deliberation:

“There are no *prima facie* rules limiting the agenda of the conversation, or the identity of the participants, as long as each excluded person or group can justifiably show that they are relevantly affected by the proposed norm under question. In certain circumstances this would mean that citizens of a democratic community would have to enter into a practical discourse with noncitizens who may be residing in their countries, at their borders, or in neighbouring communities if there are matters that affect them all.” (1996, p.70)

In spite of the emphasis put on equality and common interest, and in spite of the common assumption that citizenship is an unproblematic category, historically speaking civic deliberation has always been linked to inequality, partly because the very notion of citizenship is one that implies privilege: much of Aristotle's work on the subject was concerned with distinguishing the citizen from those who were not, and he was convinced that citizenship could only work on a small scale and as a privilege. Even in Ancient Rome, whose system of citizenship was more inclusive than that of Athens, different categories of citizenship existed, and the more political and deliberative aspects of citizenship were privileges of the highest category of citizens (Burchell 1995).

While these cases resemble Benhabib's *a priori* distinction between citizens and non-citizens, others have taken a more constructivist approach, which addresses the production of citizenship and its outside *through* deliberation. In particular, the publication of Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, a work which focussed on 17th Century European public spheres, sparked a vivid academic debate on the construction of civic deliberation in gendered, classed, and racialised ways (Fraser 1992; Calhoun 1992; Landes 1988; Fernald 2005; Ryan 1992; Hoberman 2002; Felski 1989; Benhabib 1992; Eley 1992; Baker 1992; Eze 1995; Eze 1997), pointing to the exclusionary character of deliberative citizenship in "real life" as well as in theory.

In contrast to the substantial theoretical production on deliberative democracy and citizenship, empirical research on the topic has "lagged significantly behind theory" (Delli Carpini et al. 2004, p.316). The empirical studies included in a review essay by Delli Carpini et al. were furthermore overwhelmingly experimental, thus explicitly removing context and experience from the picture. Rooted in social psychology, these studies tend to focus on "the human mind" as such, rather than – as a sociological or anthropological approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis – on socially contextual minds. Walsh offers an apt description of the field, arguing that "casual political talk" in everyday situations (of which blogging could be considered a part) has received much less attention than formal deliberation:

"Existing research [is] insufficient to explain what goes on when people talk to each other casually in natural settings about politics. [Formal] *deliberation* has been brought to empirical light (...). However, *casual* political talk – talk that is not organized for the sake of decision making – has received far less attention, and has almost always been investigated in settings manufactured by the researchers, such as through focus groups or in-depth interviews. The exceptions – studies that investigate informal political talk directly in natural settings – are few and have been conducted by sociologists, anthropologists, or social work scholars (...). When interpersonal

interaction within social contexts is expected to influence vote choices or other political attitudes, only the existence – not the *content* – of this talk has been the object of study.” (Cramer Walsh 2003, p.3)

However, where participants are allocated fixed preferences (e.g. Gaertner et al. 1999) for the purpose of an experiment or asked to discuss fictional candidates for office (e.g. Stasser & Titus 1985) rather than issues that affect them personally and emotionally, it is likely that their deliberative praxis will differ from “real-life” deliberation. Discussing deliberative polling as an experimental tool, Iyengar et al. (2003) have thus argued that:

“The goal [of the procedure] is to create a counterfactual public opinion resting on a good deal of information and serious consideration of competing perspectives. Democratic theory assumes that public opinion is so grounded, but empirical research has made it abundantly clear that the ‘state of nature’ (respondents as they are typically found in their day to day environments) bears little resemblance to the democratic ideal.” (2003, p.1)

Walsh has identified this distance between notions of deliberation in normative theory and deliberative practice in “real life” as the reason for the reluctance of many scholars in the field to engage with the latter, arguing that “the political talk that arises as a by-product of casual interaction does not fit prevailing definitions of this venerable act. As such, it has slipped through the cracks of recognition of objects worthy of serious study” (2003, p.2).

It is important to keep in mind that theoretical approaches to deliberation are mostly normative in character when we contrast them to deliberation in praxis and examine their interpretation of the latter. The aim of normative theory is to develop an *ideal* model of deliberation, not to describe it as it actually happens in “real life”. Neither does it necessarily reflect notions of deliberation among common citizens, which, as I shall show in this thesis, may be much more complex and ambiguous. As a result, from the perspective of normative theory, deliberative citizenship in praxis can only ever be understood as imperfect and contradictory compared to theoretical models. For example, Fishkin writes that

“We can put the ideal speech situation at one extreme of an imaginary continuum and then imagine various forms of *incompleteness* – compared to this ideal – as we think about more realistic forms of deliberation. When arguments offered by some participants go unanswered by others, when information that would be required to understand the force of a claim is absent, or when some citizens are unwilling or unable to weigh some of the arguments in the debate, then the process is *less deliberative* because it is incomplete in the manner specified. In practical contexts a great deal of incompleteness must be tolerated. Hence, when we talk of improving deliberation, it is a matter of *improving* the completeness of the debate and the public’s engagement with it, not a matter of perfecting it because that would be virtually impossible under realistic conditions.” (1995, p.41)

Alas, approaching deliberative citizenship in praxis as *incomplete* means that its internal logic and sense are likely to be overlooked. These can be grasped more appropriately through a qualitative, interpretative approach, which pays attention to narratives and practices in their specific context. In such an approach, as Walsh puts it:

“The dependent variable is no longer *preferences* but *perspectives*. Preferences are attitudes about particular issues. Perspectives are the lenses through which people view issues. (...) They influence interpretations by suggesting which categories are useful for making sense of the world.” (2003, p.2)

An empirical approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis contributes to our understanding of vigilance and deliberation by trying to make sense of them *within* their specific context and taking their apparent contradictions seriously, rather than simply dismissing them as imperfect.

Vigilant citizenship

Just like deliberative citizenship, the notion of vigilant citizenship, too, has a long history. To give just one example, drawing on Ancient Roman thought (in particular the writings of Titus Livy), Machiavelli (2008) identified vigilance as a core virtue of the ideal republican citizen. According to Heater,

“By ‘virtue’ in this context Machiavelli meant primarily the manly and martial qualities necessary to defend the state against internal discord and external attack (...). The citizen must vigilantly guard the state against its seizure by a tyrant. Machiavelli, in line with other Renaissance political commentators like Bruni, was convinced that a citizen-army was the quintessence of proper citizenship. (...) If the citizen is not ready to bear arms to defend his state, he must be so seriously lacking in civic virtue as barely to deserve the title of citizen at all. (...) Professional or mercenary troops (...) cannot be relied upon to fight with the same commitment and courage as citizen-soldiers defending what they hold most dear.” (2004, p.25, f.)

Compared to deliberative citizenship, vigilant citizenship has received relatively little scholarly attention (Larsen & Piché 2009), most of which has been empirical. A number of scholars (Amoore 2006; Larsen & Piché 2009; Marquardt 2012; Monahan 2006; Newman 2012; Preston 2009; Rojas 2006; 2009) have examined the way in which vigilant citizenship has been redefined “top-down” under neoliberal regimes and in the context of the “war on terror” in ways that stress security and crime, rather than – as in Machiavelli’s version – politics and government, and that target people whose claims to citizenship are fragile, such as immigrant populations, “terrorists”, or “criminals”³⁵, rather than the State and other “powerful agents”³⁶.

³⁵ I have put these terms into quotation marks not in order to question the existence of crime and terrorism and its effects on victims, but to signal the often political construction and uses of these terms, in Latin America and Peru as elsewhere.

In these cases, vigilant citizenship presents “a bias towards the security rather than the democracy side” (Rojas 2009, p.229), placing responsibility for the prevention of disaster and crime on the shoulders of the individual citizen-subject (Monahan 2006) or local communities (Flint 2002). Vigilant citizens are called upon “to constantly watch for suspicious activity and to immediately convey relevant information to authorities” (Larsen & Piché 2009, p.188; see also Amooore 2006), a phenomenon that Monahan has captured graphically in the term “citizen spy” (2006).

While these studies offer important insights in the way citizenship is framed by contemporary governments, their “top-down” approach, expressed in their focus on government campaigns or policies, means that they are of limited use for understanding vigilant citizenship as a meaningful praxis in the Peruvian blogosphere, unless we assume that subjects “accept” these “interpellations” in an Althusserian (1972) sense or at most “negotiate” and “subvert” notions of citizenship which are, in the first place, defined by the State. Althusser used the metaphor of a police hailing in order to explain his concept of interpellation as the process of subject constitution through ideology:

“Ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’ Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*.” (1972, p.174)

The choice of a police officer as the force who is prompting subject formation in Althusser’s example may be coincidental, but it does suggest a privileged position of the State in the process of becoming a subject. As shall become clear throughout this thesis, this assumption is hard to uphold. The image of “turning around” – thereby responding exactly as intended to the police officer’s hailing – does not seem to represent the process by which Peruvian bloggers constitute their subjectivity as vigilant citizens, as notions of vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere often explicitly challenge the state, its narratives and interpellations. Targeting mainly agents perceived as “powerful” or “close to the state”, Peruvian bloggers’ notion of vigilance could thus be described as citizenship “against the State”. The way bloggers respond to governmental interpellations and notions of citizenship is therefore inappropriately described as a “negotiation” (Newman 2012) of top-down interpellations, as their notions of

³⁶ However, Larsen and Piché have pointed out that public vigilance campaigns are not new, but can be traced back to the witch-hunts in fourteenth-century Europe and have since appeared in various guises (2009, p.188, ff.).

citizenship and their subjectivities as vigilant blogger-citizens often diametrically opposed these narratives.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed my approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis. I have argued above that the meanings of citizenship are not uniform across society, but vary along the lines of difference and inequality that shape societies in general. Most research on citizenship in Peru has focussed on marginal sectors of society, a “bias” that reflects a general preference for the “subaltern” in the Peruvian social sciences (Kogan 1998a, p.6, f.). The notions of citizenship described in these studies tend to emphasise rights and inclusion.

As I shall show in Chapter III, political blogging as a meaningful praxis of citizenship belongs mainly to the political “habitus” (Bourdieu 1977) of members of the (upper-) middle classes. Some comparative studies suggest that notions of citizenship in the (upper-) middle classes tend to stress a different set of values and practices, including vigilance and deliberation, but studies that focus explicitly on middle-class citizenship are rare.

The examples of blogging-as-citizenship discussed above are in accordance with these findings. However, it would be a mistake to take these representations at face value. As I shall discuss in Chapter V, my interviewees subscribed to vigilant and deliberative notions of citizenship on a normative level and valued blogging for the opportunities it offered for practising these values – in theory. In praxis, however, they were highly critical of the “real-existing blogosphere”, which they perceived as an unsuitable space for either deliberation or vigilance. Focussing on the micro-level regulation of speech in the Peruvian blogosphere and drawing on observational data, Chapter VI links back both to these criticisms and to the notions of vigilance and deliberation, asking how the two notions work in praxis and what power-effects they produce.

CHAPTER II: PHILOSOPHY, METHODOLOGY, AND METHODS

Birks and Mills have defined methodology and methods in the following way: “Stemming from a congruent philosophy, a methodology is a set of principles and ideas that inform the design of a research study. Methods, on the other hand, are practical procedures used to generate and analyse data” (2011, p.4). This definition points to three relevant components of any research project: a philosophy (including epistemology, ethics, and sometimes ontology), a methodology, and the concrete methods used to collect and analyse data. These three components are necessarily interrelated: our beliefs about the nature of knowledge, the relationship between knower and knowledge, and the nature of our object of study (philosophy) will influence both our methodology and the actual methods we use. This chapter aims to address all three of these aspects. I begin by briefly outlining the paradigmatic background (or “philosophy”) that informs my study, and the methodological assumptions that arise from it. In the second – much longer – part of this chapter, I shall describe my “methods” in detail: how I went about defining the field, collecting, and analysing data.

Philosophy and Methodology

While Birks and Mills refer to the first component as a “philosophy”, the term “paradigm” is more commonly used in the social sciences. Denzin and Lincoln define a “paradigm” as “the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises” (2003, p.33). In Chapter I, I developed and discussed my approach to blogging as a meaningful praxis of citizenship: not something people “have”, but something they “do” or “perform” in a way that is meaningful to them. As the term “meaningful” suggests, I believe that practices of citizenship reflect people’s contextual understanding of citizenship, as well as their conceptual understanding of the practices that represent citizenship and their relevance in a given historical context. At the same time, these practices *reaffirm* and *reproduce* notions of citizenship, a process that has been described as the “performativity” of discourse by post-structuralist theorists such as Judith Butler (1993).

A Constructionist Paradigm and an Interpretative Methodology

The language of meaning locates my work within a *constructionist* paradigm. The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology states that social constructionists build upon the assumption that the world is “made or invented, rather than merely given or taken for granted. Social worlds are interpretive nets woven by individuals and groups” (Scott & Marshall 2009). In turn, Lincoln and Guba put stronger emphasis on the aspect of meaning-making and its role in social action:

“A goodly proportion of social phenomena consists of the meaning-making activities of groups and individuals around those phenomena. The meaning-making activities themselves are of central interest to social constructionists/constructivists, simply because it is the meaning-making/sense-making/attributional activities that shape action (or inaction).” (2003, p.264)

They link constructionist paradigms to relativist ontologies (realities are constructed, local, and specific) and transactional, subjectivist epistemologies (findings are created intersubjectively) (2003, p.256). These definitions operate on the *paradigmatic* level: they emphasise fundamental beliefs about the nature of both things (ontology) and our knowledge of them (epistemology).

However, as mentioned above, paradigms, methodologies, and methods are closely related. Treibel emphasizes the link between these three components, arguing that in interpretative sociology (of which social constructionist works are a part), interpretation is

“Simultaneously a basic assumption about human behaviour and a research method. Those who subscribe to this so-called interpretative paradigm assume that the interacting agents are constantly interpreting; furthermore this interaction as such is being interpreted ‘from the outside’, that is, sociologically.” (2000, p.112)

As a result, methodologically, constructionist research tends to focus on understanding and reconstructing reality, rather than aiming to explain, predict, or objectively describe it (Lincoln & Guba 2003, p.257).

Such interpretative approaches have been present in sociological research from its very beginnings. For example, in the early 20th century, Max Weber defined sociology as “a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences”(1978, p.4). He crucially distinguished “action” from other forms of activity, such as mere “behaviour”, based on the “subjective meaning” attached to the former by the agent. He furthermore considered action to be social whenever it took into account “the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course” (1978, p.4).

In the middle of the 20th century, a similar approach was taken by the school of Symbolic Interactionism. Blumer, who coined the term “Symbolic Interactionism”, argued that:

“Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. (...) The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows. (...) These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.” (1969, p.2)

Blumer took a broad approach to “things”, defining them as “everything that the human being may note in his world” (1969, p.2). This broad definition explicitly included “guiding ideals,

such as individual independence or honesty” (1969, p.2) – or, in the context of this study, an ideal of “Citizenship”.

Towards the end of the 20th century, poststructuralist theorists began to focus increasingly on the intersection between discourse, power and subjectivity, arguing that “all selves [are] products of discourse and power” (Branaman 2009, p.144). While these theories share with other interpretative traditions their interest in the role of meanings in society, they put much stronger emphasis on language and “text”: Walsh describes poststructuralism as “a theory that pays attention to the role of language in constituting reality (rather than vice versa), and attempts to ‘deconstruct’ recurring categories in popular discourse (such as madness) and corresponding phenomena (such as psychiatry)” (2011, p.13). This interest in language and text has found an expression in the analytic “methods”¹ or “strategies” used by poststructuralists, including different forms of Discourse Analysis and deconstruction.

My own theoretical approach has been most strongly shaped by theorists located in this specific tradition of interpretative sociology, most notably by the works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, both of which informed my earlier work on the discursive and performative production of truth in the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Winter 2008; Winter 2009b). While my research on blogging is less interested in questions of “truthing”, Butler’s and Foucault’s contributions continue to be important references for my own thought, on an epistemological level and, in consequence, as a methodological background. These influences are expressed in my interest in the discursive construction of citizenship and its “constitutive outside” (Butler 1993). Their theoretical concepts serve as interpretative tools and inform my analysis at different points throughout this thesis.

Although I do not perform a Discourse Analysis in the strict Foucaultian sense, I borrow certain elements from his thought, most importantly his notion of discourse. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault defined discourses “not (...) as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (2004, p.54). My approach to blogging as a meaningful praxis of citizenship reflects this constructionist notion of discourse: throughout this thesis, my focus is

¹ According to its founding father, Derrida, “deconstruction” is not, strictly speaking, a “method”. He writes: “Deconstruction takes place, it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organization of a subject It deconstructs it-self. It can be deconstructed. (Ca ce déconstruit). The ‘it’ is not here an impersonal thing that is opposed to some egological subjectivity. It is deconstruction” (1991, p.274). Seeing “deconstruction” as a “method” would, on the one hand, be at odds with Derrida’s notion of the subject; on the other hand, such an approach would suggest a certain set of procedures, which has been rejected by deconstructionists in favour of a more flexible and contextually sensitive approach (Wartenpfehl 1996).

on understanding how both citizenship and blogging as a praxis through which citizenship is enacted are discursively constructed.

In addition to this, Butler offered an important contribution in pointing out the ways in which discourses, through constant reiteration and citation in social practices, produce, regulate and constrain the effects that they name (1993, p.2). This moment of regulation and constriction of objects points to discourse's exclusionary force. In Butler's theory of discourse, interpellation – the act of simultaneously naming and bringing into being – opens a “field of discourse and power that orchestrates, delimits and sustains (...)” (1993, p.8). The construction of any object is thus a “differential operation” (ibid.), which simultaneously produces a “constitutive outside” (ibid.), since the formative ability of discourse depends on the “constitutive force of exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection” (ibid.). Butlers' approach to discourse as an exclusionary matrix will be particularly important in Chapter VI, where I discuss the micro-level practices of regulation and exclusion that govern the Peruvian blogosphere. In that context, I shall explore the construction of the figure of the “troll” – essentially a non-citizen, whose claims to participation in deliberative democracy can be legitimately dismissed and who becomes the object, rather than subject, of vigilant citizenship.

Methods

Defining the Field

Studying political blogging in post-transitional Peru requires a range of decisions regarding the definition of the field: what constitutes “blogging”? What is “political” blogging? When is a blog “Peruvian”? What role does geography play? On the following pages, I shall discuss these questions.

Regarding the definition of blogging, I chose a broad approach, including both bloggers in the strict sense of the word and Facebook users, as long as the latter used the medium for communication with a large public beyond their close friends. The guiding principle was thus one of publicity, rather than the use of a specific medium. Even though Twitter is fairly popular among bloggers, I did not include this particular medium in my research. The reason is mainly practical: being limited to 140 characters, tweets offer little by way of text and are often used to spread a piece of information, rather than reflections on events. However, many of the bloggers I talked to also used twitter.

I took a similarly liberal approach to the definition of a “political” blog, defining the political as critical engagement with current events and problems in society. This can be done in a variety of ways and the frame of reference includes, but is not limited to the State. Blogs included in

the sample did not have to address exclusively political topics (some of the bloggers in my sample alternated political writings with posts about poetry, philosophy, popular culture, or personal experiences, among other fields of interest), but their choice of topics had to express a certain interest in political problems. As I was interested in political blogging in the post-transitional context, I furthermore chose bloggers whose writings demonstrated an interest in problems related to the post-transitional condition.

The Peruvian blogosphere is not a homogenous space, and struggles over post-transitional politics and memory politics in particular have shaped its internal divisions. The selection of bloggers included in my sample aimed at plurality, rather than representativeness: I tried to include a variety of different views, both on a political spectrum and with respect to the more specific field of post-transitional and memory politics. Including a range of more controversial bloggers in the sample provided valuable insights into sensitive issues, such as the regulation of speech in the blogosphere, a problem which was less strongly perceived by politically moderate bloggers. Bloggers were chosen based on a previous review of their writings, and, in some cases, following recommendation by other bloggers.

As Khiabany and Sreberny have pointed out for the Iranian case, defining a national blogosphere is a tricky issue, especially in blogospheres that build on a dynamic relationship between bloggers inside the country and diasporic bloggers:

“If Iranian blogs are defined in terms of language, this means omission of a large number of Iranian bloggers who write in other languages, most notably English, while including a number of bloggers from Afghanistan or Tajikistan who write in Persian. Focussing on Iranian bloggers writing inside the country also leads to excluding a large number of Iranian bloggers writing in Persian outside Iran. One important analytic issue about the Iranian blogosphere centers on the dynamic relationship between Iran and its diasporas, activity inside Iran and activity outside. There is little doubt that the Internet in general and the blogosphere in particular blur issues of distance and geographical separation, tie diasporas to their national and cultural homelands in often unexpected ways, and support the emergence of new forms of political engagement between those inside the polity and those outside identifying as Iranian and wanting to be involved.” (2007, p.565)

Regarding the “Peruvianness” of blogs, I therefore took a broad approach: blogs had to be written by a Peruvian, they had to engage with other bloggers inside the Peruvian blogosphere and discuss “Peruvian” topics². This broad definition reflects the diasporic condition of part of

² Studies have shown that contrary to utopian notions of a public without borders, political blogospheres tend to be nation-based. For example, focussing on Arabic bloggers, Etling et al. identify “the formation of nation-based clusters, where networks of bloggers connect with fellow citizens [as] a key finding of this research. The logic of this structure mirrors the reality of political and economic life, being rooted primarily in national and local affairs. The relative paucity of pan-Arab dialogue in the blogosphere, outside of where Arabic bloggers engage the West, is also notable. Our research shows

the Peruvian blogosphere: several of the most influential figures in the Peruvian blogosphere live and work in the United States. As one of my interviewees noted, this community is “*Limeño* and diasporic, because many of the blogs are not from Lima. They are blogs written by Peruvians abroad. (...) It reduces the distance between those of us who are in this diaspora, and those who are here”³. During my fieldwork in Lima, I had the opportunity to talk to four Peruvian bloggers living abroad (all of them in the United States), who were visiting at the time of my fieldwork. Others had lived abroad in the past, but had permanently returned to Lima since. Many of the bloggers living abroad who regularly participate in debates in the Peruvian blogosphere visit Peru on a regular basis and maintain strong links with their home communities. The Peruvian blogosphere could therefore, to a certain degree, be understood as a “transnational” community, whereby the majority of the political topics refer to either national (Peruvian) or local topics (relating to Lima or even specific neighbourhoods of Lima).

Being interested in the social aspects of blogging, I chose to approach the Peruvian blogosphere as an interactive community, rather than a collection of individual blogs. It therefore made sense to focus on bloggers who interact with each other, rather than on those who live in a particular place. However, it turned out that these two characteristics were to a certain degree interdependent and the blogger quoted above implicitly points to an important exclusion when he defines his community as “*Limeño* and diasporic”: in the Peruvian case, it seems more appropriate to speak of a number of simultaneously highly local and transnational blogospheres, than of a national blogosphere. Bloggers in my sample tended to discuss events and problems of either national (e.g. related to the national government) or regional/local relevance (e.g. related to local politics in Lima), but very rarely focussed on a sub-national level outside Lima (except in high profile cases which “reached” the capital through mass media coverage, such as riots or natural disasters).

They also tended not to establish regular links with bloggers in other parts of the country, except in cases where exceptional events meant that these could function as “correspondents” (for example, during the floods in Cusco in early 2010, the blog *El Caminierito*, from the Southern Andean city of Cusco, was frequently quoted), or in the case of bloggers who had themselves migrated to Lima from other parts of the country and brought

that bloggers in the Arab world focus more attention on local political issues and leaders, and when discussing their leaders, devote more energy to criticism than support, a critical point of departure from the mainstream press” (2009, p.47). A similar dynamic seems to be present in the Peruvian blogosphere.

³ “Yo creo que es Limeño y diaspórico, porque muchos de los blogs no son limeños. Son blogs escritos por peruanos en el extranjero. (...) Reduce la distancia entre quienes estamos en esta diáspora y quienes estén acá.”

links with bloggers from their community of origin with them. The case of the Facebook group *No a Keiko*, which I discuss in Chapter VI, is a good example. Even though the founding fathers and mothers of this group lived in the northern city of Cajamarca, they had moved there from Lima, and as one of them told me in interview, the group's success was initially based on the personal contacts they retained in Lima. In stark contrast to its huge success in the capital city, the group has ever since struggled to mobilise supporters in other parts of the country.

Only a few of my interviewees could name more than a couple of blogs written in other parts of the country, even though blogospheres of substantial size exist in other Peruvian cities, such as Cusco, Arequipa, and Iquitos (a 2010 national survey found that at 13%, respondents in urban Central and Southern Peru were twice as likely to have a blog than those in Lima (7%) (Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2010, p.4)). In many ways, the socio-geographical structure of the Peruvian blogosphere thus reflects an old proverb, which one of my interviewees quoted:

“There is a saying... a saying from (...) the 19th century, which is still true today. Lima is farther from Peru than from London. Right? I mean, I don't know what's going on in *provincias*. !! Don't! Know! What's! Going! On! Right now, I couldn't name a single blog from *provincias*.”⁴

In her pioneer work on virtual ethnography, Hine argued that “cyberspace is not to be thought of as a space detached from any connections to ‘real life’ and face-to-face interaction. It has rich and complex connections with the contexts in which it is used” (2000, p.64). Other researchers of the Internet in society have come to similar conclusions:

“Technologically mediated communication is being incorporated into ever more aspects of daily life. (...) The distinction between online and offline worlds is therefore becoming less useful as activities in these realms become increasingly merged in our society, and as the two spheres interact with and transform each other.” (García et al. 2009, p.52, f.)

Rather than thinking of the “Virtual” and the “Real” as two different social spaces, García et al. therefore argue that “there is one social world which contains both traditional and technologically advanced modes of communication and sites of social activity” (2009, p.54). From this point of view, “‘virtual reality’ is not a reality separate from other aspects of human experience, but rather a part of it” (2009, p.54).

While I did not investigate this problem systematically, the evidence quoted above suggests that in the Peruvian case, “real-life” relationships play an important role in the way local blogospheres develop. This does not necessarily mean the existence of relationships with

⁴ “Hay una frase... hay una frase... del siglo pasado, del siglo antepasado, del siglo 19, que... sigue siendo válida. Lima está más lejos del Perú que de Londres. ¿Ya? O sea, yo no sé qué pasa en provincias. ¡No! ¡Sé! ¡Qué! ¡Pasa! No te podría citar ahorita ningún blog de provincias.”

other bloggers prior to the blogging experience (in fact, several of my interviewees claimed that they had had no personal relationships with other bloggers before they started blogging, but developed these as a result of their blogging); however, many bloggers shared an experience of specific spaces, practices, and narratives of urban middle-class life, not just in terms of a segregated urban geography⁵, but also in relation to the activities of everyday life. As Díaz-Albertini Figueras has argued, these shared spaces play an important role in the configuration of the Peruvian middle classes:

“Our middle class, then, is defined by the spaces which it inhabits and through which it passes, and in which it cultivates the social relationships which will favour their economic and political strategies. The absence of a general ideology which might define it as a discourse and praxis means that as a class it is identified by itself and by others in relation to spaces, locations, and places. They recognise each other by the school they attended, the university, the clubs, recreational spaces, among others. Under these criteria, which are intimately linked to questions of race, extraction, and residence, the others are excluded. Space thus predominates over other factors, such as public spirit and respect for the other. (...) Our classes, and in particular the middle class, continue to be strongly determined by space and territory. Being present in the appropriate ambits has meant for a long time being part of the group (...), of ‘people like one’, as we say today. (...) The fact of inhabiting or having passed through these spaces has turned into a ‘water mark’ which allows one to identify one’s ‘equals’ in diverse circumstances and in publics outside those territories.” (2000, p.33, f.)

One of my interviewees expressed this idea in relation to the Peruvian blogosphere when he called it a “caviarosphere”, adapting the term “caviar”, the Peruvian equivalent to the “champagne socialist” in the English-speaking world:

“You will have heard this term already for having lived here for so long, that term *caviar*, right? (...) Now, let's say that the Peruvian blogosphere is like a *caviarosphere*, right? I mean it's a *caviarosphere*, because eighty percent of the opinions of the blogs... well-known blogs (...)/ most of this *caviarosphere* are super well-intentioned people, young people, education mostly San Marcos [University], Catholic [University], who come from... I do not know if you realise that they come from a certain... I mean, they share certain characteristics, which... which... which turn them into an entity, right?”⁶

⁵ Several social scientists have pointed out that Lima is a highly segregated city in terms of human geography. For example, Toche argues that certain parts of the city can be attributed to the “traditional” middle classes, while others are inhabited by the “emergent” middle classes: “[As a result of rural-to-urban migration,] in the conglomerate of Lima ‘internal frontiers’ were created and various ‘cities’ emerged, which, among other symbolic uses, served to help the inhabitants identify the spaces which belonged to the ‘emergent’ and ‘traditional’ sectors” (2010, p.303).

⁶ “Habrás conocido este el termino ya por vivir tanto acá este el término *caviar*, ¿no? (...) Ya, digamos que la blogósfera peruana es como una caviarósfera, ¿no? O sea eeh ahí/ sí, la/ es una caviarósfera, porque el ochenta por ciento de las opiniones de los blogs estee.. conocidos, porque hay muchos blogs radicales, pero son desconocidos o marginados o simplemente por su poca calidad no son conocido, pero la mayoría de los/ de esta caviarósfera o sea son gente superintencionada, jóvenes, la mayoría de educación San Marcos, Católica que proviene.. no sé si te das cuenta que proviene de determinado.. o sea comparte determinadas características, que... que.. que los vuelve un conjunto, ¿no?”

Or, as another blogger put it:

“The political blogs, those who write about politics, we are talking here about... twenty or thirty, I’m even exaggerating if I say thirty, and they are moving in social networks which are too small. Right? The Catholic University, San Marcos, much more Catholic than San Marcos, no? With patterns of consumption, patterns of cultural consumption, which oscillate between [the traditional middle-class and upper-middle-class districts of] Miraflores, Barranco, Jesús María, San Isidro, no? They don’t leave that area. (...) These are blogs which are linked to the Catholic University or San Marcos University, and based on these spaces they have essential networks, no? With a certain press, with a certain academic circle, and so on, and so they have a much bigger sounding board.”⁷

This shared experience and the fact of inhabiting shared spaces – as well as in many cases overlapping circles of friends – might, as the second quote suggests, facilitate the development of relationships online as well as offline, which might explain the rarity of links between bloggers in Lima and those in other parts of the country. My approach to the blogosphere as an interactive community and my focus on Lima thus also meant the exclusion of bloggers from other parts of the country.

Data Collection

Throughout the thesis, I draw on different kinds and sets of data, including interviews, social media content (such as blogposts and Facebook discussion threads), and survey data. I shall discuss on the following pages the reasons for using these different sets of data and how they have been constructed.

Blogger Survey

In Chapter III, I draw on a blogger survey. In order to find out more about the social background of the most successful political bloggers in Peru, I collected biographical data on the most highly ranked political bloggers registered in the blogging directory Perublogs⁸. While Perublogs is not the only blogging directory in Peru and not all Peruvian blogs are inscribed in it, this survey still gives an impression of the social structure of the more influential part of the political blogosphere.

⁷ “Los blogs políticos, o los blogs de política, que tocan temas políticos, hablamos de... veinte o treinta, no, exagero además si digo treinta, y que se mueven en redes demasiado reducidas, ¿no? Católica, San Marcos, mucho más Católica que San Marcos, no, que con patrones de consumo, patrones culturales de consumo, que se mueven entre Miraflores, Barranco, Jesús María, San Isidro, ¿no? No, no salen de ahí. (...) Son blogs que por estar anclados en Católica o San Marcos sí a partir de estos espacios tienen redes esenciales, no, con cierta prensa, con cierta academia, etcétera, efectivamente tienen una caja de resonancia mucho mayor.”

⁸ Perublogs uses a combination of visits, number of incoming links and authority of linking blogs to establish its ranking.

My choice of Perublogs over its “rival” BlogsPeru was mainly due to differences in the way in which the two blogging directories present their data: while Perublogs includes each and every one of its blogs into its ranking, BlogsPeru only provides a list of the 20 most-visited blogs in its directory. However, it is important to keep in mind that Perublogs and BlogsPeru are not “neutral” alternatives, but are perceived very differently by some bloggers, who associate the former with “powerful agents” and business interests. As I shall discuss in more detail in Chapter V, narratives of marginality and accusations of “lacking marginality” play an important part in my participants’ narratives of vigilance and deliberation in the Peruvian blogosphere. In this context, the history and perception of these two directories are important factors to keep in mind when interpreting the results of my survey, as choosing Perublogs over BlogsPeru has implications for the political representativeness of the sample. A third blogging directory or platform, which has become immensely popular over the past couple of years, is LaMula.pe.⁹ Unfortunately, LaMula.pe does not offer a similar ranking, and while a list of users is available (LaMula.pe 2012), there is often no simple way of contacting them. For these reasons, I did not include LaMula into my sample, in spite of its important role in the Peruvian blogosphere.

I included blogs listed on Perublogs under the category of “political blogs”, whenever one or several individual authors could be identified (this excludes institutional and anonymous blogs). Since bloggers’ initial choice of a category upon registration does not always reflect the further development of their blog, I also included blogs that were listed under the categories “news”, “opinion”, and “personal”, whenever I considered their focus to be political. Inevitably, this is a subjective judgement. However, as mentioned above, I applied a broad definition of the “political”, opting in case of doubt for the inclusion, rather than exclusion, of a blog.

Blogs whose authorship was not clearly individual (such as institutional blogs) were excluded from the sample. Blogs that were written collaboratively by several bloggers were included in the sample, but only the most active blogger was taken into account. Because I was interested in bloggers rather than blogs, I furthermore excluded secondary blogs written by a person who had already been included in the sample via their primary blog. Following these criteria, I made a list of the 35 highest-ranked, individually authored political blogs and collected biographical data on each blogger, including gender, age, occupation, education, and location. For this purpose, I drew on information that was publicly available (e.g. information provided

⁹ In November 2011, LaMula.pe had 32,598 active members (LaMula.pe 2012). However, this includes a substantial number of spam blogs. Furthermore, not every member of the community has a blog, as it is possible to become a member without creating a blog.

by bloggers on their own blogs or personal websites, publicly visible information on Facebook and LinkedIn profiles, blogging directory profiles, etc.). As I did not approach bloggers directly, it is possible that they attended universities, earned degrees, and did jobs that did not make their way into my census. However, these missing data should not fundamentally alter the overall findings of my survey – quite to the contrary, further degrees, universities and jobs with privileged access to the public sphere would only strengthen my finding that the most influential political bloggers in Peru are on average exceptionally well educated and occupy very influential positions, even by middle-class standards.

As the following graphic shows, the sample size of 35 – while relatively small – goes far beyond the most read bloggers. In fact, most of the bloggers included in the sample attract very few readers and are rarely linked to by other bloggers.

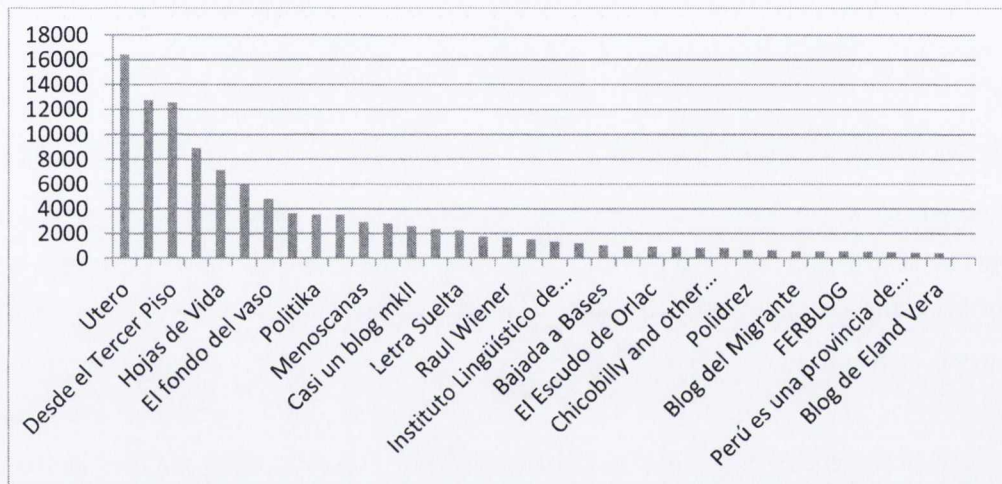


Figure 1: Ranking of political blogs on Perublogs: X = Blogs, Y = Popularity Points.

Debates

In Chapter IV, I draw on a series of debates between bloggers, prompted by current events, mostly during the García administration. I draw on these debates for my historically contextual analysis of bloggers' notions of deliberative and vigilant citizenship in relation to the wider public sphere, asking for the role of collective memories and perceptions of continuity in the construction of citizenship¹⁰.

The first debate, a series of commemorative posts on the occasions of recurring anniversaries of Fujimori's self-coup on the 5th of April 1992, was chosen because it offered a rich source of bloggers' memories of the Fujimori regime as a whole. Bloggers used the opportunity of these

¹⁰ Quotations from social-media content are quoted in English language and the original, Spanish text is reproduced in a footnote. I have not corrected any grammar or spelling mistakes in the original texts.

anniversaries to reflect not only on the self-coup itself, but on a wide range of aspects of the regime and its legacy in post-transitional Peru. Reflecting bloggers' memories of Fujimorism as a whole, this data allowed me to identify the importance of memories of mass media during the Fujimori regime. My analysis of this data found that mass media during the Fujimori regime were relevant for bloggers' memories in two ways: both as a source and as an object of memory. "That which can be seen on TV" (Tejada 2007, p.45, f., my translation) is particularly present in bloggers' memories of Fujimorism. However, at the same time, historical media representations were critically received and subject to scrutiny, as they formed part of bloggers' memories of a highly corrupt media regime. The self-coup sample also revealed a strong preoccupation with structural and cultural continuity beyond the moment of democratic transition in 2000. However, being general in its focus on the Fujimori regime as a whole, it offered only limited data on perceptions of continuity with respect to the media environment.

In order to find out more about bloggers' perceptions of post-transitional media and the links they established with historical media regimes in order to make sense of them and develop a political subjectivity in relation to them, I constructed a wider sample of 117 posts, which had been posted between January and December 2010 on 17 different blogs. These 17 blogs were chosen from the sample of the 25 bloggers I had interviewed. The difference between the 25 bloggers I interviewed and the 17 blogs included in this sample results from the fact that not all bloggers discussed media in their writings (some had fairly specific interests and focussed mainly on a small number of issues). Within the universe of these 17 blogs and the timeframe of the year 2010, all posts that critically discussed media, either extensively or in passing, were included in the sample. The sample is thus representative of the critical discourse on media within its universe. Based on this sample, I compiled a list of events that had prompted discussions of contemporary media regimes and identified a range of common criticisms of post-transitional mass media. I found that the most common criticisms referred to freedom of speech, modes of coverage, and a lack of structural independence.

For a more detailed discussion of these criticisms, I chose two case studies from the list of events that had prompted discussion of contemporary media regimes, namely a debate in response to a demonstration of members of the Shining Path on the campus of the National University of San Marcos, in 2010, and one which discussed the "takeover" of an important (and bankrupt) TV channel by the tax authorities, in 2009. These two case studies were chosen both for their relevance with respect to the core criticisms mentioned above, and because of their limited lifecycle, which allowed the construction of a fairly comprehensive sample.

Being interested in collective memories and shared perceptions, I aimed to represent conversations, rather than collections of individual posts that are unrelated to each other. As Flick has pointed out:

“One feature [of the Internet] is the intertextuality of documents on the Web, organized and symbolized by (electronic) links from one text (or one page) to other texts. This kind of cross-referencing goes beyond the traditional definition and boundaries of a text and links a big number of single pages (or texts) to one big (sometimes endless) text.” (2009, p.276)

While this potential endlessness poses a problem at the point of deciding which texts to include and when to stop, I found that debates in the Peruvian blogosphere were, in practice, of a surprisingly limited and clearly defined scope. Reflecting my interest in conversations, my sampling method followed the directions offered by bloggers themselves. Each of the samples consisted of a core of those blogs whose owners I had interviewed, thereby guaranteeing a certain degree of plurality and somewhat reducing the bias introduced by the citation-networks that structure the Peruvian blogosphere. These were reviewed for contributions to the debates in question. I then followed the links offered by these bloggers, and so on, until reaching a point of saturation (i.e. no new links could be found). This led to samples of varying size, which were not representative of the topic in the Peruvian blogosphere as a whole, but did fully cover one specific conversational network¹¹:

- In the case of the anniversary of Fujimori’s self-coup, I constructed a sample of 35 commemorative posts written between 2006 and 2012 (the start date reflected the earliest post on this topic within the universe of my sample), written by 18 different bloggers;
- In the case of the debate on the Shining Path in San Marcos, 29 blogposts, written by 20 bloggers between the 15th and the 26th of June, 2010, were included;
- In the case of the Panamericana Televisión debate, the sample included 27 posts written between the 1st and the 8th of June 2009 by 13 bloggers. The relatively small number of bloggers who wrote about the confusing and entangled Panamericana case may reflect its complexity.

¹¹ An analogy would be to imagine following conversations in one particular coffee-house in a city with several coffee-houses: not all conversations that take place in all of this city’s coffee-houses are included in the sample, but we can make a statement about those that take place in one or two particular coffee-houses.

Interviews with Bloggers

During my fieldwork in Lima, between March and September 2010, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 25 bloggers. The sampling process, access to the field, and the interviewing technique are discussed on the following pages.

Sampling

The sampling process followed an extended period of participant observation online, which allowed me to become familiar with the field. During this process, I became aware of different “groups” and currents within the Peruvian blogosphere. I also noticed that many of the divisions between these groups reflected divergent memories of the internal armed conflict and the political transition, and conflicts over post-transitional politics. My initial interest was in bloggers’ narratives of blogging in the post-transitional context, and I chose to focus on those bloggers whose writings demonstrated a certain interest in social and political problems deriving from the internal armed conflict, the Fujimori regime, and the post-transitional condition. The interest in citizenship that now structures the thesis emerged from the data analysis after the fieldwork was over.

The sampling process itself responded to these initial observations and followed the basic principles of theoretical sampling to “select cases or case groups according to concrete criteria concerning their content instead of using abstract methodological criteria. Sampling proceeds according to the relevance of cases instead of their representativeness” (Flick 2009, p.121). In Patton’s words, the sample was constructed “purposefully”, as cases were selected “because they are ‘information rich’ and illuminative, that is, they offer useful expressions of the phenomenon of interest; sampling, then, is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to a population” (2001, p.40).

Building on my initial insights about the main “battlefields” and antagonisms that structured dissent in the Peruvian blogosphere, I aimed to represent a wide array of different views and experiences. For this purpose, I tried to include both very prominent bloggers and those with a smaller readership, bloggers from different political backgrounds and of different ages, and bloggers who were associated with different “camps” within the Peruvian blogosphere. I also purposely included “extreme” cases (bloggers who held strong political views or whose writing style was particularly controversial and provocative), hoping (correctly) that these would be able to provide rich insights into the regulation of speech in the Peruvian blogosphere. In Patton’s terms, these constitute “information-rich cases (...), from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling” (2001, p.230). In addition to my own observations, I also drew on my

interviewees' knowledge of the Peruvian blogosphere. Several of my interviewees were added to the sample following suggestions made by their fellow bloggers.

Access to the Field

Access to the field was easy. In his study of the US-American political blogosphere, Hindman notes that "bloggers are an accessible bunch. The large majority of them were polite, friendly, and eager to respond to the queries of a social scientist" (2009, p.119). Although my experience was similar to Hindman's in terms of ease of access, it differed in one important aspect: in many cases I was able to establish initial contact with prospective interviewees via a mutual friend. I discovered these links either through conversations with Peruvian friends about my research and the people I was planning to interview or by looking up prospective interviewees' profiles on Facebook¹². While most bloggers were more than willing to talk to me, these links proved particularly useful in some cases of more prominent bloggers¹³, and were also helpful resources in establishing trust.

This experience is significant in spite of its anecdotal character, as it is symptomatic of the small and tightly knit community in which these bloggers live on an everyday level, beyond the scope of their blogging activities: for all their political differences, most of the bloggers I talked to belonged to a very reduced social circle – so much so that I, a foreigner with a limited number of not particularly well-connected, mostly non-blogging middle-class friends in Lima, was able to identify at least one (often more) mutual friend(s) with almost every single one of them. Nevertheless, in the case of my first interviewee, who felt that he was being marginalised by the wider blogging community, it was precisely my foreignness that convinced him to participate in the study. According to this blogger, "if you had a blog, then I would have thought twice before coming. You see? Because then I would say, no, I mean, if you had a blog, if you were a Peruvian and had a blog, then I would have thought twice."¹⁴

While both cases ultimately resulted from the same social context – that of a tightly knit community, with all its upsides and downsides – these different responses demonstrate that "categories of insider and outsider are socially constructed and are therefore constantly in flux" (Ganiel & Mitchell 2006, p.4). As Fontana and Frey have pointed out, the "interviewer's

¹² Facebook indicates mutual friends to users who look up another user in the directory.

¹³ I usually contacted prospective interviewees via e-mail. Two bloggers only got back to me after being reminded by a mutual friend.

¹⁴ "Ya, si tuvieras un blog, sí, yo lo hubiera pensado dos veces, antes de venir. ¿Ya? Porque ahí yo diría, no, o sea si tuvieras un blog, si fueras peruana y tuvieras un blog, entonces yo me lo hubiera pensado dos veces."

presentational self" (2003, p.77) is an important factor, not only in gaining access to the field, but also in interviewing:

"Do we present ourselves as representatives from academia studying medical students (Becker, 1956)? Do we approach the interview as a woman-to-woman discussion (Spradley, 1979)? Do we 'dress down' to look like the respondents (Fontana, 1977; Thompson, 1985)? Do we represent the colonial culture (Malinowski, 1922), or do we humbly present ourselves as 'learners' (Wax, 1960)? This decision is very important, because once the interviewer's presentational self is 'cast,' it leaves a profound impression on the respondents and has great influence over the success (or lack of it) of the study. Sometimes, inadvertently, the researcher's presentational self may be misrepresented, as John Johnson (1976) discovered in studying a welfare office, when some of the employees assumed he was a 'spy' for management despite his best efforts to the contrary." (2003, p.77)

Ganiel found that being perceived as an "outsider" could have a positive qualitative impact on interviewees' participation. Reflecting on her research as a US-American in Northern Ireland, she recalls that "having a national identity as an outsider eased the research process because participants assumed I had little knowledge of the local situation and were keen to make themselves clear" (Ganiel & Mitchell 2006, p.14).

However, in spite of this potential benefit, and not least because of my first interviewee's reluctance to talk to an "insider", I felt uncomfortable about being perceived as an "impartial outsider", an identity that was strongly at odds with how I perceived my own personal relationship with middle-class Lima and its blogosphere. After having lived, studied, and done research in Lima "on and off" for a total of 19 months over the course of seven years¹⁵, developing close friendships (mainly with members of the (upper-) middle classes), this place and some of its people felt more like a second home and a second family than like a "strange place". In the light of my first interview, this disparity also posed an ethical problem. I therefore made an effort to actively discourage my interviewees from seeing me as an "impartial outsider", by telling them about my own experience living in Lima and about the origins of my research project in my readership of the blogs of two Peruvian friends.

As a result of these efforts, most of my interviewees did not perceive me as a complete "outsider" and sometimes directly referred to my experience of living in Peru. For example,

¹⁵ In 2001 and 2002, I spent a year studying Spanish in Seville, Spain. At the students' residence where I was staying, I met a group of Peruvian students from the Catholic University in Lima (mainly historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists), who were participating in an exchange program with one of Seville's universities and doing research at the *Archivo de Indias*. Some of them became close friends of mine, and in 2003 I travelled to Lima for the first time to visit. Several other stays, between three and seven months each, followed. Between 2003 and 2010 I spent a total of 19 months living, studying, and doing research in Lima. In 2005, I spent a semester at the Catholic University in Lima, studying sociology and Quechua. In 2007, I did thesis research at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's archive in Lima, studying the production of truth in said body of inquiry (Winter 2008; Winter 2009b).

one interviewee introduced his use of a particular colloquialism by suggesting that “you will have heard this term already for having lived here for so long”¹⁶. However, as the doubt implicit in this particular example demonstrates, my “foreignness” was still sufficient to allow me to benefit from the effect described by Ganiel above.

Interviewing

During my fieldwork in Lima, between March and September 2010, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 25 bloggers. These interviews focussed on bloggers’ personal experiences and perceptions of the Peruvian blogosphere, their motivations, and the role of blogging in the wider context of post-transitional Peru. They combined elements of the narrative (Schütze 1977; Bauer 1996) and the expert interview (Meuser & Nagel 1991). I draw on these interviews throughout the thesis, particularly in Chapter V, quoting English translations in the text with original Spanish quotations in footnotes. Compared to social media content, these interviews constituted a particularly valuable source of insight into the meanings bloggers attached to blogging and their perceptions of the “real-existing” blogosphere and their fellow bloggers, topics which they rarely discussed in detail on their blogs.

Interviews began with an open narrative question, asking participants to recall how they decided to set up their blog, the further development of their blog, and their experiences participating in the Peruvian blogosphere. In a narrative interview, originally developed by Schütze (1977), the participant is asked to “present the history of an area of interest, in which the interviewee participated, in an extempore narrative. (...) The interviewer’s task is to make the informant tell the story of the area of interest in question as a consistent story of all relevant events from its beginning to its end” (Hermanns, quoted in Flick 2009, p.177), with minimal interruption. This interview form is a particularly useful tool in research projects that focus on participants’ subjective experience and perception of events and situations, as it reduces the influence of the interviewer compared to more tightly structured and standardised interviews and increase the likelihood that participants express their own viewpoints (Bauer 1996; Flick 2009, p.150). This worked well in the majority of cases. However, in a small number of interviews, the participants avoided personal narratives and took a more academic, analytical approach to my questions.

The openness of the narrative interview has the disadvantage of giving a great deal of control over the content of the interview to the interviewee, which can affect the usefulness of the

¹⁶ “Habrás conocido este término ya por vivir tanto acá.”

data in the context of a specific research question. I therefore took a more detailed interview guide into the interview, including both narrative and non-narrative questions. However, in practice I only referred to the interview guide if interviewees hadn't addressed its main questions and topics already during their initial narrative, allowing interviewees to structure the interview according to their own priorities instead.

In order to take advantage of bloggers' everyday knowledge of the blogosphere, I combined narrative elements with some aspects of the expert interview. This interview form was first theorised by Meuser and Nagel (1991) in a fairly restrictive way: according to them, the expert interview is not interested in the "entire person with all their orientations and attitudes in the individual or collective context of their lives. The context in this case is an organisational or institutional context, which is precisely not identical with that of the people acting in it, and in which they constitute but one factor" (1991, p.442). They also define an "expert" quite narrowly as someone who

"Forms part of the field of action that the research is concerned with. We don't mean the expert who comments on the field of action from the outside (...). It depends in the first place on the researcher's interest if someone is addressed as an expert. Expert is a relational status. (...) A teacher, who is being interviewed about pupils' difficulties to concentrate, is addressed as an expert. If the researchers' interest is in the psychological pressure on teachers, then the same teacher participates in the research as an affected person, an individual case, part of a representative sample or whatever, in any case not as an expert." (1991, p.443)

However, following their contribution, others have developed more flexible and inclusive understandings of the expert interview. For example, Deeke defined the "expert" as follows:

"The answer to the question, who or what are experts, can be very different depending on the issue of the study and the theoretical and analytical approach used in it. (...) We can label those persons as experts who are particularly competent as authorities on a certain matter of facts." (1995, quoted in Flick 2009, p.165)

As Flick has noted, this is a much broader definition, which – in contrast to Meuser and Nagel's concept – also includes those "experts" who have acquired expert knowledge as a result of being personally affected by the issue in question: "This definition also covers people as experts for their own biography or chronically ill persons as experts for their illness" (2009, p.166). Such a broad definition of an "expert" allowed me to treat bloggers as "experts" of the Peruvian blogosphere, and in fact they were often able to provide very detailed information about its structures, cultures, important agents, etc.

However, it would be naive to suggest that these accounts were independent of my interviewees' experience of the blogosphere as active participants, or even of the wider social context in which they lived. These links between bloggers' lived experience of the blogosphere

and their expert-knowledge of it become clear in the following examples. Earlier in this chapter I discussed the importance of the wider social context in which the Peruvian blogosphere developed. My findings about the “Lima-centric” character of the community, mentioned above, derived from those parts of my interviews that were closer to the “expert-interview”; yet at the same time they were not simply a “fact” offered by my interviewees, but rather a conclusion I could draw from the recommendations they offered as “experts” of the blogosphere. In this case, bloggers’ expert-knowledge of the Peruvian blogosphere reflected the wider social context of Peruvian society as a whole. Another example is the “lack-of-marginality” narrative discussed in Chapter V. The knowledge of the institutional structure of the Peruvian blogosphere discussed by some of my interviewees is inseparable from their experience as participants in the blogosphere.

While interviews proved useful sources for understanding bloggers’ perceptions and narratives of blogging and citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere, it is important to keep in mind that practices, experience thereof, and the narration of these experiences are not the same. Kitzinger points to the common conflation of “voice” and “experience” in qualitative (in particular feminist) research (2006). She criticises this approach to interview data, arguing that:

“Interviews and focus groups (...) are self-report methods, in which participants report on their own experiences, but – unlike ethnographies for example – those experiences are not observed directly by the researcher. Overwhelmingly, however, feminist researchers (like qualitative researchers more generally) use *talk about* experience as evidence for what experience is actually like. (...) Participants’ talk about relationships, behaviours and interactions is treated as an acceptable surrogate for direct observation. (...) The use of self-report data raises the important issue of the relationship between the ‘voices’ of participants and the ‘experiences’ they report. When we sit down to analyse a pile of interview or focus group data in which women describe their experiences, can we, or should we, as analysts, take everything they say as an accurate reflection of ‘what really happened’ or even as an accurate record of *their perspective* (or account, or understanding) of ‘what really happened?’” (2006, p.114)

Although it is questionable if observation provides better access to participants’ experience than their own accounts of it, Kitzinger’s cautionary tale constitutes an important critique of the ease with which voice and experience are often conflated. The normative character of marginality and internal equality in deliberative counter-public discourse, discussed in Chapter V, means that bloggers’ accounts of power, marginality, and conflict in the Peruvian blogosphere are to a certain extent political. As Flick put it, “presentations in interviews are said to comprise a mixture of how something is and how something should be, which still needs to be untangled” (2009, p.222). I found it helpful to complement these narratives with

my own observations of the practices and dynamics of regulation of speech and “exclusion through citizenship” in the Peruvian blogosphere, keeping in mind, however, that the latter translated into *my* experience, not that of the participants.

Observation

Before, throughout and after my fieldwork in Lima, I continually conducted online fieldwork in the Peruvian blogosphere, following and participating in its debates, both by writing my own field-blog (Winter 2009a) and by commenting on other blogs and Facebook pages. These activities helped me to become familiar with the topics and dynamics of the Peruvian blogosphere and to narrow down my research focus. During this initial step, I used the bookmarking tool *delicious.com* to record items and organise them thematically. This allowed me to identify problems in the Peruvian blogosphere, such as the regulation of speech, and simultaneously begin with the collection of related cases. As a result of my interviews with Peruvian bloggers, I became particularly interested in questions of power, marginality and the regulation of speech in the Peruvian blogosphere. While these interviews provided rich accounts of bloggers’ perceptions and representations of these problems, participant observation enabled me simultaneously to observe the regulation of speech in praxis on numerous blogs and Facebook pages. I decided to narrow down my perspective and focus my observation more strongly on these problems.

In Chapter VI, I draw mainly on such observation-based case-studies, most notably the case of the Facebook group No a Keiko, whose aim was to prevent Alberto Fujimori’s daughter Keiko from winning the presidential elections in 2011. Although I joined the group early on in my research process and became aware of the dynamics of its regulation during my fieldwork, the comments analysed in Chapter VI were collected retrospectively in a systematic way. As Chapter VI deals with the regulation of speech and “exclusion through citizenship” – including censorship and banning – the retrospective collection meant that some of the dialogues could not be reconstructed in their entirety, as comments had been deleted and affected users had been banned from the site. While Chapter V discusses bloggers’ accounts of (their own) marginalisation inside the blogosphere, these “voices” are therefore less present in Chapter VI, although I was sometimes able to complement them with my interviewees’ narratives. However, the benefit of participant observation in this chapter consisted in the ability to observe everyday practices and dynamics of marginalisation which clashed with democratic narratives of blogging and which few bloggers openly discussed in the interviews.

The fact that online interaction is purely textual and visual meant that – except for those comments that had been deleted in the meantime – an exact record of the events on No a

Keiko was available at a later point. This made retrospective observation possible in a way that would not be feasible in offline fieldwork. When studying the regulation of speech on No a Keiko, I was hence able to focus selectively on regulative practices and related discourses, setting aside other activities that were going on simultaneously in the group.

Data Analysis

Discourses, Narratives, and Discourse Analysis

Throughout this thesis, I approach the various kinds of textual data – interviews, blogposts, and Facebook threads – as “discourses” or “notions”, and as “narratives”. I shall briefly discuss my use of these terms. As Ruoff has pointed out, “discourse” is not a clearly defined concept, but has “turned into a fashionable term, whose arbitrary use in the most diverse disciplines makes a general coverage seem impossible” (2007, p.92). Foucault, possibly the most influential author in the field of discourse theory, acknowledged this himself in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*:

“Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe that I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements.” (2004, p.90)

In this thesis I use the terms “discourse” and “notions” interchangeably to describe more “abstract” ideas, such as “citizenship”. My thesis is interested in the way bloggers frame citizenship, a question that focuses on what could be called a “citizenship discourse”. I use the term “discourse” rather than, for example, “concept” or “idea”, in order to emphasise the social character of the notions discussed. Throughout the thesis, I discuss “notions” of citizenship (or a “citizenship discourse”) which emphasises vigilance and deliberation. This “notion” or “discourse” reflects a general and socially embedded – rather than individual – understanding of “citizenship”, which stands in a dialectic relationship with people’s everyday experience of reality, both shaping and being shaped by it. The concept of citizenship as a meaningful praxis discussed in Chapter I points to the importance of discourse in “doing citizenship” – our socially, politically and historically contextual understanding what it means to be a “citizen” is crucial to understanding how we “do” citizenship. The term “narrative”, in turn, suggests a story being told. In Silverman’s words:

“[The narrative] approach treats interview data as accessing various stories or narratives through which people describe their worlds (...). This (...) approach claims that, by abandoning the attempt to treat respondents’ accounts as potentially ‘true’ pictures of ‘reality,’ we open up for analysis the culturally rich methods through which

interviewers and interviewees, in concert, generate plausible accounts of the world (...)." (2003, p.343)

Narratives are not separate from discourses, but feed into and are influenced by them (for example, in the case of No a Keiko, discussed in Chapter VI, narratives of Fujimorism are crucial in the construction of citizens and their "constitutive outside" (Butler 1993)). However, it is possible to make an analytical distinction between narratives and discourses in pointing out that in the former the narrator's lived (or imagined, in the case of collective memories) experience plays a particularly significant role. Narratives play an important role throughout the thesis, where they appear as collective memories of Fujimorism, historical and contemporary media regimes and as bloggers' accounts of the "real-existing" blogosphere.

As Gee has pointed out:

"Any method always goes with a *theory*. Method and theory cannot be separated (...). Any method of research is a way to investigate some particular domain. (...) There can be no sensible method to study a domain unless one also has a theory of what that domain is. (...) People with different theories about a domain will use different methods for their research" (2011, p.11).

It is therefore hardly surprising that the multiplicity of explicitly defined and tacit approaches to "discourse" is matched by a wide range of explicitly defined and tacit ways of studying it. Gillen has indicated that, like discourse,

"Discourse analysis is a term used to embrace many different methods in the investigation of human communication found across the humanities and social sciences. (...) In practice, the boundary between discourse analysis and qualitative methodologies in general has sometimes become blurred where language data and the construction of meanings is the focus of intensive attention." (Gillen & Petersen 2004, p.146, f.)

Flick has made a similar observation, arguing that "methodological suggestions on how to carry out discourse analyses remain rather imprecise and implicit in most of the literature" (2009, p.341). How, then, could we go about analysing discourse?

A Constructionist Grounded Theory (Of Sorts)

In contrast to the vagueness of Discourse Analysis, Grounded Theory, initially developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in the 1960s, has become known for its rigid and detailed set of analytic practices. As a systematic approach to qualitative data, it pretended to challenge the then prevailing view in the social sciences that only quantitative research could produce reliable findings. In Charmaz's words:

"Glaser and Strauss's (1967) work was revolutionary because it challenged (a) arbitrary divisions between theory and research, (b) views of qualitative research as primarily a precursor to more 'rigorous' quantitative methods, (c) claims that the quest for rigor

made qualitative research illegitimate, (d) beliefs that qualitative methods are impressionistic and unsystematic, (e) separation of data collection and analysis, and (f) assumptions that qualitative research could produce only descriptive case studies rather than theory development.” (2003, p.253)

Glaser and Strauss later split up and further developed the methodology in different directions, the latter in co-authorship with Juliet Corbin (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Although they disagreed strongly over the correct way to do Grounded Theory (in particular over the acceptability of “preconceived research questions, categories and hypotheses” (Charmaz 2003, p.257)), Strauss and Corbin share with Glaser a positivistic approach to qualitative research (Charmaz 2003; but see Mills et al. 2006; and Birks & Mills 2011 for divergent evaluations), which has resulted in strong criticisms:

“Both Strauss’ and Corbin’s *Basics* and Glaser’s critique of it assert views of science untouched by either epistemological debates of the 1960s (...) or postmodern critiques (...). Both endorse a realist ontology and positivist epistemology, albeit with some sharp differences. (...) For example, in their efforts to maintain objectivity, [Strauss and Corbin] advocate taking ‘appropriate measures’ to minimize the intrusion of the subjectivity of the researcher into the research (...). Both (...) assume an external reality that researchers can discover and record (...). Because both (...) follow the canons of objective reportage, both engage in silent authorship and usually write about their data as distanced experts (...), thereby contributing to an objectivist stance. Furthermore, the didactic, prescriptive approaches described in early statements about grounded theory coated these methods with a positivist, objectivist cast (...).” (Charmaz 2003, p.255, f.)

The (post-) positivist assumptions that inform traditional Grounded Theory fit awkwardly with my more constructionist approach described above. Neither researchers as social subjects, nor the language they use to code and make sense of their data are neutral – the codes we assign to data are therefore as much a “construction” as our interviewees’ accounts of reality:

“We *construct* our codes because we are actively naming data (...). We choose the words that constitute our codes. Thus we define what we see as significant in the data and describe what we think is happening. Coding consists of this initial, shorthand defining and labelling; it results from a grounded theorist’s actions and understandings. Nonetheless the process is interactive.” (Charmaz 2006, p.47)

Claiming that I did “proper” Grounded Theory would require brushing over the multiple influences (including previous research and life in Peru, literature, and other sources) and choices that shaped my inquiry from an early stage, as well as my own condition as a social being. My data analysis thus strongly reflects my own interests, approaches and understandings of the world, as much as those of my participants.

However, Charmaz has argued that Grounded Theory is not necessarily bound to positivist assumptions and that its procedures can be fruitfully adapted for constructionist research (2003; 2006). Faced with the lack of definition in Discourse Analysis, Grounded Theory offers

concrete tools, some of which I found helpful in interrogating my data. Most importantly, I drew on the multi-step coding procedure offered by Grounded Theory. Charmaz has described qualitative coding as “the process of defining what the data are about (...). Coding means naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes and accounts for each piece of data” (2006, p.43). Flick, in turn, describes it as developing “categories, properties, and relations among them” (2009, p.435).

In Grounded Theory, coding is done in several steps. Birks and Mills describe the technique of “initial” or “open coding” as a “way of identifying important words, or groups of words, in the data and then labelling them accordingly” (2011, p.9). Saldaña calls these initial codes “‘first impression’ phrases” (2009, p.4), a term that captures aptly the openness of this initial coding.

With the consent of my interviewees, interviews had been recorded. Transcribing the interviews, while time-consuming, constituted a first analytical step, which helped me familiarise myself with the text and identify remarkable themes:

“Transcribing (...) is useful to get a grip on the material, and the monotonous process of transcribing opens up a flow of ideas interpreting the text. It is strongly recommended that researchers do at least some transcriptions themselves as it is actually the first step of analysis.” (Bauer 1996, p.8)

Already during the transcription process, I made notes of topics and ideas for further exploration. Transcribed interviews were then printed and read in their entirety several times. It was at this stage that the initial coding took place.

In spite of the relative openness of these “‘first-impression’ phrases” (Saldaña 2009, p.4), how I coded my data reflected my research interests from the very start. For example, when coding interviews, I was mainly interested in understanding how bloggers perceived blogging and the Peruvian blogosphere, and how these perceptions related to notions of citizenship. I read and coded my interviews with these interests in mind.

In Grounded Theory, initial coding is sometimes described as “line-by-line coding” (Charmaz 2003; Glaser 1978). According to Charmaz, this procedure “keeps us studying our data. In addition to starting to build ideas inductively, we are deterred by line-by-line coding from imposing extant theories or our own beliefs on the data” (2006, p.258). However, both due to the large amount of data I was dealing with and because – contrary to Grounded Theory – I approached my data with pre-determined subjects in mind, I found it more practical and efficient to code larger sections of text at this initial stage and perform a more detailed analysis of parts of the data at a later point. As a result of using semi-structured interviews and giving considerable leeway to my interviewees in determining the further development of the

interview, large sections of data did not offer answers to the questions I chose to ask at the point of coding, and it would have been impractical and inefficient to code these sections in as much detail as line-by-line coding requires. Rather than “important words or groups of words” (Birks & Mills 2011, p.9), I therefore initially coded broad “topics” or “issues” – problems that were repeatedly mentioned by my interviewees when discussing their experience of the Peruvian blogosphere, such as power, marginality, approaches to dissent, among others.

As I found instances of similar issues in several interviews, I was then able to compare them with each other by asking analytic questions. The choice to deepen some of the issues discussed by my interviewees while putting aside others reflected my research interests, which were now more clearly defined than they had been at the time of interviewing. At this point, sections of interviews were coded in more detail. This detailed coding continued throughout the writing process. Writing and coding at the same time necessarily meant that codes were subject to change as my understanding of the “problem” changed.

So far, I have described the procedures used to analyse my interviews. However, as mentioned above, I used different kinds of qualitative textual data throughout the thesis and at different points of the writing process. Some of these data were sampled and collected at an early stage of the research process (such as the interviews), while others were collected much later in response to specific questions and in order to fill gaps in my emergent analysis (such as the debates discussed in Chapter IV). These different “stages” of the research process affected not only the sampling decisions and data collection – both of which were much more open in the case of early-stage interviews and much more focussed in the case of debates – but also the way I approached these different kinds of data at the point of coding and analysing them. Where I allowed my initial coding of interviews to be fairly open (restricted only by my then relatively broad and general research question on bloggers’ perceptions of blogging and the Peruvian blogosphere), the debates were sampled, collected and analysed with much more precise questions in mind: here I was interested in the link between bloggers’ collective memories of historical and perceptions of contemporary media regimes, and their notions of citizenship. Although the coding process in these cases was much more focussed from the very start, the results suggest that it left room for unexpected insights to “emerge” from the data: the best example of such an “emergence” is my discussion of “corrective strategies”, which was not initially “on the radar” of my analysis. This insight proved to be very important, as it allowed me to introduce a component of active engagement with media representations and collective memories, rather than just describing these memories and perceptions.

While it is not the most sophisticated way compared to specialised qualitative data analysis software (Weitzman 2003), I found it helpful to systematise data in tables using Word, working manually through printouts of these tables and progressively building more detailed tables in response to increasingly detailed questions. For example, in Chapter IV, I discuss bloggers' perceptions of continuity beyond the transition. The theme of continuity emerged as a result of initial coding of all the posts in the "self-coup" sample. I then used Word to systematise cases of this theme in a table and further differentiate between different kinds of continuity. This resulted in a distinction between structural and cultural continuity.

CHAPTER III: POLITICAL BLOGGING AND THE URBAN MIDDLE CLASSES

Questions about potential and actual effects of the Internet on political participation and the social structure of the public sphere have inspired much of the academic and popular debate about social media and the Internet in general. Many invested great hopes in the democratising power of the Internet, either by dint of its relatively low participation barriers (Benkler 2006; Chadwick 2006; Rogers 2006; Shirky 2009), or because of its perceived anonymity, which would allow for identity play, making real life boundaries ostensibly irrelevant (Carstensen 2009; Hine 2000; Luckman 1999). In the words of Matthew Hindman, “the hope has been that the Internet would expand the public sphere, broadening both the range of ideas discussed and the number of citizens allowed to participate” (Hindman 2009, p.7).

Even though these utopian views of the Internet live on in popular, as well as pockets of scholarly discourse, they have been proven wrong over and over again in an ever growing number of studies, which found that it is mainly the urban middle classes – a social sector which already had relatively good access to the public sphere before the Internet – who use it for political purposes. While Internet in general and social media in particular have undoubtedly eased access to the public sphere for certain parts of society, creating “a participatory practice that was unimaginable two decades ago” (Shaw & Benkler 2012, p.479), a substantial amount of empirical data now suggests that they have failed to erase social inequality. On a very basic level of access, differences are decreasing in industrialised countries, but continue to be substantial in the “developing world”. However, scholars have argued that differences go beyond these very basic and ultimately technological questions, as different sectors of society use technology in different ways.

In this chapter, I shall provide an empirical basis for my approach to political blogging as an urban, middle-class praxis. Drawing on existing research on the social structure of political blogospheres in Peru and across the globe, I shall argue that political blogging is very much a middle-class praxis and, in societies such as the Peruvian, also overwhelmingly an urban praxis. I shall argue that while differences in access to the Internet play a role, they cannot fully account for the social structure of the Peruvian blogosphere, as social groups with similar access don't seem to use these media in the same way. Taking a closer look at the biographical and social background of some of the most influential political bloggers in Peru and drawing on existing research on the internal differentiation of the urban middle classes in this country,

I found that most of the more influential bloggers seemed to belong to the so-called “traditional” middle classes: not only were Peruvian bloggers in general, and even more so political bloggers, among the most highly educated parts of the urban middle classes. Their preference for the social sciences and humanities (rather than technical degrees), a large number of postgraduate degrees, and their choice of universities furthermore suggest a greater affinity with the more traditional middle classes. This suggests that access alone cannot explain the demographic composition of the Peruvian political blogosphere, but that more subjective factors, such as political “habitus” (Bourdieu 1977) and notions of citizenship, play a significant role. My survey furthermore found that the most influential political bloggers in Peru are overwhelmingly male, based in Lima, and work in jobs that give them privileged access to the public sphere independently of their blogging activities.

Chapter Outline

The chapter is structured in the following way: I shall begin by discussing existing literature on the social structure of political blogospheres across the world, arguing that these tend to be populated mainly by middle-class and upper-middle-class people. Furthermore, and contrary to utopian discourses, they tend to reproduce the inequalities that characterise the societies in which they are rooted, such as gendered access to the public sphere. Following this general literature review, I shall address the Peruvian case, arguing that in Peru, too, political blogging constitutes mainly a praxis of the urban middle classes.

I shall then address the role of differential access to infrastructure. Access to the Internet is an essential precondition for blogging and is thus by no means irrelevant. Drawing on my interviewees’ experiences, I shall argue that their blogging-praxis was based on permanent high-quality access through a diverse set of devices. In the Peruvian case, access differs substantially, both between different socio-economic sectors of society and in different socio-geographic locations, and both in quantitative (access or no access) and in qualitative (fast or slow, shared or individual, etc.) terms. As long as these differences in access persist, it is hard to imagine political blogging in more representative ways.

However, I shall argue that differences in access cannot fully explain the demographics of the political blogosphere in Peru. Research suggests that the Peruvian middle classes consist of at least two groups – the “traditional” and the so-called “emergent” middle classes –, and that these two groups, while economically similarly positioned, maintain substantial cultural differences, including their educational and professional choices and their political culture. Drawing on this research and on my own small-scale biographical survey of some of the most

influential political bloggers in Peru, I shall argue that they overwhelmingly belong to the so-called “traditional” (upper-) middle classes. This internal diversification between different parts of the middle classes – people who have in theory similar physical access to the Internet, but don’t use it in the same way – suggests that more subjective, culturally grounded factors, such as political subjectivity and notions of citizenship, play an important role in explaining the composition of the political blogosphere in Peru.

Political Blogging is a Middle-Class Praxis

Some critics of the cyber-optimist school have argued that the growing importance of the Internet, rather than facilitating greater inclusion, might further increase inequality (Peter & Valkenburg 2006, p.297). The concept of a “digital divide”, developed since the second half of the 1990s to describe “the gap between those who do and those who do not have access to new forms of information technology”(van Dijk 2006, p.221, f.), expressed this concern. This strand of thought tended to focus on differences in access across different social sectors (Bimber 2000; Bucy 2000; Norris 2001).

The technological bias of early digital divide research has been criticised for neglecting social, psychological, and cultural factors, for equating physical access with participation, and for ignoring qualitative differences in the use of technology (van Dijk 2006, p.224). These aspects have since received greater attention under the so called “digital differentiation” parameter, which focuses on qualitative differences in Internet use (DiMaggio et al. 2004; Hargittai 2008; Hargittai & Walejko 2008; Mossberger et al. 2003; Peter & Valkenburg 2006; Warschauer 2004). Starting from the observation that “in terms of physical access the divide seems to be closing in the most developed countries; concerning digital skills and the use of applications the divide persists or widens” (van Dijk 2006, p.221), this “emerging digital differentiation approach” (Peter & Valkenburg 2006) suggests that inequality has been transformed, rather than disappeared, leading to differences in “Internet-in-practice” (Zillien & Hargittai 2009).

Studies focussing on these differences have found that the use of social media for the creation and publication of content is most prevalent among the middle classes. For example, a 2007 survey among first-year college students at an urban public research university in the US found that the creation and sharing of content is related to a person’s gender and socio-economic background:

“Students who have at least one parent with a graduate degree are significantly more likely to create content, either online or offline, than others. (...) Looking at the especially novel aspect of sharing on the web, even when we control for creating content, we find that posting one’s materials online is related to user characteristics.

In particular, women are significantly less likely to share their creations on the web.” (Hargittai & Walejko 2008, p.252)

Among the group of those who share content on the web, political bloggers in particular have been found to be far from “average” citizens. According to Hindman, arguably the most fervent critic of utopian narratives of blogging, “the small group of white, highly educated, male professionals [is] vastly overrepresented in [US] online opinion” (2009, p.19). He adds that “while it is sometimes difficult to decide who counts as an ordinary citizen, the few dozen bloggers who get most of the readership are so *extraordinary* that such debates are moot” (2009, p.128).

Hindman’s findings have been confirmed by a growing number of studies that focus on the social structure of blogospheres in various contexts. For example, a 2011 survey among 222 “international bloggers”, conducted by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, found that 49% held a university degree, and 38% a post-graduate degree. None of them had less than a high-school or secondary school degree. Similarly, a 2010 survey on the “State of the Blogosphere”, conducted by Technorati, found that “overall, bloggers are a highly educated and affluent group. Nearly half of all bloggers we surveyed have earned a graduate degree. (...) Bloggers are still more affluent than the general population”(Technorati 2010). Data on the social structure of the blogosphere has been included in the Technorati report since 2008. In the course of these three years, the percentage of bloggers with college or graduate degrees had even increased (from 70% and 42% to 79% and 43%, respectively (Technorati 2009a; Technorati 2009b; Technorati 2010)), putting a question mark behind the popular thesis of social media as a tool for the inclusion of marginalised groups. Similar findings are available for the Chinese case. Here, Sima and Pugsley have noted that:

“Those with access to blogs are those taking part in sustained development. In many ways, they are speaking from a position of privilege, as the blogosphere is not peopled by the disenfranchised – the poor rural or itinerant workers – but primarily by the urban youth with ready access to global economies, cultures/ideologies and technologies. Research conducted by the CNNIC found that in 2007, 38 percent of Chinese bloggers were students, 51 percent had college education and above (a figure much higher than the average education level of Chinese netizens) (...) and that China’s blogosphere is still largely populated by those rich in ‘cultural capital’ – students and elites – despite the grassroots potential of the medium (...). China’s young bloggers inhabit a place where the biggest gripe may hinge upon a delay in receiving the latest mobile phone.”(2010, p.290)

Research from a variety of different contexts finally suggests that bloggers are also much more politically active than the average citizen. A study of the South Korean citizen journalism platform OhmyNews came to the conclusion that:

“While it is offered to all citizens, only some type of citizens – primarily those who were influencing and directing public opinion before the Internet – take advantage of the medium. In this sense, the impact of the Internet may be more relevant in amplifying pre-existing citizen activity rather than drawing in new participants” (Joyce 2007, p.9).

A study on “Digitally Networked Technology in Kenya’s 2007 – 2008 Post-Election Crisis” contends that “in the Kenyan context (...) the Internet and mobile phones have lowered the barriers to participation and increased opportunities for many-to-many communication” (Goldstein & Rotich 2008, p.9). At the same time, however, the authors stress that while “Kenya has perhaps the richest blogging tradition in sub-Saharan Africa”, this tradition is not universal, as less than 5 percent of the population have regular access to the Internet: “The cost of connectivity limits blogging to the Kenyan elite” (Goldstein & Rotich 2008, p.8).

Studies have furthermore questioned the often alleged positive effects for women’s political participation in patriarchal contexts: 74% of the bloggers included in the Berkman Center survey were men and only 26% women (Roberts et al. 2011, p.9, f.). A study of the Arabic language blogosphere found that “Arabic bloggers are predominately young and male. The highest proportion of female bloggers is found in the Egyptian youth sub-cluster, while the Maghreb/French Bridge and Syrian clusters have the highest concentration of males” (Etling et al. 2009, p.4). This unequal pattern was even more pronounced among political bloggers, as “female bloggers were much more likely to discuss poetry, literature, and art than men (47% vs. 30%), making it the most popular topic among women (...). The most popular topic for men was human rights (31%), which was discussed less by female bloggers (23%)” (Etling et al. 2009, p.37). Gender imbalances were still greater in the Iranian blogosphere, according to a similar study (Kelly & Etling 2008). Using a broad definition of “the political”, this study found that “the majority of the bloggers in all clusters are men, but some clusters feature a large minority of women, principally secPat and poetry” (Kelly & Etling 2008, p.9). The abbreviation “secPat” refers to “secular/expatriate”, suggesting that mainly politically liberal women living outside Iran use social media for political purposes, while the vast majority of women living in Iran don’t.

These studies suggest that as praxis of citizenship, blogging belongs mainly to the political “habitus” (Bourdieu 1977) of the urban middle classes and reproduces general patterns of inequality, such as gendered access to the public sphere. As I shall show on the following pages, the Peruvian blogosphere does not deviate from this pattern.

The Peruvian Case

Both quantitative and qualitative data on the social structure of the Peruvian blogosphere is limited. However, the little existing data can give us an impression both of differences between users and non-users of the Internet in general, and of the social background of Peruvian bloggers. I shall discuss these surveys on the following pages, arguing for an understanding of political blogging as a praxis that is most prevalent among the urban middle classes.

Surveys conducted by researchers at the Catholic University (Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2009) and by the market research bureau Ipsos APOYO (Álvarez et al. 2009a; Álvarez et al. 2009b) found that the Peruvian Internet was structured along socio-economic lines, both quantitatively in terms of a “digital divide” between those who use the Internet, and those who don’t¹, and qualitatively regarding the things users of different socio-economic backgrounds did online and the spaces they inhabited.

Ipsos APOYO found that at 64% and 62%, respectively, members of the upper- and upper middle classes (sectors A and B) were almost twice as likely to use social networking sites such as Facebook as members of the bottom strata D and E (33%) (Álvarez et al. 2009b, p.7). A similar pattern was present in the use of blogs. According to the Catholic University study, 14% of upper- and upper middle class participants claimed to write a blog, compared to 4% of those in the middle class (sector C) and, surprisingly, a slightly higher 6% in the bottom strata D and E (Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2009, p.9). The use of blogs as a source of information also presented substantial differences between socio-economic sectors (39% of participants in the sector A, compared to 3% in the sectors D and E (Álvarez et al. 2009a, p.21)).

Within the universe of social media, both surveys also found differences between the spaces users of different socio-economic backgrounds inhabited, mirroring the spatial differentiation and segregation that characterizes Lima as a city in general (Arellano & Burgos 2010). 64% of the users of Facebook, a network which “only has a consolidated space within the sectors A and B” (Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2009, p.1), lived in an area which market researchers refer to as “Modern Lima” (Lima Moderna), and which is mainly inhabited by the upper- and upper middle classes (Álvarez et al. 2009b, p.24). At the same time, the social networks Hi5 and the MSN Messenger were preferred by the “popular sectors”. Ipsos APOYO furthermore found that users of Facebook were much better educated, with 73% of them holding a university

¹ 24% of the participants from the socio-economic sectors A and B (upper- and upper middle class), 43% of the sector C (middle class), and 66% of those in the bottom strata D and E claimed that they used the Internet less than once a month or never, as opposed to 58%, 26%, and 11%, respectively, who used it every or almost every day (Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2009, p.2).

degree, compared to 25% of the (albeit slightly younger) users of Hi5 (Álvarez et al. 2009b, p.23, f.).

None of these surveys addressed the political uses of social media, nor did they distinguish between different kinds of blogs (personal, literary, political, and fashion-related, among others). Their findings can thus only give us limited clues about the socio-economic structure of the political blogosphere in Peru. For this reason, I conducted my own, small-scale biographic survey of some of the most influential Peruvian bloggers, which I shall discuss later in this chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that its results suggested an even stronger correlation between socio-economic background and political blogging than the studies discussed above suggest.

With a view to arguing for an understanding of political blogging as a middle-class praxis, which is grounded in notions of citizenship akin to this social sector, I shall on the following pages discuss the role of physical access. I shall argue that while differences in physical access to the Internet continue to be important factors of social inequality and to a certain degree influence the way in which people use the Internet, they cannot fully explain these qualitative differences in use, as users with similar physical access use the Internet in very different ways. I suggest that we can explain this disparity better by looking at more subjective factors, such as differences in political culture and in notions of citizenship.

Is it a Question of Access?

As mentioned above, the “digital divide” parameter has rightly been criticised for its technological bias and for equating physical access with participation. The Peruvian survey data and the international research discussed above suggest that having access to the Internet, using it, using it for political purposes and in the specific way of blogging are four different kettles of fish. However, access is obviously a precondition both for using the Internet at all and for blogging. While differences in physical access to the Internet cannot fully explain differences in use, they continue to be an important factor in societies of the global South, such as Peru, where both qualitative and quantitative differences in access between rural and urban areas and between different socio-economic sectors are often still significant.

(Successful) political blogging in particular requires constant access, both at home, at work, and through mobile devices. The following quote from one of my interviews is an example of this experience of constant access, which characterizes the daily reality of many of the more influential political bloggers in Peru and elsewhere. Recalling her participation in the online coverage of and debate around the 2009 uprising and killings in Bagua, this blogger said:

"I remember that [unintelligible] like every day I switch on my computer, [unintelligible] because I do a bit of everything throughout the day, word, Facebook, everything, and my Twitter and my blog are always open. And then in that moment that hashtag starts to appear in thousands of tweets, Bagua, Bagua, Bagua, and I said something is/ something has happened. So I put on my headphones to listen to rpp [a Peruvian radio station], I don't like rpp, but it's the only medium that covers all of Peru, right? And then I hear: 'Until now, five victims in *Curva del Diablo*'. You say: 'Five victims! What's happening?' [unintelligible], no? So [unintelligible] I started to listen, to be aware, and you also start writing, 'They just said five victims, they just said 10 victims, they just said I don't know how many, the minister is travelling to the zone', whatever they are beginning to tell you, you begin to tweet it. (...) Because in my work I switch on my Twitter and my blog, they are open all day. And with the blackberry even more, you can imagine, I'm connected all day."²

This permanent access is not available to the vast majority of the Peruvian population. A representative national survey in Peru found that household income, level of education, gender, age, place of residence, and ethnicity are the most relevant factors that structure differences in Internet access (Vilchez de los Ríos et al. 2012, p.21). However, these numbers need to be further differentiated according to both quality and place of access, as qualitative differences encourage and discourage different uses of the Internet. Connection speed, frequency and length of connection, as well as the general environment where access to the Internet takes place all influence the way the Internet is used: Hassani (2006) found that the number of places where people could access the Internet influenced their likelihood to engage in "beneficial" online activities. Hargittai and Walejko conclude that "not surprisingly, more access to digital media allows for more opportunities which may be especially relevant when it comes to time-intensive activities such as content creation and sharing" (2008, p.241).

Scholars like Benkler (2006) have pointed to the minimal cost involved in blogging. However, even though the cost of blogging is certainly dramatically less prohibitive than the cost of running a mass media outlet, these costs must not be underestimated, in particular when it comes to marginalised groups in the global South. The survey discussed above found that among those participants who used the Internet less than once a month or never, a substantial percentage gave the cost or the lack of equipment as reasons (Tuesta Soldevilla et

² "Me acuerdo que [inintendible] como todos los días prendo mi computador, [inintendible] porque trabajo un poco de todo todo el día, Word, Facebook, de todo, y tengo abierto el Twitter y el blog como siempre. Y entonces en ese momento empieza a haber pues este... hashtag en mil tweets este Bagua, Bagua, Bagua y yo digo algo esta/ algo ha pasado. Entonces me pongo los audífonos para escuchar rpp, que no me gusta rpp, pero es el único medio que está en todo el Perú, ¿no? Y entonces escucho: 'Hasta ahora, cinco muertos en la Curva del Diablo'. Tú dices, 'Cinco muertos, ¿qué está pasando?' [inintendible] ¿No? Entonces [inintendible] empecé a escuchar, a estar al tanto, y tú también empiezas a estar escribiendo, 'Acaban de decir cinco muertos, acaban de decir diez muertos, acaban de decir no sé cuánto, el ministro está yendo a la zona', todo lo que te empiezan a decir, lo empiezas a tuitear. (...) Porque yo, en mi trabajo yo prendo mi Twitter y mi blog, están abiertos todo el día. Y ya con el Blackberry más todavía, te imaginas, estoy todo el día conectado."

al. 2009, p.4). All of them belonged to the socio-economic sectors C to E. Home Internet access is still fairly expensive and beyond the means of the majority of the population, and many people cannot access the Internet at work either.³ As the interview quote above suggests, this is a place where many successful bloggers do part of the activities related to blogging.

These financial barriers are reflected in the number of households that have Internet access at home. A survey conducted in Lima in 2009 found large differences in home Internet access between different socio-economic sectors: 65% of the upper and upper middle classes (sectors A and B) had Internet access at home, compared to just 37% of the middle (C), and 9% of the bottom strata (D and E) (Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2009, p.2). On a national level, significant differences exist between different regions (Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2010) and between rural and urban populations. A national survey found that by the end of 2011, barely 0.5% of rural households had home Internet access, compared to 35% of households in Lima and 15.2% in other cities across the country (Vilchez de los Ríos et al. 2012, p.3).

However, with the surge of public access points called *cabinas* (often operated by small entrepreneurs) following an initiative of the *Red Científica Peruana* in the mid 1990s (Herzog 2002), the Peruvian geography of Internet access has developed mainly outside the private home. These services are mainly used in rural areas and among the urban poor, while they serve a rather complementary function for the urban middle and upper classes (Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2009, p.4, ff.). Availability of access without a personal subscription at a relatively low cost (in places such as schools, *cabinas*, etc.) means that the actual use of Internet both in rural and urban areas is higher than the number of households with private Internet access (Vilchez de los Ríos et al. 2012, p.24). However, particularly in rural areas Internet access continues to be precarious outside the home as well: a recent evaluation of the One Laptop per Child⁴ program in Peru found that among the children who had received a laptop, "Internet use was limited because hardly any schools in the sample had access" (Cristia et al. 2012, p.3). Where available, quality of access both in rural and urban *cabinas* is usually low, as equipment is scarce, often old, and – particularly outside Lima - connections are slow.

³ In a 2010 national survey, only 23% of the sample said they used the Internet at their workplace, fluctuating between 27% in Lima/Callao and 16% in Central Peru (Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2010, p.2). A 2009 survey conducted in Lima found – not surprisingly – large differences in Internet access at the workplace between different socio-economic sectors (Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2009, p.4).

⁴ The One Laptop per Child project, funded by the U.S.-based One Laptop per Child Association (OLPCA) and OLPC Foundation (OLPCF), aims "to design, manufacture, and distribute laptops that are sufficiently inexpensive to provide every child in the world access to knowledge and modern forms of education" (One Laptop per Child n.d.). By 2012, the program had been implemented in 36 countries and more than two million laptops had been distributed. According to a 2012 evaluation, Peru is the world's leading country in terms of scale of implementation (Cristia et al. 2012, p.2).

Having access or not is not the only factor that influences the way in which we use (or don't use) the Internet. I have said above that the number of places where people can access the Internet has been found to correlate with the likelihood that they will create and share content online (for example via a blog). It makes sense to assume that the same applies to qualitative differences in access – is the connection slow or fast, do I have exclusive use of a computer or do I have to share it with others, do I have to pay per hour of use, or by flat-rate? These are some of the relevant questions that come to mind when we ask for qualitative differences in Internet use. The following excerpt from an interview with a Peruvian anthropologist and blogger offers a vivid impression of the reality of public rural and urban Internet access and its impact on the way it is used:

“I use *cabinas*, that's quite different, right? I mean... I use the computer here [at work]. I don't have a fixed schedule here, but I have my office. And apart from that, I use *cabinas*, right? My home is some sort of sanctuary [unintelligible; laughs] of this world. (...) I live with my father only. And... And of course, there I realized, in some of the *cabinas*, why people don't use Facebook. Because it was slower than... it took longer to/ I mean it was freezing all the time. (...) And I said to Rolando [Toledo, chief executive of the Red Científica Peruana, the company that developed the Peruvian blogging platform LaMula], when we were talking about these issues, I told him... Rolando, we are connected! You are connected 24 hours, because you have your Blackberry, you... I don't know, but of course I also assumed a bit that attitude of being connected as well, because... because of being around for 20 hours, but I mean [unintelligible] to be connected or not connected, and on top of that using/ remaining in this public space [the *cabinas*] which was so important in Peru and which is still important, although it is disappearing already in some neighbourhoods of Lima, and I said to him, it's a different dynamic! Right? (...) In some villages you have a *cabina* with four computers which will be shared by 300 people or 200 people and where the pupils are the kings of the space, because... I mean spending a day in a village *cabina* is fascinating! It's the pupils [unintelligible] and they are there. And then I say, this person has to read their news, eeem... reply to their email, they don't have time to read... the discussions between Rendón and Gonzalez [two influential political bloggers], no! It's the last thing they are interested in! Right? So we need to find products, mechanisms, forms so they can have access, too. Initially he wanted the project LaMula to be something much more national. And he couldn't find blogs in the provinces. Blogs, because... people said it's very difficult, it's easier with a different system, right?”⁵

⁵ “Yo uso cabinas este.. es otra cosa particular, ¿no? Osea... yo uso la máquina acá. Yo acá no tengo un horario fijo, pero tengo mi oficina. Y aparte uso las cabinas, ¿no? Mi casa es una suerte de santuario [ininteligible, risas] de este mundo. (...) Vivo con mi padre nomas. Y... y claro, ahí me di cuenta en ciertas cabinas por qué la gente no usa Facebook. Porque corría más lento que.. se demoraba más en su/ en.. osea se colgaba permanentemente. (...) Y yo le decía a Rolando, conversando sobre estas cosas, le decía.. Rolando, nosotros estamos conectados, tu estas conectado 24 horas, porque tienes tu blackberry, tu no se que, este.. pero claro, yo un poco que he asumido la actitud de yo también estoy conectado, porque.. por estar 20 horas metido, pero digo [ininteligible] estar conectado o no conectado, y además usar, mantenerme en este espacio público que fue tan importante en el Perú y que sigue ser tan importante, aunque en Lima ya empieza a desaparecer en algunos barrios, y le digo ¡la dinámica es otra pues! ¿No? (...) En algunos pueblos tienes una cabina con cuatro maquinas que van a

As this quote suggests, the kind of Internet access provided in *cabinas* does not lend itself to activities that require being connected permanently, such as political blogging. This suggestion is also in accordance with the findings of one study of qualitative differences in Internet use in different parts of the country, which found that:

“In [urban] Eastern Peru, the number of people who never use the Internet is as high as 53% and, in general, the data on Internet use in this part of the country is depressing. 80% of the few people who do connect to the Internet do so from the slowness of public *cabinas* and only 10% have access at home. In consequence, 46% of those who are connected in the East of Peru make a brief, utilitarian, and little social use of the web: they neither have a Facebook, Hi5, Twitter, or YouTube account, nor anything similar.” (Sifuentes, in: Tuesta Soldevilla et al. 2010, p.1)

As the data discussed above suggests, differences in access – both qualitative and quantitative – continue to structure Internet use in Peru. Access to the Internet is an essential precondition for blogging and is thus by no means irrelevant. As the quote from one of my interviews reproduced above suggests, political blogging depends on permanent high-quality Internet access through a diverse set of devices. In the Peruvian case, access differs substantially, both between socio-economic sectors and between different socio-geographic locations, and both in quantitative (access or no access) and in qualitative (fast or slow, shared or individual, etc.) terms. As long as these differences in access persist, it is hard to imagine political blogging in more representative ways.

However, if we take a closer look at the social background of political bloggers in Peru, we will find that differences in access cannot fully account for the social structure of the political blogosphere. Research suggests that the Peruvian middle classes consist of at least two groups, the “traditional” and the so-called “emergent” middle classes–, and that these two groups, while economically (and hence in terms of physical access) similarly positioned, maintain substantial cultural differences, including their educational and professional choices and their political culture. Drawing on this research and on my own small-scale biographical survey of some of the most influential political bloggers in Peru, I shall argue that they overwhelmingly belong to the so-called “traditional” (upper-) middle classes. This internal diversification between different parts of the middle classes – people who have in theory similar physical access to the Internet, but don’t use it in the same way – suggests that more

compartir 300 personas o 200 personas y donde los escolares son los reyes del espacio porque .. o sea estar en una cabina un día en un pueblo es fascinante, ¿no? Son los escolares [ininteligible] y están ahí. Entonces digo esa persona tiene que leer sus noticias, este.. contestar su correo, no tiene tiempo para leerse.. las discusiones entre Rendón y Gonzales, ¡no! Es lo último que lo interesa, ¿no? Entonces hay que buscar productos, mecanismos, formas para que puedan acceder también. Él quería en el proyecto inicial de la Mula que fuera algo mucho más nacional. Y no conseguía blogs provinciales. Blogs, porque.. la gente te decía es muy difícil, mas fácil con otro sistema, ¿no?”

subjective, culturally grounded factors, such as political subjectivity and notions of citizenship, play an important role in explaining the demographic composition of the political blogosphere in Peru.

Which Middle Class?

In Chapter II, I argued that many of the more influential political bloggers in Peru shared an experience of specific practices and spaces, which, as one of my interviewees put it, “turn them into an entity”, and which, in the words of one scholar of the Peruvian middle classes, allows them – as members of a particular sector of Peruvian society – to

“Recognise each other by the school they attended, the university, the clubs, and recreational spaces, among others. (...) The fact of inhabiting or having passed through these spaces has turned into a ‘water mark’ which allows one to identify one’s ‘equals’ in diverse circumstances and in publics outside those territories.” (Díaz-Albertini Figueras 2000, p.33, f.)

This spatial intimacy is rooted in the social geography of the city of Lima, which, as several scholars (and also some of my interviewees, see Chapter II) have noted, continues to be highly segregated in spite of the increasing diversification of the city as a whole. But it is now widely recognised that his segregation cannot be neatly translated into a division between the “rich” and the “poor”. Arellano and Burgos have argued that “new” and “old” citizens of Lima, both of which make up the increasingly diverse middle classes, inhabit different spaces within the city:

“The classic citizen of Lima, [who lives in the centre of the city], doesn’t know *Lima Conurbana*, simply because they have never needed to go there. More than 80% of the working population of Central Lima work in the same Central Lima. This aspect, added to the fact that this zone concentrates the great majority of services, explains why until now the average classic Limeño has not had to ‘have a look around’ any of the *conurban* ‘Limas’. (...) In the past years, the classic Limeño has lived locked away in a ghetto whose limits are marked by two principal axes, the motorway [Vía Expresa], from North to South, and the Avenida Javier Prado, from East to West.” (2010, p.128)

But the difference between the “new” and the “traditional” middle classes of Lima is not limited to the spaces they inhabit. Several researchers (Arellano 2010; Arellano & Burgos 2010) have found significant cultural differences between the two groups, as a result of their different historical backgrounds. It is both the cultural and the spatial differences that I shall draw on in my attempt to define the political blogosphere of Lima in terms of social class. I shall focus on bloggers’ educational and professional choices as indicators of a particular section of the middle classes, for two reasons: firstly, because rich information on bloggers’ educational background was often readily available, as many political bloggers volunteer it on their blogs in the form of an academic CV; but secondly, and more importantly from an

analytical point of view, because scholars of the Peruvian middle classes have argued that educational choices (including number of degrees, choice of discipline, and of university) differ significantly between the “traditional” and the “emergent” middle classes in Lima. These findings make educational choices a particularly useful indicator of bloggers’ social background within the urban middle classes, which allow not only themselves, as Díaz-Albertini suggested above, but also the researcher to “recognise” them as members of a particular sector within the Peruvian middle classes.

In order to find out more about the social background of the most successful political bloggers in Peru, I conducted a biographical census of the most highly ranked political bloggers listed in the Peruvian blogging directory Perublogs, drawing on information that was publicly available (e.g. information provided by bloggers on their own blogs or personal websites, publicly visible information on Facebook and LinkedIn profiles, blogging directory profiles, etc.). Following Hindman’s (2009) study of the US American political blogosphere, I focussed on education, gender, occupation, profession, and journalistic background. Unlike Hindman, I also included location, and found that of the 35 political bloggers included in my sample, 29 lived in the Lima and Callao Metropolitan Area, one in Cañete (Lima Region), one in Arequipa (the second largest city in Peru), while two lived abroad – in other words, the “Peruvian” blogging directory Perublogs was, at least in its most influential parts, really a directory of the *Limeño* blogosphere. For reasons I shall discuss in the sub-section on Gender, “ethnicity”/“race”, and location I did not include the categories of “ethnicity”/“race” in my analysis. In the case of education, I compiled data both on the universities bloggers had attended and on the presence or absence of post graduate study. While not all Peruvian blogs are inscribed in these directories, these surveys still give an impression of the social structure of the more influential part of the political blogosphere.

The fact that I was able to collect data on the educational and occupational background of political bloggers so easily is interesting in itself. It is difficult to compare these findings with the wider blogging community, in part because the praxis of posting detailed CVs on one’s blog– “showcasing” one’s expertise and position in society – is to a certain degree specific to the political and academic blogging community – possibly reflecting the importance given to these achievements. It is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse the role these CVs play in the construction of authority and credibility.

Educational Choices as a Micro-Level Indicator of Social Class

As Toche et al. have pointed out, educational choices are not only a question of money, but also one of values. Their research with members of the “traditional” and the “emerging” urban

middle classes in Peru found that the former attached much more importance to postgraduate studies than the latter: “Among the ‘traditionals’ the necessity to specialise after graduating from an undergraduate course is pretty clear. (...) The ‘emerging’ middle classes, in turn, prefer to acquire the indispensable skills necessary to steer the family business towards improvement and growth” (2003, p.127). Arellano and Burgos came to similar conclusions in their study of *Lima Conurbana*, the relatively young districts that formed around the city’s traditional core as a result of rural-to-urban migration flows throughout the second half of the 20th century. They argue that the inhabitants of these parts of the city tend to

“Opt for efficiency over the social conventionalisms of supposed ideality which come with earning a professional degree. In this sense, it can be observed that the highest degree that is reached in *Lima Conurbana* is, in the majority of the cases, a technical degree after graduation from secondary school.” (2010, p.118, f.)

I was able to find educational data for 26 of the 35 political bloggers included in the Perublogs sample. Together these 26 bloggers had visited a total of 44 universities (several courses taken by the same blogger at the same university were only counted once). 15 of them (42.9% of the overall sample) had obtained at least one post graduate degree – in other words they were highly educated, and certainly better educated than even the average middle-class Peruvian (let alone the average Peruvian). Drawing on the research quoted above, it is possible to conclude that the extraordinary educational background of many of the more successful political bloggers in Peru is also an indicator of their social background as members of the more traditional middle classes.

But the high number of degrees earned by political bloggers is not the only indicator of their social background within the “traditional” middle classes. Their choice of university is also an important factor. As Pedraglio has pointed out, universities are not neutral places, but form part of the “shared spaces” mentioned above. In his study of “emergent middle-class” district Los Olivos, he found that:

“The majority of the interviewees’ children study or have studied at national universities: in decreasing order, San Marcos (clearly the most frequented university), Federico Villareal, Engineering and Callao, basically. Fewer are those who attend or attended private universities; of these, Garcilaso and San Martín de Porres are the preferred choices. Very few went to the Catholic University and Ricardo Palma. The University of Lima, the Pacific University, and the University Cayetano Heredia almost don’t exist on the academic horizon of this sector.” (2003, p.67)

The bloggers in my survey were not only highly educated in terms of the number of degrees they had earned. Many of them had furthermore studied at prestigious and expensive private universities. By far the largest number of political bloggers (14) were students or graduates of the Catholic University in Lima (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú), a prestigious and

fairly expensive (though not the most expensive) private university. Nine had studied at Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (a public university and, incidentally, the oldest university on the American continent), and five bloggers had studied at other public and private universities⁶. Only one blogger had attended Peruvian universities outside Lima, namely Universidad Nacional del Altiplano in Puno, and Universidad Nacional San Agustín in Arequipa. Both are public universities. Seven bloggers had studied abroad. Other influential bloggers whom I interviewed, but whose blogs are not listed in Perublogs and are thus not included in the census sample, were working towards a Ph.D. or Masters degree from U.S. universities (or had done so in the past), including Berkeley, Notre Dame, The New School for Social Research, New York University, and Davis. Two of them had developed successful academic careers in US universities and think tanks.

The difference between the academic preferences discussed by Pedraglio and those of the bloggers included in my survey is striking: apart from the University of San Marcos, the latter seemed to display the exact opposite preferences, suggesting that their background is in the more “traditional” (upper-) middle classes. Since these students are no different from “traditional” middle class students in terms of their economic situation, these choices must be grounded in more “qualitative” factors, such as values.

A third educational choice which can give us certain clues about bloggers’ specific location within the middle classes is their choice of discipline. Here, too, Arellano and Burgos (2010) have noted differences between different sectors of the Peruvian middle classes, arguing that the new middle classes of *Lima Conurbana* often prefer technical degrees over the classical subjects pursued by the traditional middle classes. Similarly, Pedraglio argues that among the inhabitants of “emergent” middle class area Los Olivos,

“Education seems to have an instrumental value: (...) it is preferred that children study as long as this is expected to better the economic position of the family (engineering, business, and now informatics, for example). The careers which imply a humanist education are not valued in the same way.” (2003, p.66)

I was able to find information on the professional background of 26 of the 36 individual bloggers who authored the top 40 political blogs listed on Perublogs. Broadly speaking, they can be divided in five groups: journalists (holding a degree either in journalism or in communication), social scientists, humanists, lawyers, and those with technical degrees (engineers). While the second largest group – nine – consisted of journalists, the social

⁶ These included the private Jesuit Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, Universidad Ricardo Palma, and Universidad Particular San Martín de Porres, the public Universidad Nacional Federico Villarreal and Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería, and the Centro de Altos Estudios Nacionales, which belongs to the Armed Forces.

sciences were most popular: 10 bloggers had studied one or even several social sciences (political science (6), sociology (4), anthropology (1), or economics (1)). The third group consisted of four lawyers, followed by three humanists (two linguists and one archaeologist). Two engineers were also part of the sample, which was completed by a cartoonist and a lawyer with a further degree in “work studies” (ciencias del trabajo).

While educational choices should never be seen as an absolute indicator of social class, the research discussed above suggest that bloggers’ professions, degrees, and universities can, to a certain degree, shed light on their particular social background within a heterogeneous landscape of urban middle classes in Peru. Comparing some of the most successful political bloggers’ educational choices with these findings and matching them with my interviewees’ narratives, it is possible to conclude that most political bloggers – at least the more successful ones – form part of the social sector which Peruvian social scientists call the “traditional middle classes”.

Finally, the findings of my biographical survey also have implications for the more utopian narratives of blogging as a way of expanding citizenship. As mentioned above, many had hoped that the Internet (and social media such as blogs in particular) would widen the public sphere by decreasing participation barriers and “giving a voice to the voiceless”. A growing body of research suggests that overall these hopes have not been met by reality. Hindman (2009) in particular has pointed out that influential bloggers are often those very same people who already tend to have fairly privileged access to the public sphere, with or without their blogs.

A good way to “measure” access to the public sphere is to focus on what bloggers do for a living (unlike in the case of the US American A-list of political blogs, in Peru blogging is still very much a hobby, even for the most successful political bloggers), and if their work offers them an opportunity to communicate their points of view to people who would otherwise not listen to them. I was able to collect occupational information about 27 out of 35 bloggers, and the results were striking: almost all of them worked in jobs that gave them privileged access to the public sphere. They worked as journalists (11), academics (10), politicians⁷ (3), lawyers (3), and cartoonists (1). One worked for a government agency, and one was a trade unionist. Several bloggers also wrote blogs or opinion columns for the online editions of national newspapers. While it is likely that some of the latter gained access to these more established media as a result of their blogging activities, bloggers’ overall levels of access to the public sphere were

⁷ All three had held ministerial posts during past governments.

still remarkably good and certainly far from representative of even the urban middle classes as a whole.

Gender and "Ethnicity"/"Race"

Even though constructions of gender are necessarily "classed" and vice versa (Fuller (1993; 1997a; 1997b; 2001; 2005) and Kogan (1998a; 1998b; 2009), in particular, have discussed gendered identities in the Peruvian middle, upper middle, and upper classes), gender as such is not a class issue. Nevertheless, the gender imbalances in my sample are so pronounced that this factor merits a mention: of the political bloggers included in the Perublogs sample, 32 were men and only three were women (in other words, 91.4% of political bloggers were male and 8.6% female). This imbalance is particularly high in the case of political bloggers. Among the top 35 blogs of all categories (not just political blogs) the gender ratio was a slightly more "egalitarian" 82.9% to 11.4% (with two bloggers of unknown gender accounting for the missing 5.7%). Given the important presence of women in Peruvian political and investigative journalism (such as Rosa María Palacios, Patricia del Río, Cecilia Valenzuela, Jacqueline Fowks, Paola Ugaz, among others, some of whom also maintain a blog) and the fact that in 2009 between 65 and 72% of first year communication students were women⁸ (La Primera 2009), this is a puzzling finding. More research would be necessary in order to identify the reasons for this imbalance.

Categories of "ethnicity" or "race" pose a problem to scholars of Latin American societies, where racial or ethnic categories are much more fluid and contextual (though by no means irrelevant) than for example in the US or the UK and subject to constant negotiation (de la Cadena 1995). Using racialising and ethnicising categories in surveys and censuses furthermore creates important ethical problems, as their positivistic logic contributes to naturalising and de-problematising categories that are socially constructed and fundamentally entangled with regimes of power and inequality. For these reasons I cannot and do not wish to provide numbers regarding the supposed "ethnic" or "racial" composition of my sample.

However, others have argued that while "race" is a social construction, as such it does have powerful reality effects (El-Tayeb 2003). For the Peruvian context, Ellis-Richmond has argued that the obviousness of "whiteness" would only be questioned by "whites" (1998, p.232). Taking a deconstructivist approach to "whiteness", I have argued elsewhere that in Peru the

⁸ It is important, however, that the high number of women journalists is, as often, not proportional to their representation in leading positions. According to Zuliana Lainez, director of the National Association of Journalists, "we must recognise the facts: women dominate the newsrooms by number, but do not command. (...) As in countries as diverse as Russia and Sweden, women in Peru are the workforce of journalism, yet do not get to be supervisors" (cited in La Primera 2009).

concept of “professional” is an urban category, which comprises notions of class, “ethnicity”, socio-geographic situation, and “race” (Winter 2008, p.89; see also de la Cadena 1998; Garcia 2005). Being a “professional” – as most political bloggers are, if not in their role as bloggers – thus has in itself a “whitening” effect. That said, I did not ask bloggers to self-identify in racial or ethnic terms, and the subjective, constructed, negotiated, and contextual character of these categories make it much more difficult – and indeed highly questionable – to “measure” them. Nevertheless, keeping all these complications and reservations in mind but recognising at the same time the meaningfulness of “race” and “ethnicity” in everyday interactions, it is probably fair to say that most Peruvians would be likely to identify most of the bloggers in my sample as “whites”.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that, in the Peruvian case as elsewhere, blogging belongs mainly to the political “habitus” (Bourdieu 1977) of the urban middle and upper middle classes. Suggesting a link between social structures and social praxis, “habitus” were defined by Bourdieu as:

“Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.” (1990, p.53)

While in societies such as the Peruvian questions of physical access still play an important role in understanding the different uses of new media across society, I have argued that these problems cannot fully explain the social structure of the political blogosphere in Peru, as members of different sections of the urban middle classes, with similar physical access, do not participate in it to the same degree: drawing on research on cultural differences between different parts of the Peruvian middle classes – which social scientist have analytically divided in at least two groups, viz. the “traditional” and the “emergent” middle classes – and using their educational choices as indicators of their social background I have shown that the bloggers included in my sample presented patterns of cultural consumption which are more closely linked with the “traditional” than with the “emergent” middle classes. This suggests that the social structure of the political blogosphere in this country is less a question of access than one of political and civic culture, including notions of citizenship.

In Chapter I, I have argued that political blogging draws on notions of citizenship that stress vigilance and deliberation. In the following chapter, I shall situate these notions within the historical context of post-transitional Peru. Following the sociological Thomas Theorem, which states that “when people define situations as real they are real in their consequences” (Thomas & Thomas 1928), I shall focus on bloggers’ perceptions of this historical context, rather than attempting an “objective” assessment of the situation.

CHAPTER IV: CITIZENSHIP IN CONTEXT – VIGILANCE, DELIBERATION, AND THE POST-TRANSITIONAL CONDITION

In the year 2000, Peru transitioned from an authoritarian and highly corrupt regime – usually referred to as Fujimorism, or Fujimontesinism, after then President Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) and his advisor and Head of Intelligence Vladimiro Montesinos – to democracy. At the same time, it also carried a heavy legacy of a recent internal armed conflict between the Peruvian state and two insurgent groups – the Shining Path and the Revolutionary Movement Túpac Amaru –, which, according to the country’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, had taken close to 70,000 lives over the course of 20 years (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003). Ever since the transition (and arguably long before it (Burt 2007; Youngers 2003)), Peruvians have tried to come to terms with their country’s most recent past, both through the mechanisms of transitional justice (Root 2012), memorialisation (Barrantes Segura et al. 2010; Drinot 2009; Hite 2007; Milton & Ulfe 2011), and in the more “informal” ways of everyday life (Gonzalez 2011; Theidon 2004).

As part of the wider public sphere, the Peruvian blogosphere is also a space of remembrance and for the construction of collective memories¹. In fact, events of the Fujimori regime, as well as the politics of (post-) transitional justice are constantly being discussed and remembered in a variety of ways – ranging from almost institutionalised dates of remembrance (such as the annual commemoration of the Truth Commission’s report every 28th of August, or Fujimori’s “self-coup” on the 5th of April), over ad hoc campaigns born out of the twists and turns of post-transitional justice (such as a 2010 campaign against a presidential decree which would have resulted in the closure of legal processes against high-profile human rights violators), to commemorations of policies that were not linked to a specific date (such as forced sterilisations of poor women as part of a birth control programme under Fujimori). The Peruvian blogosphere also hosts a wide range of virtual memorials, dedicated to the memory of individual victims and particular events of the internal armed conflict.² As such, it offers a

¹ To the degree that blogging is an interactive and intertextual activity in which bloggers commonly refer to each other’s writings, constructing a collective discourse on a particular topic of interest, it is perhaps particularly appropriate to speak of the construction of a “collective memory”. However, this does not mean that these memories are undisputed between bloggers. Rather, this process of commemoration could be referred to as a “negotiation” of memories.

² For example, the blog *San Marcos en los 80s* (Gracia Ríos 2009b) is dedicated to events in the state university San Marcos during the internal armed conflict. Other blogs, such as *Melissa Alfaro: ¡Justicia para Melissa!* (Méndez 2008), *Melissa Alfaro: Melissa en el Recuerdo* (Méndez & Alfaro 2008), *Ernesto Castillo Paez* (Anon 2009a), *Kenneth Ney Anzualdo Castro* (Anon 2009b), and *Saúl Cantoral Presente*

rich source of data for the analysis of urban middle-class memories of the internal armed conflict and the Fujimori regime. In spite of the devastating impact the internal armed conflict in the 1980s³ had on the country – in particular on the rural Andean and Amazonian communities –, bloggers' collective memories tend to focus more strongly on the Fujimori regime and the restriction of political liberties during his government.

While these memories address the past, they are also relevant for the present. In the context of this thesis, I shall argue that these memories matter, because they have shaped the way in which notions of vigilant and deliberative citizenship “translate into praxis”. The experience of a recent media history of political violence, authoritarianism, and corruption, as well as of the current structure of the Peruvian media landscape, played an important role in how this understanding has been constructed. In fact, as I shall show in this chapter, bloggers' perceptions of journalism and mass media in post-transitional Peru are inextricably intertwined with their memories of the political role and situation of media prior to the transition in the year 2000, as well as with perceptions of structural continuity beyond the moment of transition. As one blogger put it in interview:

“The one big absentee and the one big social actor which hasn't learned a shit, because that's how it has to be said, are the media. And I don't understand, and that's a criticism of the Truth Commission, why they didn't question the media. For example, why did they question the armed forces, the/ not only the immediate agents of the war, they questioned political parties when they did the institutional hearings, right? Parties on the left were questioned, on the right, everywhere, they even went for the Shining Path. Why were the media not questioned? This is a job we'll have to do now.”⁴

(Anon 2009c), are dedicated to the memory of individual victims of the internal armed conflict and the Fujimori regime.

³ It is difficult to clearly delimit the duration of the internal armed conflict in Peru, as pockets of insurgency are still active in parts of the country today. Although leftist insurgencies had been active on a small scale in Peru for much longer, the start of the internal armed conflict is usually understood to be the 17th of May 1980. After transitioning from a left-wing military dictatorship, Peru was due to run general elections on the next day, but the Maoist group Shining Path initiated its armed struggle by burning ballot boxes in the small Andean town of Chuschi. The Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission covered the time from May 1980 to November 2000, the month of the initiation of a political transition. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the internal armed conflict was most devastating – in terms of deaths and disappearances – during the governments of Fernando Belaúnde (1980-1985) and Alan García (1985-1990) (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2008, p.25). During Fujimori's governments (1990-2000), violence initially affected large parts of the country, including Lima, but subsided following the capture of Shining Path leader Abimael Guzmán in 1992. Fujimori's government is controversial (Barrantes Segura & Peña Romero 2006), but mainly remembered by his critics for its high levels of corruption, including the media, its abusive counter-insurgent strategies (including the use of death squads), Fujimori's self-coup in 1992, and allegedly widespread forced sterilisation campaigns targeting poor rural and urban women.

⁴ “El gran ausente y el gran actor social que no ha procesado ni un carajo, porque así lo tengo que decir, son los medios de comunicación. Yo no entiendo, y eso es una crítica a la Comisión de la Verdad, por qué no interpeló a los medios de comunicación. Por ejemplo, ¿por qué interpeló a las fuerzas armadas?”

As in the statement quoted above, which links the past with the present and draws the responsibility of blogger-citizens from these sources, I suggest that both the corrupted mass media of the 1990s and continuities in networks of media corruption constitute a counterpoint or 'negative Other' for bloggers to construct their own political subjectivities as vigilant and deliberative citizens and build a distinctly post-transitional political discourse on blogging. Furthermore, in the context of an "incomplete transition", the act of "remembering the past differently" itself takes on vigilant and deliberative notions, and thereby actively contributes to the construction of blogging as a meaningful praxis of citizenship. Finally, I shall show how the focus of vigilance on specific agents and specific issues reflected collective memories of historical media regimes and perceptions of continuity. In this sense, it is possible to speak of a distinctly "post-transitional" notion of citizenship, which is rooted in a particular historical context and in people's understanding of this context. It is therefore important to address bloggers' memories of recent historical media regimes, their perceptions of contemporary, post-transitional media, the links they establish between the two, and these narratives' impact on notions and practices of citizenship.

Chapter Outline

This chapter is structured as follows: I shall begin by examining mass media representations as a source of collective memory, arguing that for the urban middle classes, media representations play a particularly important role in the construction of collective memories. Drawing on a sample of 35 commemorative blogposts written by 18 bloggers between 2006 and 2012 on the occasions of the anniversaries of Fujimori's self-coup in 1992, I shall show that "that which can be seen on TV" (Tejada 2007, p.45, f.) is particularly prominent in bloggers' memories of the internal armed conflict and the Fujimori regime. However, this has not resulted in a collective memory that uncritically accepts "official discourses". Quite to the contrary, Peruvian bloggers are very critical of historical and contemporary media representations of the internal armed conflict and the Fujimori regime. This critical approach to the wider public sphere builds the "discursive backdrop" against which bloggers construct the counter-public narratives of blogging discussed in Chapter V.

I proceed to suggest that this critical attitude to historical and contemporary representations of the internal armed conflict and the Fujimori regime in part reflects bloggers' collective memories of media politics during the Fujimori regime and their perceptions of cultural and

Al/ osea no solamente a los actores directos de la guerra, interpeló a partidos políticos cuando se hicieron las audiencias institucionales, ¿no? Se interpeló a partidos políticos de izquierda, de derecha, de todos lados, hasta a Sendero se fue buscando. ¿Por qué no se interpeló a los medios de comunicación? Eso es una tarea que nos toca ahora."

structural continuity beyond the moment of political transition in 2000. The complicity of mass media with the Fujimori regime, the huge bribes that were paid and received in order to guarantee favourable media coverage, and the precarious situation of opposition journalists are very much present in bloggers' collective memories of Fujimorism.

Drawing again on the self-coup sample, I shall discuss bloggers' active engagement with historical media representations, showing that far from passively accepting them as "true" representations of historical events, they draw on them in order to construct highly critical memories of mass media during the Fujimori regime. While the regime succeeded in creating iconic memories, it failed to condition the way they would be received and interpreted by their audiences. This failure is expressed in bloggers' frequent use of "corrective strategies": a critical engagement with official representations and narratives, with the aim of "correcting" them. I read these "corrective strategies" as a distinctly post-transitional form of vigilant and deliberative citizenship, where "remembering the past differently" becomes a civic duty.

Bloggers' "corrective strategies" in their engagement with historical media representations and collective memories express their perception that the past is anything but over. Theorists of memory have argued that the construction of collective memory is rooted in the concerns of the present: they often serve as a resource in people's attempts to make sense of the present (Jelin 2003; Misztal 2003; Waxman 2008). Many of the posts in the self-coup sample express a feeling that Fujimorism has had a profound impact on the country's political and civic culture, and that little has changed fundamentally since the transition in 2000. These perceptions of continuity are often coupled with an intense fear of a possible return to the past. I shall first discuss perceptions of cultural and political continuity with respect to a broader social field, drawing on bloggers' reflections in the self-coup sample.

In order to learn more about perceptions of contemporary mass media and their relationship with memories of historical media regimes, I constructed a wider sample of 117 posts, which had been posted between January and December 2010 on 17 different blogs. This sample includes all posts published in this timeframe which made mention of mass media beyond the simple use of media sources as a reference. Drawing on this sample, I identified a range of common criticisms of contemporary mass media. I found that the most common criticisms referred to freedom of speech, the way in which events were covered, and a perception that media outlets lack structural independence. I discuss these criticisms in detail with the help of two case studies, paying particular attention to bloggers' use of memories to make sense of current events.

Mass Media Representations as a Source of Collective Memory

Different sectors of society have been affected in different ways by the internal armed conflict and the Fujimori regime, which (in part) explains the different ways in which these periods are remembered. The “traditional” urban middle classes were most affected by the hyperinflation of the late 1980s and Fujimori’s neoliberal “shock therapy”, both of which led to great economic insecurity, particularly for those depending on a monthly or fortnightly salary. While independent small business owners were able to adapt their prices “on the go”, the same was not true for those who received a fixed salary: “Who was, then, the most affected? It was the formal employees of companies, who received a predetermined monthly or fortnightly salary. These groups with formal employment, who made up the traditional middle class of our countries, suffered the most” (Arellano 2010, p.40). On a symbolic level, the inability to maintain a lifestyle that was perceived as “appropriate” for the middle classes (including, for example, children’s attendance of private, fee-paying schools), was a great concern. Scholars of the Peruvian middle classes have stressed that in post-transitional Peru, members of the “traditional” and the “emergent” middle classes evaluate their economic situation differently, precisely as a result of their different trajectories over the course of the past three or four decades: towards greater instability in the case of the former, as opposed to increased establishment in the case of the latter (Toche et al. 2003, p.130, f.). The middle classes were also affected by the interruption of everyday life caused by the Shining Path’s urban incursions in the early 1990s, such as blackouts, shortages in food supplies and a feeling of insecurity.

Nevertheless, to an important degree they experienced the Fujimori regime through its representations in mass media, both during the regime and after its downfall. For this reason, media representations are particularly salient in collective memories of Fujimorism among the urban middle classes. Tejada has found that memories of the internal armed conflict and the Fujimori regime among urban dwellers who were not directly affected by political violence tend to be strongly influenced by media coverage:

“The most salient memories evolve around those attacks that were iconic for the official discourse (like the attacks in Tarata and Channel 2) and which were widely covered by the media. (...) The memories of this group of the popular sectors are influenced by that which can be seen on TV, therefore they are the official discourses about what happened in this epoch, and they don’t have many opportunities to learn about the memories of those who have been affected. For this reason, attacks such as the Tarata bombing or the attack on Channel 2 are frequently mentioned in this group, because for the official history these are the most important icons of the violence.” (2007, p.45, f.)

Although Tejada studied the memories of what he calls “popular” sectors of society, his findings are certainly relevant for patterns of remembrance in the Peruvian blogosphere,

where “that which can be seen on TV” is particularly salient: many of the most important *lieux de mémoire*⁵ (Nora 1996) of the Fujimori regime and the democratic transition commemorated in the blogosphere refer to mediated experiences. One of these *lieux de mémoire* is Fujimori’s self-coup in 1992. As one blogger put it:

“Today we commemorate the day in which the convict Fujimori staged a self-coup, shutting down Congress. It is one of those occasions which sweep the Internet in this country, what a cybernetic hecatomb. There is no Twitter or Facebook account or Google reader subscription which will stay without at least one mention of an event of such importance for the history of Peru”⁶ (Rothgiesser 2010)

My analysis of 35 blogposts, written by 18 different bloggers between 2006 and 2012 on the occasion of the anniversary of Fujimori’s self-coup, showed that bloggers remembered the self-coup and negotiated its memory mainly through its media expressions, in particular Fujimori’s “Message to the Nation”⁷, in which he informed citizens about the coup and gave reasons for his decision to “dissolve” the democratically elected congress and other democratic institutions, and opinion polls⁸ which suggested⁹ strong popular support for the coup and were widely distributed by the media, whose headquarters had been occupied by the armed forces. Some bloggers even linked these media expressions to their own lived experience, recalling how they had watched Fujimori’s message on TV, as in the following two examples:

“I remember that Sunday, the next day I had Pascal lab, and plop! Chino’s [Fujimori’s] message, the truth is that at that point in time he was already beginning to disappoint me, but I still thought of him as democratic... I was deluded, oh well... the truth is that I turned off the TV when he commented on the critical situation and what not, bah! I’ll watch it tomorrow. (...) The thing is that later they called my mum and she told me to turn on the TV because they had carried out a coup, I turned it on and there I see the message again and the part that I hadn’t seen: ‘Dissolve, dissolve’... Later a communiqué by the army commanders and ... nothing else! Something had happened.

⁵ In his introduction to the English-language edition of *Les lieux de mémoire*, Nora declared that: “[i]f the expression *lieu de mémoire* must have an official definition, it should be this: a *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community (in this case, the French community)” (1996, p.XVII).

⁶ “Hoy se recuerda el día en el que el convicto Fujimori infringió un autogolpe, cerrando el Congreso. Es una de esas ocasiones que barren Internet en el país, cual hecatombe cibernética. No hay cuenta de Twitter o de Facebook o suscripción de google reader que quedará sin aunque sea una mención de tan importante evento para la historia del Perú.”

⁷ The message to the nation is mentioned, either in words or images, in the following posts: (Arroyo Gárate 2011; Arroyo Gárate 2010b; Ernesto 2007; Godoy 2007; Godoy 2011; Jomra 2007; Meléndez 2012; Sifuentes 2011).

⁸ These are mentioned in the following posts: (Arroyo Gárate 2008; Arroyo Gárate 2010b; Bardales 2010; da Maus 2007; Ernesto 2007; Godoy 2006; Godoy 2010a; Jomra 2007; Meléndez 2010a; Meléndez 2012; Rendón 2010; Rothgiesser 2010; Silva Santisteban 2012).

⁹ The reliability of these polls is the subject of much debate. However, most of the bloggers in my sample accept their findings as realistic.

The answer? The radio, RPP was very relaxed about it, so I turned to a radio station which doesn't exist any longer (I think it was called *Antena something*) and there they did comment on the topic in a serious way, an interview with Osterling (President of the Senate for those who don't remember) who said that he had been put under house arrest and was later forced to hang up, minutes later the radio presenters said that they were forced to stop transmitting, so they do it by playing the national anthem."¹⁰ (Ernesto 2007)

"I vaguely remember that Sunday. I don't know for what strange reason I couldn't sleep. What's for sure is that, for a change, I turned on 'Goals in Action' and there the ticker appeared: *Message to the Nation by Engineer Alberto Fujimori Fujimori*. I was surprised by the time of the day. Also by what he said, although my parents – at my age of ten years – clarified it immediately: "Now you know what a *coup d'état* is." And of course, that night I also learned what 20 army and police vans driving past the building were – I lived in the city centre back then – and I also knew that, unlike what many Peruvians thought at that time, the *Nisei* engineer [Fujimori], whose children studied in the same school as I did and whose workplace – read, the Palace – I had visited only eight months earlier, had done something bad."¹¹ (Godoy 2007)

However, as these examples suggest, while "that which can be seen on TV" is particularly present in bloggers' memories of Fujimorism, these memories don't necessarily reflect "the official discourses about what happened in this era" (Tejada 2007, p.46). Even though media representations of the Fujimori regime occupy an important place in bloggers' memories of Fujimorism, these are not accepted in an uncritical way. Quite to the contrary, they often serve as a starting point for the deconstruction of "official" narratives of Fujimorism. This scepticism regarding media representations of Fujimorism reflects people's experiences of mass media during the 1990s, which occupy an important space in their collective memories of this time.

¹⁰ "Recuerdo ese domingo, al día siguiente tenía laboratorio de Pascal, y plop! mensaje del chino, la verdad es que para ese entonces ya me estaba empezando a decepcionar, pero aun me parecía democrático... iluso yo, bueno ... la verdad es que apague la tele cuando comentaba la crítica situación y no se que mas, bah! mañana lo veo. (...) El caso es que luego le llaman a mi mamá y ella me dice que prenda la tele pues habían dado un golpe, la prendo y ahí veo nuevamente el mensaje y la parte que no había visto: "disolver, disolver"... luego un comunicado de los jefes militares y ... nada más! algo había pasado. Solución? La radio, RPP se lo tomaba muy tranquilo así que me puse a captar una radio que ahora ya no existe (antena algo creo que se llamaba) y ahí sí se comentaba con seriedad el tema, una entrevista a Osterling (presidente del Senado para quien no lo recuerda) comentando que había sido puesto bajo arresto domiciliario y luego obligado a colgar el teléfono, minutos después los locutores de la radio decían que estaban siendo obligados a cerrar la transmisión, así que lo hacen con el Himno Nacional."

¹¹ "Recuerdo vagamente aquel domingo. No sé porque extraña razón no podía dormir. Lo cierto es que puse, para variar, Goles en Acción y en eso apareció el cintillo: *Mensaje a la Nación del Ing. Alberto Fujimori Fujimori*. Me extrañó la hora. Lo que dijo también, aunque mis viejos - a mis 10 años - me lo aclararon al toque: ahora ya sabes lo que es un golpe de Estado. Y claro, esa noche supe también lo que era que pasen como 20 vehículos de tropa militares y policiales por la puerta del edificio - vivía en el Centro en aquel entonces - y supe también que, a diferencia de lo que muchos peruanos pensaron en aquel momento, algo malo había hecho el ingeniero nisei cuyos hijos estudiaban en el mismo colegio que yo y cuyo centro de trabajo - léase, Palacio - había visitado hacía sólo 8 meses."

Memories of Fujimorism

Although parts of the media played an important role in holding governments to account, exposing corruption and reporting on political violence (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003; Laplante & Phenicie 2010), it is now known that significant parts of the media were all too willing to sell their editorial lines to the government, while others were forced into submission (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003; Conaghan 2002; Conaghan 2005; Fowks 2000; Laplante & Phenicie 2010; Macassi Lavander & Ampuero Navarro 2001; McMillan & Zoido 2004; Wood 2000). Mass media played a central role in stabilising the Fujimori regime and were located at the core of the secret service's strategy to guarantee regime stability¹². The fact that, of all figures of influence, media owners received the highest bribes demonstrates the importance Vladimiro Montesinos ascribed to controlling the media (McMillan & Zoido 2004). The complicity of mass media with the Fujimori regime is strongly present in the collective memory of Peruvians, and so is the precarious situation of opposition journalists during the 1990s. This epoch in Peruvian media history is remembered as a time when media power was concentrated in very few hands, and where this concentration was used to deceive the public and distract attention from political problems.

¹² As several scholars have pointed out, terrestrial TV is a particularly far-reaching medium in Peru. Montesinos was aware of the importance of this medium and was keen on controlling its editorial content (Conaghan 2005, p.146). While 'serious' print media – where criticism of the government was most likely to be found during the Fujimori regime – reached a rather small and mainly *Limeño* public, terrestrial television had national reach (Fowks 2000, p.62, f.). All but one TV channel (Canal N) received bribes of up to US\$10,600,000 (in the case of *Panamericana Televisión*) (McMillan & Zoido 2004, p.81, f.). The three largest TV stations were paid monthly bribes between US\$500,000 and US\$1.5 million so as to guarantee continuous favourable coverage, while smaller stations received single payments or favours. Julio Vera (*Andina de Televisión*/Channel 9) was paid US\$50,000 to dismiss journalists Cecilia Valenzuela and Luis Ibérico, and Genaro Delgado Parker (*Red Global*/Channel 13) received business help and judicial favours in exchange for the dismissal of journalist César Hildebrandt. In some cases, Montesinos even bought shares of the media outlets he wished to control, such as in the cases of *Frecuencia Latina* after owner Baruch Ivcher had been forced into exile (McMillan & Zoido 2004, p.81) and *Cable Canal de Noticias CCN*, or gave loyal shareholders money so they could increase their share, as in the case of Eduardo Calmell del Solar, director and stockholder of the newspaper *Expreso* (Conaghan 2002, p.119). According to John McMillan and Pablo Zoido, who use bribe receipts as an indicator of the importance given to television, "the typical bribe paid to a television-channel owner was about a hundred times larger than that paid to a politician, which was somewhat larger than that paid to a judge. One single television channel's bribe was five times larger than the total of the opposition politicians' bribes" (McMillan & Zoido 2004, p.69). In exchange for bribes, favours and preferential treatment, television owners gave Montesinos almost complete control over their editorial line and accepted extensive conditions: "If the channel ever fails to act as agreed, Montesinos may resolve the matter without the channel 'having any right to complain in any way.' Montesinos's contractual duties include, 'To do whatever else is necessary.' The channel agrees to allow Montesinos to review each day's news programs before they air and not to broadcast anything about presidential or congressional candidates, or any program referring 'explicitly or implicitly to political issues,' without Montesinos's written approval" (McMillan & Zoido 2004, p.82).

One reason for the central position of mass-media corruption in collective memory of the Fujimori regime is that it was carried out with flagrant openness, yet at the same time was emphatically denied by those involved: when asked about the distorted coverage of the 2000 presidential elections campaign, Fujimori denied all links to defamatory publications and refused to “intervene” in what he called “the product of the editorial decisions of a free press” (Conaghan 2002, p.120). So called “smokescreens”, the exaggerated coverage of often bizarre and unimportant news, were regularly used to distract attention from serious political problems (Fowks 2000, p.62).

When the immense corruption network of Montesinos and Fujimori – including among others “television executives from every major station” (Conaghan 2005, p.154) – was finally exposed to the public, this, too, happened on TV. In an attempt to gain control over his business partners by collecting compromising material, Montesinos had recorded his illicit negotiations and payments on video. The airing on the small private channel Canal N on the 14th of September 2000 of the first of these so called *Vladivideos* – showing Congressman Alberto Kouri and Montesinos in a deal – evolved into a huge media scandal which ultimately led to the breakdown of the regime and Fujimori’s escape to Japan. For its far-reaching consequences the *Vladivideo* scandal could not be ignored by any media outlet and came to be one of the central *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1996) of the Peruvian transition.

As a consequence of this experience and its passage into collective memory, bloggers tend to be very critical of the media coverage during the 1990s, an attitude which has had an impact on the way they handle its narratives. Again, my analysis of 35 blogposts about the self-coup provides several examples of this scepticism. While the posts in my sample were all written on the occasions of the coup’s anniversaries, they often went beyond that specific event, remembering and reflecting on the Fujimori administration as a whole, including the role of media during the 1990s. Fifteen of the posts in my sample of 35 posts made reference to media corruption¹³, as in the following examples:

“April 5, 1992 was a shameful moment for our society, a large percentage of whom approved it, because it was screaming out for a firm hand. And we got that firm hand, only it was also a long hand: this date marks the start of the consolidation of the systematic theft of the state, with bank accounts in the Cayman Islands or other tax havens, which still haven’t been repatriated; of crime in the highest echelons of the Armed Forces; of the genuflection of generals and colonels before Vladimiro Montesinos; of the sale by weight of the consciences of media owners and their

¹³ These were: (Arroyo Gárate 2010b; Arroyo Gárate 2011; Bardales 2010; Bardales 2012; buda de nieve 2012; Bustamante 2011; Ernesto 2007; Godoy 2006; Godoy 2008; Godoy 2010a; Godoy 2011; Jomra 2007; Rendón 2010; Sifuentes 2011; Silva Santisteban 2012).

lackeys, the journalists who bowed to them not for a plate of lentils, but for a 4x4; of the stupefaction of the people through brutish television, useful to the autocrat's authoritarianism."¹⁴ (Silva Santisteban 2012)

"The empire of arbitrariness and corruption installed itself on that day: except for a handful of exceptions, the press aligned itself with the regime. Any dissidence was punished with lawsuits, persecution by the SUNAT [National Superintendence for the Administration of Tax] or the withdrawal of citizenship. From 1998 onwards, TV channels and newspapers were bought in order to favour re-election."¹⁵ (Godoy 2006)

Like these two examples, many of the commemorative posts in my sample highlighted, discussed, and criticised the role of mass media during the Fujimori regime.

Corrective Strategies, I: "Remembering the Past Differently"

However, rather than simply recounting experiences of mass media representations during the Fujimori regime, a surprisingly high number of posts display what could be called a "corrective strategy": in these cases, bloggers engage with media representations and the narratives spawned by them in a critical way, trying to "correct" them. On the following pages, I shall discuss some examples of these "corrective strategies", which can be understood as a particular interpretation of deliberative citizenship in the context of post-transitional Peru.

In 2007, blogger Marco Sifuentes, also a professional journalist, edited a video for the TV show *Ventana Indiscreta*, entitled "What you didn't see about the 5th of April 1992" and posted it on his blog (Sifuentes 2007). The video begins with a short TV-advert-style skit showing a cartoon of a nurse, an outsized bottle of a drug named "Memorex" (supposedly a remedy for those who suffer from "political amnesia" or remember Fujimorism in the "wrong" way), and a picture of Fujimori holding what looks like a sword. A jingle is played and a female voice (probably belonging to the nurse) sings "Take *Memorex!*" [*¡Tome Memorex!*]. The bottle of *Memorex* hits Fujimori over the head. He disappears from the picture as if being "hammered" into the ground. This is followed by an extract from Fujimori's Message to the Nation, in which he informs citizens that he has "decided to take the following important measures: first, to

¹⁴ "El 5 de abril de 1992 fue una vergüenza para nuestra sociedad que lo aprobó en un porcentaje altísimo porque pedía a gritos mano dura. Y tuvimos esa mano dura, solo que también fue una mano larga: esa fecha inicia la consolidación del latrocinio sistemático del Estado con cuentas en Islas Caimán u otros paraísos fiscales que aún no son repatriadas; de la delincuencia en las más altas esferas de las Fuerzas Armadas; de la genuflexión de los generales y los coroneles ante Vladimiro Montesinos; de la venta al peso de las conciencias de los dueños de los medios de comunicación y sus lacayos, los periodistas que se agacharon no por un plato de lentejas, sino por su camioneta 4x4; de la imbecilización del pueblo a través de una televisión bruta y funcional al autoritarismo del autócrata."

¹⁵ "El imperio de la arbitrariedad y la corrupción se instauraron desde aquel aciago día: Salvo contadas excepciones, la prensa se alineó con el régimen. Cualquier disidencia era castigada con procesos judiciales, la persecución de la SUNAT o el retiro de la nacionalidad. A partir de 1998, se compraron canales de televisión y diarios para favorecer la reelección."

dissolve, dissolve temporarily the Congress of the Republic”¹⁶. The video then shows archive footage of the military operations, protests and detentions. Fujimori is shown in an interview, saying that “the government is conscious of the historical necessity to eliminate all resistance and obstacles to this reconstruction process”. In an interview, he affirms that “many have said that this is a coup, I’d rather say it’s an anti-coup.”¹⁷ Against the background of further archive footage, a voice begins to comment on these archive materials:

“Very few knew what was really happening that night. You probably don’t remember these images. And you don’t remember them, because you didn’t see them. Or, it would be more accurate to say, because they didn’t allow you to see them. That night you only saw this: [excerpt from Fujimori’s Message to the Nation: “Dissolve, dissolve”]. The message had been recorded. In the *Pentagonito* [army headquarters], Fujimori was watching his own speech, accompanied by the owners of the three most important national TV stations of the time. That’s why only foreign correspondents documented for posterity the crudeness of the last military coup of our history. That night, tanks took the streets of the centre of Lima and entire detachments of troops occupied the newspapers, radios and TV channels. The next morning, many newspapers had entire pages censored. (...) Many (...) politicians, trade unionists and journalists were arrested without any justification. In the Palace, surrounded by his ministers, Fujimori tried to deceive the outraged international public opinion, without success. (...) Fujimori (...) took ‘popularity baths’ every day, and those were indeed broadcasted everywhere in Peru. Although there were many spontaneous supporters, a good part of the masses who feted him consisted of *Cambio 90* [Fujimori’s party] militants. [When vice-president Máximo San Román was sworn in as President of the Republic by the exiled Congress on the 26th of April 1992], he quickly turned into a national leader, but the media, already in the hands of Fujimori and Montesinos, looked after the business of discrediting him.”¹⁸ (Sifuentes 2007)

Sifuentes’ video was very well received in the Peruvian blogosphere, and many other bloggers included it into their own commemorative posts, not only in 2007, but also in the following

¹⁶ “Por lo que he decidido tomar las siguientes trascendentales medidas: primero, disolver, disolver temporalmente el Congreso de la República”

¹⁷ “El gobierno es consciente de la necesidad histórica de eliminar todas las resistencias y frenos a este proceso de reconstrucción.”

¹⁸ “Muy pocos supieron lo que realmente sucedió esa noche. Seguramente usted no recuerda estas imágenes. Y no las recuerda, porque no las vio. Mejor dicho, no le permitieron que las vea. Esa noche, usted solo vio esto: [Mensaje a la Nación: “Disolver, disolver”] El mensaje estaba grabado. En el pentagonito, Fujimori vio su propio discurso, acompañado por los dueños de los tres canales más importantes de la televisión nacional de entonces. Por eso es que solamente los corresponsales extranjeros registraron para la posteridad la crudeza del último golpe militar de nuestra historia. Esa noche, los tanques tomaron las calles del centro de Lima y tropas enteras ocuparon los diarios, las radios y los canales de televisión. A la mañana siguiente muchos periódicos aparecieron con páginas enteras censuradas. (...) Muchos (...) políticos, líderes sindicales y periodistas fueron arrestados sin ninguna justificación. En Palacio, rodeado de sus ministros, Fujimori intentaba engañar a la escandalizada opinión pública internacional, sin éxito. (...) Fujimori (...) todos los días tomaba baños de popularidad que si eran difundidos a lo largo y ancho de todo el Perú. Aunque habían muchos espontáneos, buena parte de la muchedumbre que lo vitoreaba estaba conformada por partidarios de Cambio 90. (...) San Román se convirtió súbitamente en un líder nacional, pero los medios, ya en manos de Fujimori y Montesinos se encargaron de ridiculizarlo.”

years (Bardales 2010; Bustamante 2007; Godoy 2008; 2012; Jomra 2007; Manrique 2007; Sifuentes 2008; 2009a; 2011; Valdez Morgan 2010). The emphasis on “what was really happening that night” and the prescription of “Memorex” to those who remember Fujimori favourably are examples of what I call “corrective strategies”, a practical interpretation of vigilant and deliberative citizenship in the context of post-transitional Peru.

Other examples of such “corrective strategies” can be found in several of the posts included in the self-coup sample. For example, blogger *buda de nieve* lists several common statements about the achievements of the Fujimori regime, only to emphatically reject them, as in the following extract from his post:

“Wasn’t it thanks to the 5th of April that the country was modernised? Oh please! The economic management caused by the other infamous character, Alan García, was adjusted in favour of extreme liberalism. The economy was corrected, but at what price? MPs, judges, policemen, the Armed Forces, athletes, comedians... *all those whom we had been taught to respect were debased by Fujimorism*. Even TV, previously more or less decent, turned into the stupefying shit which it continues to be to this day. That’s what Fujimorism left us. This lack of decency. This fear that everything is resolved through crime.

So Fujimorism was not an example of success in Latin America? Oh please! It triumphed in the worst way, it did the opposite of what it was supposed to do: it created the school of apparent democracy from the outside and management of all powers inside. Hugo Chávez is not similar to Fidel, but to Fujimori. And during the [2011] elections you could hear the advocates of the dictatorship cry: ‘[Presidential candidate] Ollanta [Humala] is going to militarise everything! Ollanta is going to carry out a coup! Ollanta is going to shut down Congress!’ when they are THE FIRST to applaud this type of brutal and anti-democratic measures. So, they are the most rancid thing that exists right now in our political landscape (...)”¹⁹ (*buda de nieve* 2012)

A similar example is that of blogger Laura Arroyo, who set out to dismantle Fujimori’s Message to the Nation in her post. Like Sifuentes’ video, this example combines “corrective strategies” with a call for “remembering the past differently”, both of which can be understood as practices of deliberative and vigilant citizenship rooted in the post-transitional condition:

¹⁹ “**¿Entonces no fue gracias al 5 de Abril que la modernización llegó al país?** ¡Por favor! Se ajustó el manejo económico causado por el otro infame Alan García a favor del liberalismo extremo. Se corrigió la economía, ¿pero a qué costo? Congresistas, jueces, policías, fuerzas armadas, deportistas, comediantes... *todos a quienes nos enseñaron a respetar, envilecidos por el Fujimorismo*. Incluso la televisión, antaño medianamente decente, se convirtió en la mierda embrutecedora que aún hoy se resiste a ser. Eso es lo que nos dejó el Fujimorismo. Esa indecencia. Ese miedo a que todo se solucione con el crimen. **¿Así que el Fujimorismo no fue un ejemplo de éxito en América Latina?** ¡Por favor! Triunfó para mal, hizo todo lo contrario que debía: creó la escuela de la aparente democracia por fuera y el manejo de todos los poderes por dentro. Hugo Chávez no se parece a Fidel, sino a Fujimori. Y en las elecciones escuchabas cacarear a los defensores de la dictadura: ‘¡Ollanta va a militarizarlo todo! ¡Ollanta va a dar golpe de estado! ¡Ollanta va a cerrar el congreso!’ cuando ellos son LOS PRIMEROS en aplaudir ese tipo de medidas brutales y antidemocráticas. Son, así, de lo más rancio ahora mismo de nuestra política.”

“Today, on the 19th anniversary of the self-coup of 1992, the day on which a democratically elected Congress was closed and therefore the day on which we Peruvians were deprived of the right to have representatives whom we had decided should speak for us, it is worthwhile to remember that this self-coup was unnecessary. But apart from unnecessary, it’s worth to revisit the reasons which the ex-president Alberto Fujimori gave, intending to carry out the self-coup, and to note that, on that 5th of April 1992, he lied to us shamelessly.”²⁰ (Arroyo Gárate 2011)

She then proceeds to quote several extracts from the speech, which she describes as “lies” and subsequently refutes. She finally concludes:

“These are seven lies in the presidential message of that 5th of April. Later, the condemned Fujimori talked about certain measures (dissolve, dissolve) and concluded with some objectives, among them to ‘radically restore the morality of the Judiciary’ (as we can see, this was a lie), to ‘pacify the country, in a legal way...’ (a climate of peace which never really existed, because where there is injustice, there is no peace), to ‘achieve the elimination of isolated cases of immorality and corruption in the law enforcement agencies and other institutions’ (I think that was a mistake, instead of elimination he maybe meant promotion) and to ‘make an example by sanctioning all cases of immorality and corruption in public administration’ (this would imply sanctioning himself, something he never did). Here you have the ex-president’s mendacious justifications. Look again at the declarations of his daughter Keiko Fujimori [who is running for president] to note that she defends them. **Do we deserve for them to betray us again? Have we really not learned a thing?**”²¹ (Arroyo Gárate 2011)

Further examples of such “corrective strategies” exist. In the following section of this chapter, I shall argue that these “corrective strategies” are contextual “translations” of deliberative and vigilant citizenship, which reflect bloggers’ perception of cultural and structural continuity. Stack (2012b) has argued that among citizens of the Mexican town of Tapalpa, knowing history was a way of being a “good citizen”. Something similar happened with the bloggers quoted above. However, in their case “knowing history” as such was not enough; instead, history needed to be actively remembered, and in a specific (“correct”) way. The examples discussed

²⁰ “Hoy que se cumplen 19 años desde el autogolpe de 1992, día en que se cerró un Congreso elegido democráticamente y, por tanto, día en que se nos negó a los peruanos tener representantes que habíamos decidido que lleven nuestra voz. Vale la pena recordar que dicho autogolpe además de negativo era innecesario. Pero además de innecesario, vale la pena revisar las razones que el ex presidente Alberto Fujimori defendió con la intención de llevar a cabo el autogolpe y notar que, ese 5 de abril de 1992, nos mintió sin asco.”

²¹ “Estas son 7 mentiras en el mensaje presidencial de aquel 5 de abril. Luego, el condenado Fujimori informó de ciertas disposiciones (disolver, disolver) y concluyó con algunos objetivos entre los que se encontraban ‘moralizar radicalmente el Poder Judicial’ (como vemos esto fue una mentira), ‘pacificar el país, dentro de un marco jurídico...’ (un clima de paz que nunca lo fue realmente pues no hay paz cuando hay injusticia), ‘lograr la eliminación de los casos aislados de inmoralidad y corrupción en la fuerzas del orden y otras instituciones’ (creo que se equivocó, en lugar de eliminación a lo mejor quiso decir ‘fomentación’) y ‘sancionar ejemplarmente todos los casos de inmoralidad y corrupción en la administración pública’ (eso implicaba sancionarse a sí mismo, cosa que nunca hizo). Ahí tienen las mentirosas justificaciones del ex presidente. Revisen las declaraciones de su hija Keiko Fujimori para notar que las defiende. **¿Merecemos que nos engañen otra vez? ¿Acaso no hemos aprendido nada?**”

above thus suggest that in the context of post-transitional Peru, deliberative and vigilant citizenship – here referring both to state agents and fellow citizens – included a critical approach to history and remembrance. Faced with a heroic narrative of Fujimorism (Barrantes Segura & Peña Romero 2006) and a very real threat of a return to the past, “deconstructing” and correcting these narratives and remembering the past differently became an ethical imperative – a praxis of “good citizenship” beyond a simple legal status of citizenship.

Perceptions of Structural and Cultural Continuity

The examples of bloggers’ “corrective strategies” quoted above reflect their perception of structural and cultural continuity beyond the democratic transition, an interpretative frame which informed the ways in which they translated vigilant and deliberative citizenship into practice. “Correcting” narratives about the past is a relevant aspect of vigilant and deliberative citizenship to the degree that these narratives impact on contemporary society. Many of the posts express a feeling that Fujimorism has had a profound detrimental impact on the country’s political and civic culture, and that since 2000, little has changed fundamentally. Blogger Christian Manrique cautions that “we must forever remember the words of Fernando Belaúnde Terry, founder of [political party] *Acción Popular* [who is shown in Sifuentes’ video quoted above, saying]: ‘To stray from democracy is to turn towards barbarism’. Be alert, gentlemen, because in this government we are heading in this direction”²² (Manrique 2007). Similarly, blogger Roberto Bustamante writes:

“Fujimorism hasn’t gone away. Ever since that Sunday, 5th of April, it’s been among us: Authoritarian and autocratic ways of governing, a media politics where the *caudillo* and the leader are more important than the construction of a politics for the masses, the dependence of the state system and of the country’s governability on the Armed Forces, the politics of ‘I’m the one who’s in command’, the fear of organising, a common sense according to which the market distributes resources better than the state, but where it can’t do it, it’s best to create organs of social assistance (that’s to say, in most of the country), a disdain for intellectualism, that’s to say for the possibility of constructing a critical sense of Peruvian history and society, the devaluing of forms of unionised organisation (which brings with it the control of civic mobilisation), etc. (...) The brief [transitional] government of Valentín Paniagua did (precisely because of its brevity) little to push reforms and the democratic transition. The government of Alejandro Toledo, with more time and resources (...) did even less. As a result, [we had] the tight and fear-filled [2006] election between Alan García and Ollanta Humala. Also as a result, we have the ‘cohabitation’ of Fujimoristas and Apristas [members of the governing party APRA]. (...) [Vice-President Luis] Giampietri, in turn, is pursuing the rearticulation of military power, reduced greatly during Toledo’s government and hit hard by the scandalous (and shameful) denunciations of

²² “Tenemos que rescatar por siempre las palabras de Fernando Belaúnde Terry - fundador de Acción Popular-: ‘Alejarse de la democracia es dirigirse hacia la barbarie’. Páren la oreja, señores, porque en este gobierno estamos tirando para ese lado.”

corruption and public denunciations of human rights violations committed during nearly 20 years of counterinsurgent fighting. With this panorama, we do not simply commemorate fifteen years of a far-away coup, but fifteen years of a hegemonic form of politics and society in Peru.”²³ (Bustamante 2007)

While Bustamante and Manrique point mainly to the political culture among politicians, others have discussed the ongoing influence of Fujimorism on civic culture and collective memories among ordinary citizens. These bloggers argue that the psychological strategies of Fujimorism have profoundly shaped citizens’ approach to politics, as well as their political and historical narratives, in a way that has not yet been overcome. In this sense, blogger Jorge Valdez, a contemporary historian, argues that the political socialisation of his own generation during the 1990s has produced worrying results:

“The most difficult thing about studying Fujimorism is that it is still an unfinished process. The 5th of April and the Fujimorista government that followed it marked the decade of the 1990s in the most important aspects, and thereby the life of many youngsters who learned what politics is in a polarised, debased, corrupt and criminal context. This has produced both a cynical and pragmatic generation, where everything goes (except when they touch your own people), and another idealistic group whose only flag is a meaningless and deformed ideal of democracy and freedom. Those who affirm that the Fujimorista self-coup marked a before and an after in our recent history are not mistaken (...), but taking into account that still 18 years later the polarisation around Fujimorism and anti-Fujimorism is very great, a balance of the same and of its place in the history of Peru could still wait a few more years.”²⁴ (Valdez Morgan 2010)

²³ “el Fujimorismo no se ha ido. desde aquel domingo 5 de abril, ha estado entre nosotros: formas autoritarias y personalistas de gobernar, una política mediática donde la figura del caudillo y del líder importa más que la construcción de una política de masas, soporte del sistema estatal y de la gobernabilidad en las fuerzas armadas, la política del aquí mando yo, el miedo a organizarse, un sentido común bajo el cual el mercado asigna mejor los recursos que el estado, pero donde no puede asignarlos mejor crear organismos de asistencia social (es decir, en la mayor parte del Perú), desprecio a la intelectualidad, es decir la posibilidad de construir sentidos críticos sobre la historia y la sociedad peruana, subestimación de las formas de organización gremiales (lo que conlleva a un control de la movilización ciudadana), etc. (...) el breve gobierno de valentín paniagua hizo (justamente por su brevedad) poco por impulsar la reforma y la transición a la democracia. el gobierno de alejandro toledo, con más tiempo y recursos (...) hizo todavía menos. producto de ello, la elección ajustada y temeraria entre alan garcía y ollanta humala. también producto de ello tenemos la convivencia entre fujimoristas y apristas. (...) a su vez, [vicepresidente luis] giampietri busca la rearticulación del poder militar, tan venido a menos durante el gobierno de toledo y golpeado por las escandalosas (y vergonzosas) denuncias de corrupción y las denuncias públicas de violaciones a los derechos humanos cometidas durante cerca de veinte años de lucha contrasubversiva. con este panorama, no solamente se conmemora quince años de un lejano golpe, sino quince años de una forma hegemónica de política y sociedad en el Perú.”

²⁴ “Lo más difícil al abordar el estudio del Fujimorismo es que aun es un proceso inacabado. El 5 de abril y el posterior gobierno fujimorista marcaron la década de los noventas en los aspectos más importantes, y con ello la vida de muchos jóvenes que aprendieron lo que es política en un contexto polarizado, desprestigiado, corrupto y criminal. Esto ha producido tanto una generación cínica y pragmática en la que todo vale (salvo cuando tocan a los suyos) con tal de cumplir los objetivos, y a otro grupo idealista cuya única bandera es un ideal gaseoso y deforme de democracia y libertad. No están equivocados los que afirman que el autogolpe fujimorista marcó un antes y un después en nuestra

José Alejandro Godoy, in turn, focuses on the persistence of political discourses that were propagated during the Fujimori regime, and that have weakened citizens' appreciation of the importance of civil and human rights:

"Today the after-effects of that evil period of our history persist. There are those who think that to defend human rights is to support terrorism, that to defend workers' rights is a heresy against the free market, that speaking of transparency is a frivolity worthy of Switzerland, that economy means nothing more than getting the taxes sorted, and that's it, that you mustn't say that the privatisations were done badly, that talking about democracy is secondary when people need to survive."²⁵ (Godoy 2007)

This perception of structural and cultural continuity beyond the democratic transition is, in some cases, paired with fears of a possible "return to the past". In particular towards the end of Alan García's second government (2006-2011), which had seen the resurgence of Fujimorism under Keiko Fujimori's leadership, some bloggers claimed that despite having reached important milestones in post-transitional justice, little had been learnt. Two days before the publication of Alberto Fujimori's sentence, in 2008, Godoy wrote the following:

"But let's look at the future. Not the immediate future, which will be defined in 48 hours, but that of [the electoral year] 2011. Let's say it plainly: **there is a real threat that we will lose democracy**. This threat has a name: **Keiko Sofía Fujimori de Vito**. It's true that the Fujimoristas are trying to inflate support for Ms. Fujimori in opinion polls (...), but it's also true that there exists a percentage of Peruvians who are dissatisfied with democracy, or who simply don't believe in it. I shall affirm something else: **Ms. Fujimori is a greater danger than Ollanta Humala was at his moment**, for several reasons: **1) she presents herself as an 'advocate of the system'**, with the intention to win the support of the same businessmen who applauded her dad like seals, and who today celebrate the authoritarian jokes of Alan García. (...) **2) She'll play the victim card**. If in 48 hours her 'daddy' receives a lengthy prison sentence, she'll march through a range of programmes and media which never ask her any unpleasant questions in order to present herself as the successor to the man who 'defeated terrorism', an image which she, wrongly (...), still maintains among many people (...). **3) She has the support of the government**. It's not a secret that this government doesn't dislike Fujimorism. (...) **4) The support of some of the media**. And I don't just refer to the troika of newspapers which are compliant with Fujimorism or to the TV shows which don't ask Mrs. de Vito any serious questions, but to those columnists who, in the name of the system, defend the indefensible. (...) So you've been warned, if you vote for Keiko Fujimori you are not only voting for a programme which has a single objective: the liberation of a delinquent (and not precisely so he can play with

historia reciente (...), pero tomando en cuenta que aun luego de 18 años la polarización en torno al Fujimorismo y al anti-Fujimorismo es muy alta, el balance del mismo y su lugar dentro de la historia del Perú aun podría esperar unos años más."

²⁵ "Hoy las secuelas de aquel periodo nefasto de nuestra historia persisten. Hay quienes piensan que defender los derechos humanos es hacerle el juego al terrorismo, que defender los derechos laborales es una herejía al libre mercado, que hablar de transparencia es una frivolidad digna de Suiza, que la economía se restringe a tener la caja fiscal cuadrada y punto, que no se puede decir que las privatizaciones estuvieron mal hechas, que hablar de democracia es secundario cuando la gente tiene que sobrevivir."

his grandchildren), but you will also vote for impunity, theft and murder. You'll vote, in conclusion, for putting a gang into Government Palace. Think it through, the damage to the country during ten years was already immeasurable. Imagine what would be the result of five more years, and that's only if they don't try to re-elect themselves."²⁶ (Godoy 2008)

As many of the examples quoted suggest, the activities of "powerful agents" were not the only problem. Many bloggers also did not have much confidence in their fellow citizens. Arroyo and Rothgiesser worry about the degree to which citizens' democratic credentials have improved, asking if a similar coup would meet with substantially more resistance today:

"It seems pertinent to comment on this, because on that fateful 5th of April many applauded the shutting down of a highly unpopular Congress. And let's consider who would defend the circus we have for a Parliament today. It's debased, inefficient, useless and disconnected from the necessities of the population. Just do the mental exercise to imagine the people's reaction if someone would blow up this construction one night when nobody is there. Are you not worried by this image? No, not the image of the destroyed building. The image of people's reaction."²⁷ (Rothgiesser 2010)

"Why did 71% support this dissolution of such an important institution for the functioning of democracy? Well, I think there are two reasons, and both give me goose bumps, because today in 2010 we are not very far from them. On the one hand there is (...) the fact that back then, the legitimacy of Congress was worrying. Here we have an important detail, because imagine what the situation would be like today. **Would anybody who wanted to sweep away Congress not be applauded at least a little bit by several citizens who are sick of having such a bunch of incompetents in the semi-circle? Sad but true. As an example you only need to remember one of the**

²⁶ "Pero vayamos ahora al futuro. No al inmediato, que se definirá en 48 horas, sino en el 2011. Vamos a decirlo con todas sus letras: **existe el peligro real de que perdamos la democracia**. Ese peligro tiene nombre y apellido: **Keiko Sofía Fujimori de Vito**. Es cierto que los fujimoristas pretenden inflar el apoyo en las encuestas a la señora Fujimori (...), pero también es cierto que hay un porcentaje de peruanos que está insatisfecho con la democracia, o que simplemente no cree en ella. Afirmaré algo más: **La señora Fujimori es un peligro mayor del que fue en su momento Ollanta Humala**. Y lo es por varias razones: **1. Se presenta como 'defensora del sistema'**. Con ello, pretenderá que los mismos empresarios que aplaudían cual focas a su papá - y que hoy celebran las chanzas autoritarias de Alan García - la apoyen. (...) **2. Va a jugar a la victimización**. Si en 48 horas, su 'apí' recibe una sentencia contundente, desfilará por una serie de programas y medios de comunicación que nunca le hacen preguntas incómodas para presentarse como la sucesora del 'vencedor del terrorismo', imagen que, equivocadamente (...), aun mantiene entre muchos (...). **3. Tiene el apoyo del gobierno**: Para nadie es un secreto que este gobierno no le tiene antipatías al Fujimorismo. (...) **4. El apoyo de algunos medios**. Y no me refiero a esa solo a la troika de diarios condescendiente con el Fujimorismo o a los programas de televisión que no le hacen preguntas serias a la señora de Vito, sino con aquellos columnistas que, en nombre del modelo, defienden lo indefendible. (...) Ya sabe, si vota por Keiko Fujimori no solo votará por un programa que tiene un objetivo único: la liberación de un delincuente (y no precisamente para que juegue con sus nietos), sino que votará por la impunidad, el robo y el asesinato. Votará, en suma, por poner una banda en Palacio de Gobierno. Piénselo bien, el daño al país durante diez años ya fue incalculable. Imagine lo que vendría con 5 años más, si es que no intentan reelegirse."

²⁷ "Me parece pertinente comentar esto, porque ese fatídico 5 de abril muchos aplaudieron el cierre de un Congreso altamente impopular. Y consideremos quién defendería hoy en día el circo que tenemos por Parlamento. Desprestigiado, ineficiente, inútil y desconectado de las necesidades de la población. Hagan el ejercicio mental de imaginarse la reacción del pueblo si alguien dinamitara esa construcción una noche que no hay nadie. ¿No les preocupa esa imagen? No, no la del edificio demolido. La de la reacción de la gente."

proposals of [TV host and presidential candidate] Jaime Bayly in his supposed government plan for 2011: to reduce Congress to 25 MPs. Did citizens ask themselves why he would want to reduce democratic representation in the country in this way? No. They applauded, and many defended it, because they believed in the validity of this proposal. Fatal.”²⁸ (Arroyo Gárate 2010b)

The comments discussed demonstrate that for many bloggers the recent history of Fujimorism was anything but over. Quite to the contrary, it reached into the present, constantly threatening to return, a possibility that was felt with a substantial degree of anxiety and urgency, which is graphically expressed in bloggers’ use of bold print in the respective passages of their posts. Because of the “spectre of Fujimorism”, as it was perceived by many political bloggers on the verge of the 2011 general elections, the “corrective strategies” described above and the imperative of publicly “remembering the past differently” were particularly important and became a historically situated way of practising vigilant and deliberative citizenship in post-transitional Peru.

While the examples discussed above targeted mainly popular narratives of Fujimorism and a lack of democratic commitment in common citizens, they also often referred to the mass media as a particularly influential agent. On the following pages, I shall shed some light on the questions how bloggers perceived contemporary mass media, and how their memories of Fujimorism interacted with these narratives.

Making Sense of the Present

Theorists of memory have pointed to the “presentness” of the past – memory’s rootedness in the present: while memories are constructed on the grounds of past experiences and their representations, the problems of the present influence the way in which we remember events. It is in this spirit that Waxman states that “the function of collective memory is not to focus on the past in order to find out more (...), but to use the past to inform and address present concerns” (2008, p.6). In a similar vein, Misztal stresses that “we do not retrieve images of the past as they were originally perceived but rather as they fit into our present conceptions” (2003, p.53). Finally, Jelin states that:

²⁸ “¿Por qué un 71% apoyó esta disolución de una institución tan importante para el funcionamiento de la democracia? Bueno pues, creo que hay dos razones y en ambos casos se me eriza la piel del miedo porque, por si acaso, ahora en el 2010 no es que estemos muy lejos de las mismas. Por un lado, está (...) el hecho de que el Congreso de entonces tenía una legitimidad preocupante. He aquí un detalle importante pues imaginen como sería la situación el día de hoy. **¿Cualquiera que quisiera barrer con el Congreso no sería aplaudido aunque sea un poco por varios ciudadanos que están hartos de tener a tanto incompetente en el hemiciclo? Triste, pero cierto. Para muestra basta con recordar una de las propuestas de Jaime Bayly en su supuesto plan de gobierno con miras al 2011: reducir el Congreso a 25 congresistas.** ¿Acaso la ciudadanía se preguntó cómo era posible que quisiera reducir así la representación democrática en el país? No. Lo aplaudieron y muchos lo defendieron pues creían en la validez de esta propuesta. Fatal.”

“Insofar as the frameworks of memory are historical and subject to change, all memories are more reconstructions than recollections. Anything that does not find a place or a meaning in that framework is material that can be lost and forgotten. (...) These frameworks (...) provide meaning to individual recollections.” (2003, p.11)

Everyday reconstructions of the past thus take place with current problems in mind and as a way of dealing with the present (Attwood 2008; Theidon 2008). If we are interested in how practices of deliberative and vigilant citizenship through blogging in contemporary Peru relate to the country’s post-transitional condition, then memories of Fujimorism are most important where they establish a link between the past and the present, between *Fujimorism* and the García administration, and are used to make sense of the present.

In the previous section of this chapter, I have argued that many bloggers perceived Fujimorism in terms of an “ongoing past”, stressing both cultural and structural continuity. I shall now address the question how this perceived continuity affected their interpretations of the contemporary public sphere. As mentioned before, historical media regimes play a particularly important role in bloggers’ collective memories of Fujimorism, and many of the posts included in the sample used above refer to these memories. In order to gain a better understanding of bloggers’ perceptions of mass media in post-transitional Peru, I drew on a broader sample, containing 117 posts, which had been posted between January and December 2010 on 17 blogs by 18 different bloggers²⁹, and which critically discussed the situation of media and journalism in Peru. I coded these posts, identifying the events that prompted reflections about media regimes, the relevant agents identified by bloggers, and aspects of the Peruvian media landscape which bloggers pointed out as problematic. Having done so, I grouped these events, agents and problems in clusters.

Events that prompted reflections on current media regimes included those relating to freedom of speech, political uses of media, media silence, and structural problems/corruption. Aspects of mass media under the García administration which bloggers perceived as problematic included modes of coverage, freedom of speech, lack of independence, media owners’ attitudes and interests, and journalists’ attitudes. Freedom of speech, lack of independence, and modes of coverage were criticised most frequently.

On the following pages, I shall discuss these criticisms in greater depth with the help of two case studies from the Peruvian blogosphere, drawing particular attention to the role of

²⁹ These 17 blogs were chosen from the sample of the 25 bloggers I interviewed. The remaining eight bloggers did not discuss media in their writings. Within the universe of these 17 blogs and the timeframe of the year 2010, all posts that critically discussed media, either explicitly or in passing, were included in the sample. The sample is thus representative of the critical media discourse within its universe.

memories of the internal armed conflict and the Fujimori regime in bloggers' interpretation of contemporary media coverage.

Case Study I: Shining Path in San Marcos

During the period of my fieldwork, the way political events were covered was one aspect that bloggers perceived as problematic. This was particularly the case in the coverage of post-transitional politics (e.g. the conditional release of Lori Berenson, a former supporter of the MRTA, from prison, or a demonstration of supporters of the Shining Path in the National University of San Marcos (see below), both in 2010) and new social conflicts (for example the clashes between protesters and the police in the town of Bagua, in 2009, which resulted in several fatalities). Based on the sample discussed above, criticisms of media coverage could be grouped in six main clusters: those including charges of manipulation, silence, ideology, corruption, partiality, and aggression (the latter two particularly during the run-up to the mayoral elections in Lima in 2010). Accusations of manipulation were particularly common. The following case study is an example of this.

In June 2010, a YouTube user posted a blurry amateur video, filmed in the National University of San Marcos. The video showed a demonstration of students linked to the *acuerdista*³⁰ arm of the Shining Path. Waving red flags, the protesters were chanting slogans and handing out pamphlets, demanding an amnesty for Shining Path leader Abimael Guzmán and other "political prisoners"³¹. The publication of these activities led to an outcry in the media and prompted then President García to affirm that he would "not ask anybody for permission to enter the university [San Marcos] if this happens again, I beg you not to be useful idiots"³² (Perú21 2010), a statement that was widely interpreted as a threat of military intervention.

³⁰ After Abimael Guzmán, the leader of the Shining Path, was captured in 1992, he signed a peace accord with Fujimori and Montesinos. At this moment, the organisation split into three arms, the so-called *acuerdistas*, who follow Guzmán and adhere to the peace accord, the group *Proseguir* [proceed], who continue with the armed struggle and have developed links with drug trafficking under the leadership of *Camarada José*, and a third group under the leadership of *Camarada Artemio*, who, albeit closer to Guzmán than the group *Proseguir*, also decided to continue the armed struggle. The *acuerdistas* are now organised in the *Movement for Amnesty and Fundamental Rights (Movimiento por Amnistía y Derechos Fundamentales, MOVADDEF)*, who is trying to achieve official recognition as a political party. One of their central demands is an amnesty for Guzmán and other "political prisoners" of the Shining Path, a request which is outrageous in the eyes of many Peruvians. The students who marched in San Marcos were believed to be members of the *Democratic Student Front (Frente Democrático Estudiantil, FDE)*, a student organisation which belongs to this arm of contemporary Shining Path.

³¹ Followers of contemporary Shining Path refer to those imprisoned on terrorism charges as "political prisoners".

³² "Yo no voy a pedir permiso a nadie para ingresar a la universidad (San Marcos) si eso vuelve a ocurrir, les pido que no hagan de tontos útiles."

The following analysis is based on a sample³³ of 29 blogposts, written by 20 bloggers between the 15th and the 26th of June, 2010, in reaction to the video and the presidential statements and media coverage prompted by it.

Memories of the internal armed conflict, García's first administration, and the Fujimori regime played a crucial role in the way in which García's statement, the demonstration, and its coverage by the press were received in the blogosphere. In order to contextualise these memories, it is necessary to first offer some basic historical information of the role of the Shining Path in Peruvian state universities.

Historical Background

Before and during the internal armed conflict, national universities harboured a wide array of radical movements. As a highly politicised space, they offered an important opportunity for the Shining Path to recruit new members and to spread their ideas (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.603, ff., Vol. III). For this purpose, they tried (with mixed success (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.648, Vol. V)) to take control of strategic areas, such as the cafeteria and the student dorms, which were of particular importance to the poorest students.

In Lima, the Shining Path created support groups and concentrated its activities among students in the National University of San Marcos and the National University of Education Enrique Guzmán y Valle (also known as *La Cantuta*). In these universities, the Shining Path initially met only weak resistance, due to the ubiquity of radical discourses, the acceptance of authoritarian and violent approaches to political change, and the notorious fragmentation of the political left, which hampered concerted resistance (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.620, Vol. III).

Having initially ignored the problem, the state later responded with "indiscriminate and disproportionate police and paramilitary repression"³⁴ (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.632, Vol. III), detaining, torturing and "disappearing" students and lecturers and destroying university infrastructure. During García's first government, in 1987, the police simultaneously invaded the National University of San Marcos, the National University of Education Enrique Guzmán y Valle, and the National University of Engineering (all of them in

³³ This sample was created in the same way as the self-coup sample.

³⁴ According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the state is responsible for 67.04% of deaths and disappearances of students during the internal armed conflict (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.632, Vol. III).

Lima) and detained about 700 students³⁵. In the following years, these universities experienced a series of more selective and clandestine paramilitary interventions. In 1988, three students of San Marcos were shot by police during a demonstration (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.633, Vol. III).

During his first government, in 1991, Fujimori authorised military intervention in several national universities, including San Marcos, creating military bases on their campuses. This measure enjoyed the support of parts of the public, who perceived San Marcos and other national universities as centres of subversive activity and students of certain disciplines as terrorists, but also of many members of the academic community (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.635, Vol. III). When subversive activities decreased after the capture of Abimael Guzmán in 1992 and criticism of the regime grew, Fujimori tried to gain political control of the universities by imposing an “academic state of emergency”, suspending statutes and institutions of academic self-governance (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.636, Vol. III). However, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this experience also had a profound impact on the political discourses of student movements, which began to concentrate more strongly on problems of human rights and democracy and came to form an important part of the opposition to the Fujimori regime (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.637, Vol. III).

As part of their activities, both the Shining Path and other political groups inside San Marcos also painted murals in classrooms, on staircases and other spaces inside the university and organised public demonstrations. Pictures of these murals and other symbolic acts (particularly those representing the Shining Path) were published by the mass media and created an image of the Shining Path “owning” San Marcos. These striking images have passed into Peruvians’ graphic memory of the internal armed conflict, and they were a common reference for bloggers as they tried to make sense of the 2010 demonstration in San Marcos.

Remembering the Shining Path in San Marcos

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned the importance of “that which can be seen on TV” (Tejada 2007, p.45, f.) for bloggers’ collective memory of the internal armed conflict and the Fujimori regime. In this case, however, an important distinction needs to be made, as media images played different roles in the memories of bloggers from different generations: the image of the Shining Path “owning” San Marcos, created with the help of media representations, was

³⁵ It is important to note that universities in other regions, such as the National University San Cristobal de Huamanga, in Ayacucho, and the National University of the Centre of Peru, in Huancayo, were strongly affected as well. I focus here on the situation in Lima, and particularly in San Marcos, because this is what bloggers remembered in the context of the demonstration in San Marcos.

particularly common in the memories of bloggers who had no first-hand experience of San Marcos during the 1980s and early 1990s³⁶.

For example, Raúl Mendoza, who studied at the Catholic University, writes:

“Everybody remembers that it was Fujimori who restored order in San Marcos and that without him *these cloisters, then besmirched with red paint would still be a fortress of the Shining Path*. (...) The topic which inspired this post is a frightening piece of news: the Shining Path is returning to San Marcos. The scenes recorded last Monday night in the academic city seemed to be taken from the dark history of the first university of America when, in the late 1980s, *the terrorists promenaded around San Marcos as if it were their home* and even greeted the new students.”³⁷ (Mendoza Cánepa 2010a emphasis added)

In a later post, he adds:

“In the case of San Marcos *what reigned among the students was indolence*. There were neither peasant self-defence committees on campus, nor democratic battalions and *such was the average student’s passivity in the face of the Shining Path* that, in the end, it wasn’t the brave student cleaning barricades who restored order, but Fujimori’s tanks.”³⁸ (Mendoza Cánepa 2010b emphasis added)

³⁶ However, age and first-hand experience are not the only important factors. For example, blogger José Alejandro Godoy was born in the early 1980s and thus is too young to have had first-hand experience of the situation in San Marcos during the 1980s and the early 1990s. However, he works for the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (IDEHPUCP), an academic institute of the Catholic University, which was founded in 2004 following the presentation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report in 2003. The head of the IDEHPUCP is Salomón Lerner Febres, the president of the TRC, and several of the institute’s members also worked for the TRC. The institute furthermore published the second edition of the TRC’s abbreviated final report. In his post on the San Marcos case, Godoy referred to the TRC report to refute the perception that the Shining Path “owned” San Marcos: “**Let us not stigmatise San Marcos:** This is a minority group and therefore we cannot call all those who study in this university rebellious or terrorists. (...) Neither could the same be claimed during the worst period of the conflict. Read the TRC’s final report or the blog about San Marcos during the ‘80s so you see how the Shining Path was a minority in terms of numbers, but really had a devastating effect on the State University as such” (Godoy 2010f). [“**No estigmaticemos a San Marcos:** Este es un grupo minoritario y, por tanto, no puede achacarse a todos los que estudian en esa casa de estudios el sanbenito de revoltosos o terroristas. (...) Y tampoco se podía decir lo mismo en la época más fuerte del conflicto. Revisen el Informe Final de la CVR o el blog sobre San Marcos en los 80s para que vean como Sendero era un grupo minoritario en número, pero que fue realmente nefasto para la universidad pública en general.”]

³⁷ “Todos recuerdan que Fujimori fue quien puso en orden la Universidad de San Marcos y sin él *esos claustros otrora pintarrajeados de rojo serían aún un fortín senderista*. (...) El tema que inspira este post es una noticia que escarapela: Sendero Luminoso vuelve a San Marcos. Las escenas que se registraron la noche del lunes pasado en la ciudad universitaria parecían sacadas de la negra historia vivida por la Decana de América cuando, a finales de la década de los 80, *los terroristas se paseaban como si fuera su casa* e, incluso, les daban la bienvenida a los nuevos estudiantes.” The second part of this extract from Mendoza’s post is copied from a newspaper article published in the newspaper Perú21. However, Mendoza did not mark this quotation as such, assuming it as his own.

³⁸ “En el caso de San Marcos *lo que reinó entre los estudiantes fue la indolencia*. No hubo rondas campesinas en el campus ni batallones democráticos y *tanta fue la pasividad del estudiante medio frente a Sendero* que, al final, no fueron las valerosas barricadas estudiantiles de limpieza del claustro las que trajeron el orden sino los tanques fujimoristas.”

In these two extracts from Mendoza's writings, we can appreciate both the importance of media representations – the emphasis on Shining Path murals and on Fujimori restoring order – and the perception (in part resulting from these graphic representations) that the Shining Path “owned” the University, expressed in phrases such as “a fortress of the Shining Path”, “the terrorists promenaded around San Marcos as if it were their home”, and the suggestion that other students were passive and politically indolent. Another blogger, born in 1983, criticised students of San Marcos for:

“Allowing this infamous protest to take place on your campus (...). It would be better if you rejected the pro-terrorists (...). It's everybody's responsibility to ostracise this group which promotes impunity for criminals (...). You mustn't allow your university to be the ideological breeding ground of terrorists who have done so much harm to so many lives and who unfortunately generated all the crimes perpetrated during the decades of terror”³⁹ (Esparza 2010)

To illustrate his criticism, he drew on one of the most iconic images used in representations of San Marcos during the internal armed conflict, taken by the photographer Vera Lentz in 1989. The image shows a campus staircase covered in graffiti promoting the causes of a range of different radical groups. Paradoxically, rather than the hegemony of the Shining Path, this image demonstrates the presence of a wide array of political opinions inside San Marcos which competed openly for influence and space. While the discourses of other radical groups were not necessarily less authoritarian than those of the Shining Path, this image belies the common perception, promoted by media representations, that the Shining Path “owned” San Marcos.

Drawing on their personal memories, rather than media portrayals, those bloggers who did have first-hand experience of San Marcos during the 1980s were more likely to remember their university as a contested space⁴⁰. For example, Rocío Silva Santisteban writes:

“But it's true that we as *Sanmarquinos* (I am the class of '83) must also remember the enormous harm which was caused by all the movements of the left as a result of using the university campus and the university itself for political proselytism. Those were not debates: those were fights. With bullets and fists. In the roof of Humanities, next to the ramp, there are still bullet marks from a fight between political groups which I myself saw during the 1980s. Those were not the bullets of intervening soldiers, as

³⁹ “Hoy quisiera hacerles una reflexión a todos los sanmarquinos que dejaron que, en su campus, se produjera esa infame protesta (...). Será mejor que rechazen a los pro-terroristas (...). Es responsabilidad de todos desterrar esa agrupación que impulsa la impunidad de criminales (...). No pueden dejar que su universidad sea semillero ideológico de terroristas que han hecho tanto daño a tantas vidas y que lamentablemente originaron todos los crímenes perpetrados en las décadas del terror.”

⁴⁰ María Gracia Ríos, the author of a blog on San Marcos during the 1980s (Gracia Ríos 2009b), suggests that this plurality was discussed in press articles about San Marcos written during the 1980s (e.g. Gracia Ríos 2009a). However, it seems that this narrative is not very common among younger generations or those who have no first-hand experience of San Marcos during the 1980s.

happened later when they killed a student who was walking past, Hernán Pozo Barrientos, during the intervention of 1989. On this occasion the shooting was a confrontation between militants of opposing groups, some of them students, others who came from outside. For this reason we *Sanmarquinos* must remember and learn from the history that we went through, so that it shall never happen again. This can only happen if we act, if we offer head-on opposition to these groups of remaining *Senderistas*, via all public spaces.”⁴¹ (Silva Santisteban 2010a)

I have discussed these memories of San Marcos in the 1980s and 1990s in some detail because the construction of San Marcos as a political space in public discourse constitutes an important foundation for understanding both the media coverage of the 2010 demonstration, and of some of the criticisms passed on this coverage by the bloggers included in my sample.

Interpretations of Media Coverage

While narratives of San Marcos during the internal armed conflict varied depending on their sources (personal experience or media representations), most bloggers agreed in their critical assessment of the contemporary media coverage of the Shining Path in San Marcos, which they perceived as manipulative and politically interested. Perceptions of continuity played an important role in this assessment, and the contemporary media coverage was interpreted in the light of historical experiences. Many bloggers established a link between their memories of the political manipulation of media during the Fujimori regime and the contemporary media coverage of the demonstration in San Marcos. The following quotations from posts written by Juan Shepud and Rocío Silva Santisteban are two out of many cases in which bloggers referred to memories of mass media in the 1990s in order to make sense of the present:

“There is no disagreement about the need to investigate the recent events in San Marcos, not only because it might be a ‘resurgence’ of the Shining Path, but because it could also be a “psychosocial” [a communication strategy commonly associated with Fujimori and Montesinos], very opportune in times of free fall in the [government approval] ratings and of acts of government corruption. (...) What really stands out is the role of some media. How easily they call any citizen a terrorist without having investigated. There are front pages in the best Fujimori style, which present us with a state of horror when this is really an isolated case. The chronicles reflect sentiments and sensations but don’t provide an analysis of what is happening. This is happening on the radio, on TV, and in print media. It seems as if there is a stupid *Senderisation* of

⁴¹ “Pero es cierto que nosotros, como sanmarquinos (yo soy Base 83), debemos también recordar el enorme perjuicio que causó el utilizar el campus universitario y a la universidad en sí para el proselitismo político de todas las izquierdas. No eran discusiones: eran peleas. Con balas y con puños. En el techo de Letras, junto a la rampa, todavía está la marca de algunos balazos de una pelea entre grupos políticos que yo misma vi durante la década del 80. No fueron balazos de militares interventores, como sucedió después cuando mataron a un estudiante que pasaba por ahí, Hernán Pozo Barrientos, durante la intervención de los años 1989. En esa ocasión la balacera fue un enfrentamiento entre militantes de grupos contrincantes, algunos estudiantes, otros que venían de afuera. Por eso mismo, los sanmarquinos, debemos de hacer memoria y aprender la historia que vivimos para que no se vuelva a repetir jamás. Eso solo puede suceder si pasamos a la acción, a la oposición frontal con estos grupos de remanentes senderistas, a través de todos los espacios públicos.”

the agenda. Using the words of Dr. Alan García, the media shouldn't be useful idiots of the presidential rhetoric."⁴² (Shepud 2010)

Rocío Silva Santisteban, in turn, focuses on the image of the "terrorist" created by the media during the internal armed conflict and points out continuities in the contemporary treatment of the San Marcos case:

"Who was the perfect terrorist during the 1980s in Peru? (...) The biggest paradigm of the terrorist was a dumpy, dark-skinned, black-haired and unkempt student, with glasses and a plaid shirt, a beige knitted pullover, and shiny gabardine trousers, who on top of everything carried an Inca backpack with a red book inside. That's how the police, soldiers, the press and the scared mothers of the freshers in Humanities imagined the *Sanmarquino* who professed extremist political ideas." (Silva Santisteban 2010b)

Recalling the general suspicion *Sanmarquinos* were put under, and the repression they suffered as a result, including searches, detention, imprisonment, torture, murder, and disappearance, in many cases with complete impunity, she concludes:

The fact that three newspapers dedicate their front pages to a supposed 'takeover of San Marcos' by a group of 30 people who went out to give cheers to Abimael Guzmán in the yard of Social Sciences is not only a classical media theme which will serve as a platform for Keiko [Fujimori's] listless [presidential] campaign, put also a way of encouraging, inciting and spurring a senseless fear and a fragile stereotype. Enough of the myth of the *Sanmarquino* terrorist."⁴³ (Silva Santisteban 2010b)

Both examples draw on memories of mass media during the Fujimori regime in order to make sense of contemporary media coverage of political events, pointing both to the manipulative techniques used during the 1990s and to the revival of historical narratives. At the same time, both bloggers also engage with mass media narratives on a discursive level, questioning their

⁴² "No hay discrepancia en que los hechos recientes de San Marcos tienen que ser investigados, no sólo porque se trate de un 'rebrote' senderista sino porque también podría tratarse de un psicosocial, muy oportuno, en tiempos de caída libre en las encuestas y de actos de corrupción gubernamental. (...) Lo que me llama la atención es el papel de algunos medios de comunicación. De qué manera tan fácil llaman terroristas a cualquier ciudadano sin que se haya investigado. Se presentan carátulas al mejor estilo fujimorista, que nos muestran un estado de horror cuando se trata de un hecho aislado. Las crónicas reflejan sentimientos y sensaciones pero no se realiza un análisis de lo que viene ocurriendo. Esto sucede en radio, televisión y medios escritos. Pareciera que hay una senderización tonta de la agenda. Utilizando las palabras del doctor Alan García, los medios de comunicación no deben ser tontos útiles de la retórica presidencial."

⁴³ "¿Quién era el perfecto terrorista durante los años 80 en el Perú? (...) El paradigma máximo del terruco era un estudiante retaco, moreno, de pelo negro y apelmazado, de lentes y camisa a cuadros, chompita beige tejida a palito, y pantalón de gabardina lustroso, que además portara una mochila incaica con un libro rojo en el interior. Así se imaginaban los policías, los militares, la prensa y las madres angustiadas de las cachimbas de letras al sanmarquino que profesaba ideas políticas extremistas. (...) Que tres periódicos le dediquen sus carátulas a una supuesta 'toma de San Marcos' por un grupo de 30 personas que salieron a corear vítores a Abimael Guzmán en el patio de Ciencias Sociales es no solo el clásico elemento mediático que servirá de plataforma a la alicaída campaña de Keiko, sino una manera de alentar, fomentar y azuzar un miedo sinsentido y un estereotipo deleznable. Basta ya del mito del terruco sanmarquino."

validity and offering alternative interpretations in a way similar to the “corrective strategies” discussed above in relation to popular memories of the Fujimori regime.

Corrective Strategies, II: “Interpreting the Present Differently”

Most bloggers also agreed that the Shining Path did not play a relevant role in the San Marcos of post-transitional Peru. This perception clashed with the media coverage of the 2010 demonstration, which was perceived by many bloggers as excessive, manipulative and grounded in the political context of upcoming elections. It is thus not surprising that the discussion of media coverage of this event took up a large part of the debate. Juan Arellano sums the discussion up as follows:

“The way it is presented in the media the issue seems to be a full-blown resurgence of the Shining Path, but is this really the case? (...) On the part of the blogs, opinions are a little more sophisticated and there are questions, some formulated and others only suggested, about the treatment of these events by the government and the media (...) as well as the true intentions underlying this emphasis in the news.”⁴⁴ (Arellano Valdivia 2010)

The following quote from a post written by Laura Arroyo expresses this perception of manipulative media coverage very well:

“I’ll only say that I think it’s really curious that the phantasm of terrorism in the University of San Marcos should suddenly be resurrected due to a ‘spontaneous’ march in favour of the Shining Path in which, it has to be said, there weren’t thousands of students present, although some media have presented it almost like the March of the Four Suyos⁴⁵. Very curious, too, that this topic should have managed to put the most alarming and extremist headlines onto the front pages of certain media, which almost seem to border on the phrase ‘The Shining Path is back’. It’s also curious that due to this event, it is forgotten that in the same university the recent elections, full of corruption on all sides, continue on stand-by. But of course, suddenly nobody remembers this. And even worse, wouldn’t it be better if they had an authoritarian

⁴⁴ “Tal como se ve en los medios el asunto pareciera ser todo un resurgimiento senderista, pero ¿realmente es así? (...) Por el lado de los blogs las opiniones son un poco más elaboradas, y hay preguntas, algunas formuladas y otras sólo sugeridas, sobre el manejo que el gobierno y los medios le están dando a estos hechos (...) así como las intenciones reales que subyacen tras este ‘destaque noticioso’.”

⁴⁵ The March of the Four Suyos was an opposition march that took place on the 26th, 27th and 28th of July 2000, towards the end of the Fujimori regime. It was motivated by accusations of electoral fraud in relation to Fujimori’s attempt to gain a third term in office. The name refers to the national scale of the march (the four Suyos are the historical regions of the Inca Empire), which was underscored by the use of national symbols and rituals, such as a patriotic oath which was sworn by the masses to an eleven-year-old girl wearing a Peruvian flag (Hinojosa 2010). The choice of the date (the 28th of July is Peruvian Independence Day [Fiestas Patrias]) also contributed to this narrative. 250,000 people participated in the march (Manrique 2010). It is often represented as a popular march in which people from all walks of life participated. However, this representation is contested (Meléndez 2010b; Bustamante 2007). Nevertheless, Arroyo’s comment refers to this notion of a mobilisation that involved the entire nation.

rector? So he can eradicate the *Senderistas*. Hmm... Curious.”⁴⁶ (Arroyo Gárate 2010a)

Similarly to the historical media representations and their echo in contemporary discourses about the past, bloggers resorted to “corrective strategies”, questioning the media coverage of current events and offering their own interpretations. Both Arellano’s expression of doubt and Arroyo’s attempt to “downsize” the march in relation to its appearance in media reports are examples of “interpreting the present differently”.

Case study II: Freedom of Speech and Panamericana Televisión

Bloggers also perceived freedom of speech to be seriously restricted in the face of a notoriously intolerant president. As blogger José Alejandro Godoy put it, “this government has shown signs of little tolerance for the press. The irregular closure of [radio station] *La Voz de Bagua* and [other] actions reveal that the President cares little for criticism, be it from one side or the other”⁴⁷ (Godoy 2010d). Elsewhere he writes:

“Clearly our situation is not the same as that of Cuba or Venezuela, where freedom of speech is restricted or repressed systematically, or that of Mexico or Colombia, where journalists die due to the violence. But it is nevertheless necessary to point out that these events happen in our country, to condemn them and to do everything possible so that freedom of speech may continue to be the basis of democracy.”⁴⁸ (Godoy 2010e)

Juan Arellano agrees, arguing that:

“Even though there is no censorship on the part of the state, there is what is known as ‘pressure’ or ‘management’, as well as partiality and the dangerous tendency to silence the dissenting or opposition voice on the part of certain elements of the

⁴⁶ “Yo solo diré que me parece curiosísimo que de pronto resucite el fantasma del terrorismo en la Universidad San Marcos por una ‘espontánea’ marcha pro sendero en la cual, hay que decirlo, no hubo miles de estudiantes, aunque algunos medios de comunicación la han presentado casi como la Marcha de los Cuatro Suyos. Curioso también que este tema haya logrado poner en portadas de ciertos medios titulares de lo más alarmistas y extremistas que ya parecen casi rayar con la frase ‘Vuelve Sendero’. Curioso también que con este hecho se logre olvidar que, por si acaso, en la misma universidad las recientes elecciones internas colmadas de corrupción a diestra y siniestra siguen en stand by. Pero claro, de pronto, de eso nadie se acuerda. Y peor aún, mejor que entre un rector autoritario ¿no? para que erradique a los senderistas. Mmmm....curioso.”

⁴⁷ “Este gobierno ha dado muestras de poca tolerancia frente a la prensa. El cierre irregular de *La Voz de Bagua* y estas acciones revelan que las críticas, sean de un lado o de otro, le importan poco al Presidente de la República.”

⁴⁸ “Ciértamente, nuestra situación no es la de Cuba o Venezuela, en la que la libertad de expresión es coactada o reprendida sistemáticamente, o la de México o Colombia donde a causa de la violencia fallecen periodistas. Pero si es necesario hacer notar que estos sucesos ocurren en nuestro país, condenarlos y hacer todo lo posible para que la libertad de expresión siga siendo la base de la democracia.”

media, both traditional as well as the new or 'digital' media."⁴⁹ (Arellano Valdivia 2010)

A lack of freedom of speech was also attributed to the mass media's lack of structural independence, often resulting from the notoriously precarious financial and fiscal situation of media outlets. As was the case during the Fujimori regime, in post-transitional Peru, too, many TV stations carried large tax debts, which made them vulnerable to government intervention, often resulting in censorship of critical content.

During the García administration, which is the historical context of my research, the ownership – and hence editorial control – of several media outlets was under dispute: one such case is that of Panamericana TV. On the 1st of June 2009, the heavily indebted TV channel, then under the ownership of Genaro Delgado Parker, went into administration. Allegedly, this was done in order to avoid a ruling that would have allowed Ernesto Schütz, who as the company's majority shareholder had sold influence over its editorial line to the Fujimori government in the 1990s, to take control of the channel once again. Panamericana had very extensive debts, its single largest liability being a tax bill of 110 million Soles (then ca. £22.2 million). This led to the tax authorities (SUNAT) taking control of the channel and appointing an administrative board. However, following heavy criticism and doubts about the legality of the measure, SUNAT withdrew on the 5th of June and administration was handed over to the company's employees. The topic abruptly disappeared from the public eye after that date, due to clashes between protesters and police in the Amazonian town of Bagua, which led to the death of 23 policemen and 10 civilians, as well as the disappearance of one policeman, and left 200 people injured⁵⁰ (Merino 2010).

In principle, bloggers approved of Delgado Parker's decision to step down: he had been infamous for his abusive treatment of employees, who furthermore hadn't received their salaries for months. Also, as one blogger put it, his channel was "not precisely the pinnacle of opposition" (Godoy 2009a), and in the 1990s he, too, had negotiated personnel decisions with Montesinos. Nevertheless, the intervention of the SUNAT was cause for concern. My analysis of 27 posts written about the Panamericana case between the 1st and the 8th of June 2009 by 13 bloggers⁵¹ found that bloggers mainly worried about the legality of the measure, the role

⁴⁹ "Si bien no hay censura por parte del estado, hay lo que se conoce como 'presiones' y 'manejos', así como parcializaciones y la peligrosa tendencia a callar la voz discordante u opositora por parte de ciertos elementos de los medios, tanto tradicionales como de los nuevos o 'digitales'."

⁵⁰ These numbers continue to be disputed.

⁵¹ This sample includes text posted on the blogs included in my interview sample, as well as any blogs these refer to, and so on. Links to mass media content, such as newspaper editorials, were excluded from the sample. However, the contributions of journalists who also had a newspaper byline were

Government (in particular the then President Alan García) had played, possible motivations behind it, and possible implications for the channel's editorial line.

Vigilant Citizenship: Staff Decisions and "Closeness to Power"

Bloggers reactions to the Panamericana case reflect the notion of vigilant citizenship discussed in Chapter I. In this case, bloggers' vigilant activity concentrated on the topic of staff decisions, including both dismissals and new appointments. Evaluations of dismissed and potential new staff's "closeness" to or "distance" from "power" formed a leitmotif of these examinations. For example, when it became known that the entire team of the political show *Panorama* had been dismissed, allegedly in response to politically sensitive investigations, many were convinced that both the "takeover" of Panamericana and the dismissal of critical journalists had been ordered by President García, whose intolerance of criticism was notorious:

"They have just announced that the entire team of Panorama has been sacked from Panamericana Television. The administrator, Alberto Cabello, points out that the dismissal is a decision taken by the former management, which obviously only the government believes. The argument? Spurious, the 'low rating'. Ridiculous from every point of view. The *Panorama* team, which was led by Pablo O'Brien, had managed in a short time to become the programme with the highest rating on Panamericana TV. Therefore it was the most rentable. If they have been sacked, it's because in Government Palace they don't forgive Pablo O'Brien for being one of the protagonists in the uncovering of the *Petroaudios* scandal"⁵² (Shepud 2009a)

"The person in charge of taking Alan García's order to Genaro Delgado Parker was Mauricio Mulder: 'Appointing Pablo O'Brien as the director of *Panorama* is a declaration of war', the servile Mulder transmitted. With the rope around his neck, Genaro sacked O'Brien and his team immediately. In truth, this is nothing new. Genaro has always been willing to make deals with the powerful. But the new administrator of Panamericana TV, Alberto Cabello, could have revoked the order the same day. He didn't. It's a sign that everything is designed to put the channel in the service of the government"⁵³ (Rospigliosi 2009)

included, as long as these had been posted on their blog. While this sample is not representative of all posts written by Peruvian bloggers on the occasion of the Panamericana case, it covers the entirety of one particular conversation within the blogosphere.

⁵² "Se acaba de anunciar que el equipo en pleno de Panorama ha sido despedido de Panamericana Televisión. El interventor, Alberto Cabello, señala que el despido es una decisión de la administración anterior lo cual como es obvio sólo se lo creen en Palacio de Gobierno. ¿El argumento? deleznable, el bajo rating. Risible desde cualquier punto de vista. El equipo de Panorama que lideraba Pablo O'Brien logró en poco tiempo constituirse en el programa con mas rating en Panamericana TV. Por tanto era el más rentable. Si se les ha despedido es porque en Palacio no perdonan que Pablo O'Brien sea uno de los protagonistas en el destape de los petroaudios."

⁵³ "El encargado de llevar la orden de Alan García a Genaro Delgado Parker fue Mauricio Mulder: "poner a Pablo O'Brien como director de Panorama es una declaratoria de guerra", le transmitió el servicial Mulder. Con la soga al cuello, Genaro despidió a O'Brien y su equipo al instante. En realidad, eso no es novedad. Genaro siempre ha estado dispuesto a transar con el poder. Pero el nuevo administrador de Panamericana TV, Alberto Cabello, pudo haber revocado la orden el mismo día lunes. No lo hizo. Señal de que todo está concertado para poner el canal al servicio del gobierno."

Managerial and journalistic appointments attracted bloggers' suspicion just as much as redundancies and were discussed in one-third of the posts included in the sample (nine out of 27, written by five bloggers). The frequency with which these bloggers pointed to the "closeness" of managers and journalists to "powerful agents"⁵⁴ is striking: these were mentioned on 13 occasions. Additionally, in three cases the author used bold typeface for emphasis, which stresses the great importance the author attributed to it. For example, rumours circulated about the potential appointment of journalist Cecilia Valenzuela, who was perceived as relatively uncritical of the Government. The credentials of potential managers, too, were examined for their relationship with the García administration and their previous involvement in media politics, particularly during the Fujimori regime. Often, this "closeness" was mentioned in the context of speculations about future editorial decisions. The following quote by José Alejandro Godoy is an example:

"With respect to the men who now manage the channel, the situation is complex. Cabello is an experienced and recognised manager, but he's had the scandal of [journalist] Hildebrandt's dismissal in 2006. Regarding the Advisory Board, Cateriano was the speaking dummy of the América news programmes under the management of Crousillat⁵⁵ – remember the famous interview with Beto Kouri with earphones included⁵⁶ –, Benavides is a mining entrepreneur, quite close to [the governing party] APRA – and he has provoked a sarcastic question: 'Will he give [leftist] presidential candidate Marco Arana, who is critical of [the gold mine] Yanacocha, a platform?'. The only one who survives the review is Alfonso de los Heros, who resigned during the coup of April 5, 1992. As we can see, although many people celebrate the fact that Genaro Delgado Parker is no longer at Panamericana (and that Ernesto Schütz hasn't come back), the fundamental question remains: who has gained from all of this?"⁵⁷ (Godoy 2009b)

⁵⁴ Links mentioned included the governing party (APRA), ex-Prime Minister Jorge del Castillo, broadcasters Genaro Delgado Parker and Baruch Ivcher, Fujimorism during the 1990s, the government, and Alan García.

⁵⁵ José Enrique Crousillat was the majority shareholder of América Televisión during the Fujimori administration. He appears in a famous Vladivideo, where he accepted to dismiss critical journalists in return for money.

⁵⁶ Godoy here refers to an interview with Congressman Alberto Kouri shortly after the publication of the first Vladivideo. In the Vladivideo, Kouri receives a bribe from Montesinos in exchange for renouncing his party membership and joining Fujimori's party Perú 2000. Throughout the interview, Kouri was wearing an earphone, presumably receiving instructions as to how to respond. He denied the corruption charges, claiming that Montesinos had given him a \$10 million loan for a refrigerated van to deliver fish in poor neighbourhoods.

⁵⁷ "En cuanto a los hombres que manejan ahora el canal, la situación es compleja. Cabello es un experimentado y reconocido gerente, pero que ha tenido el baldón de la salida de Hildebrandt en el 2006. En cuanto al Consejo Consultivo, Cateriano fue el busto parlante de los noticieros parametrados de América en la gestión Crousillat - recordemos la famosa entrevista a Beto Kouri con audifono incluido -, Benavides es un empresario minero bastante cercano al APRA - y que ha motivado una socarrona pregunta '¿Daré tribuna al candidato presidencial Marco Arana, crítico de Yanacocha?'. El único que queda bien parado en el recuento es Alfonso de los Heros, quien renunció con el golpe de Estado del 5 de abril de 1992. Como vemos, a pesar de que muchos celebren que Genaro Delgado Parker no esté ya

This high degree of mistrust demonstrates not only the importance bloggers attribute to the editorial independence of media, but also their view that this independence is notoriously fragile. Blogging as a praxis of vigilant and deliberative citizenship takes on particular significance in such a context, where the editorial leeway of “professional deliberators and guardians” is perceived to be significantly curtailed, and the way vigilant citizenship is practiced through blogging reflects these perceptions.

Bloggers’ Memories of Mass Media and their Interpretation of the Panamericana Case

As in the San Marcos case discussed above, here, too, bloggers drew on their memories of historical media regimes in order to make sense of current events. These references included both Fujimorism and García’s first presidential term (1985-1990), during which his attempt to nationalise the banks had had disastrous effects on the economy. Others linked the events to the leftist military dictatorship of General Juan Velasco Alvarado, who had seized control of the press in 1974 (Contreras & Cueto 2009, p.339).⁵⁸ Roberto Bustamante summarised the reactions to the Panamericana case as follows:

“The takeover of Panamericana by an ad hoc administrative commission of the SUNAT has led many to raise several refrains: nationalization (with the memories of the nationalization attempt of the first Aprista government), Chavismo (for that media control thing), Velasquismo (for the same reason), etc.”⁵⁹ (Bustamante 2009)

Blogger José Alejandro Godoy focussed on the link which people established with the Fujimori regime in their reactions to the Panamericana case. For him, both the incomplete transition (expressed in the authoritarian behaviour of then President Alan García and in the importance given to media) and collective memories of the media regime of the 1990s conditioned people’s reaction to state interventions in private television channels:

más en Panamericana (y que Ernesto Schutz no haya regresado), la pregunta de fondo sigue siendo quien ha ganado con todo ello.”

⁵⁸ Several journalists and bloggers spoke of the “nationalisation” of the channel, putting particular emphasis on this term and the emotions it provoked. For example, blogger Marco Sifuentes of the blog *El Útero de Marita* wrote that “[i]n effect, the government has NATIONALISED a television channel” (Sifuentes 2009b emphasis in original) [“En la práctica el gobierno ha ESTATIZADO un canal de televisión.”]. In his blog *Desde el Tercer Piso*, which covered the case extensively over several days, José Alejandro Godoy linked a “message to the nation by [journalist] Rosa María Palacios including the dreaded word NATIONALISATION” (Godoy 2009b emphasis in original) [“Aquí el mensaje a la nación de Rosa María con la palabra temida: ESTATIZACION”]. In the same post, Godoy added: “The entrepreneur had been told that the state would respect his shares. Sure, in exchange for the channel being nationalised (yes, the dreaded word) and of course, with a pro-government line” [“Al empresario se le habría dicho que el Estado respetaría sus acciones. Claro, a cambio de que el canal pase a estatizarse (sí, la palabra temida) y claro, con una línea prooficialista.”] (Godoy 2009b).

⁵⁹ “La toma de Panamericana por parte de una comisión interventora ad-hoc de la SUNAT ha llevado a muchos a levantar varios estribillos: Estatización (con el recuerdo de intento de estatización de la banca del primer gobierno aprista), Chavismo (por esto del control de los medios de comunicación), Velasquismo (por lo mismo), etc.”

“There is no doubt that all this mess resulting from this problem [the Panamericana case] has to do with three questions: 1. the media are given more importance than they could have in a more institutionalised country, 2. A President who has announced that he wants to have an active role in the coming elections⁶⁰ and 3. The mistrust towards the media – and really towards authority in general – after the *Vladivideos* (and after a President had bought almost every medium). This is why suspicions arise, alarm bells are very much the order of the day and we warn that Alan [García] wants to take over a channel.”⁶¹ (Godoy 2009a)

In the vast majority of the cases, bloggers drew on memories of Fujimorism in order to make sense of the Panamericana case. Media owners’ willingness to negotiate editorial lines and staff decisions with Montesinos, demonstrated in the Vladivideo scandal, was a common theme: out of the nine posts which drew on memories of historical media regimes, eight referred to media politics during Fujimori’s government and five explicitly mentioned the illicit meetings between Montesinos and media owners, documented in the Vladivideos. Other memories included the SUNAT’s role⁶² in pressurising opposition media during the Fujimori regime, García’s attempt at nationalising the banking sector during his first government in the late 1980s, and less specific references to the media regime of the Fujimori era. The quotation from José Alejandro Godoy’s post reproduced at the end of the previous section, which points to Beto Kouri’s orchestrated interview after the Vladivideo scandal and approves of Alfonso de los Heros for his behaviour during Fujimori’s self coup of 1992, is an excellent example of this use of collective memories as an interpretative resource for making sense of the present.

⁶⁰ In a meeting with investors in March 2009, Alan García reportedly said that “In Peru the president has certain powers, he can’t make president whom he likes, but he is able to impede someone he doesn’t like from becoming president. I have demonstrated this.” [En Perú el presidente tiene un poder, no puede hacer presidente al que él quisiera, pero sí puede evitar que sea presidente quien él no quiere. Yo lo he demostrado”] (Perú21 2009).

⁶¹ “Sin duda, todo el chongo activado en torno a este problema tiene que ver con tres cuestiones: 1. A los medios se les da más importancia de la que podrían tener en un país más institucionalizado, 2. Un presidente que ha dicho que quiere tener un rol activo en las próximas elecciones y 3. La desconfianza hacia los medios - y en realidad, ante la autoridad en general - luego de los Vladivideos (y que un Presidente haya comprado a casi todos los medios). De allí a que las suspicacias se activen, las alarmas estén muy a la orden del día y previnamos que Alan quiera hacerse de un canal.”

⁶² The Fujimori regime often drew on democratic institutions, such as the SUNAT, in order to control media coverage. As part of his neoliberal restructuring program, Fujimori had cut off monetary regulations and tax breaks that had been introduced during the Belaunde and García regimes and had allowed media firms to import newsprint and equipment cheaply. Most significantly, newspapers were now required to pay an 18% tax on sales and a 15% import tax on paper for newsprint, a tax that could not be avoided since the Peruvian paper industry was virtually non-existent. Shortly after the self-coup, the opposition periodical *Caretas* was even charged a 25% import tax on the grounds that its paper was of a “higher quality” (Wood 2000, p.29). After the coup, several periodicals and newspapers experienced a serious financial crisis which was aggravated by tax inspections. All but a few media outlets accumulated large tax debts, fines and interest (Wood 2000, p.30). This situation made them vulnerable to government interference.

I have argued earlier in this chapter, memories of the Fujimori regime in particular are linked to the present through perceptions of structural and cultural continuity. For example, blogger Juan Sheput declares that:

“Rather than the SUNAT, what Peruvian TV needs is decency and other civic values. Peruvian TV has not recovered from the depths to which Vladimiro Montesinos and Alberto Fujimori took it, who should be condemned for the deterioration of the national value system and for establishing a scheme of practices and customs which continues to be in place in the majority of media today.”⁶³ (Sheput 2009b)

But memories of historical media regimes and perceptions of continuity did not only influence bloggers’ perceptions of contemporary, post-transitional media politics; bloggers’ debates over staff decisions also suggest an immediate impact on the way in which they proceeded as “vigilant citizens”: by scrutinising the new management of Panamericana in the light of these memories with regard to their democratic credentials, rather than for example their administrative experience and their ability to turn a bankrupt company around. Memories of historical media regimes thus serve both as interpretative resources in contemporary events, and as a reference for practices of citizenship.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have placed political blogging as a praxis of vigilant and deliberative citizenship within the historical context of post-transitional Peru. Following the sociological Thomas Theorem, which identifies attributed meaning as a crucial source of action, I have focussed on bloggers’ perceptions of historical and contemporary media regimes, and the links they establish between the past and the present. I have argued that bloggers’ narratives stressed cultural and structural continuity in media regimes, and that memories of historical media regimes constituted important interpretative resources for making sense of the present.

These narratives have also influenced the way in which notions of vigilant and deliberative citizenship translated into praxis: I have identified “corrective strategies” and the praxis of “remembering the past/interpreting the present differently” as translations of vigilant and deliberative citizenship in a post-transitional context. In the context of the Panamericana case study, I have furthermore shown how bloggers’ perceptions of continuity have shaped their

⁶³ “Más que la SUNAT lo que necesita la televisión del Perú es que ingrese la decencia y otros valores cívicos. La televisión peruana no se ha recuperado desde las honduras a las que la llevó Vladimiro Montesinos y Alberto Fujimori, que deberían ser juzgados por el deterioro del sistema de valores nacionales y por instalar un esquema de usos y costumbres que hasta ahora se mantiene en la mayoría de medios de comunicación.”

vigilant practices in relation to the topics they perceived as sensitive and the memories they used as interpretative resources.

In this sense, it is possible to speak of distinctly “post-transitional” notions of vigilant and deliberative citizenship, which are rooted in a particular historical context and people’s understanding of this context. In Chapter V, where I shall discuss bloggers’ narratives of blogging and the Peruvian blogosphere, this narrative background will be helpful for understanding the importance of normative notions of marginality.

CHAPTER V: TWO TALES OF ONE BLOGOSPHERE

So far I have argued that as a meaningful praxis of middle-class citizenship, blogging draws on deliberative and vigilant notions of citizenship. I have furthermore argued that in the context of post-transitional Peru, memories of historical media regimes and perceptions of continuity conditioned the way in which Peruvian bloggers experienced the wider public sphere in which these deliberative and vigilant practices take place, and hence have shaped the very way deliberative and vigilant notions of citizenship were put into practice. These “translations” often involved practices that symbolically distanced bloggers from the state and other powerful agents. For example, deliberative citizenship appeared in the form of “corrective strategies” and by remembering the past and interpreting the present “differently”: faced with a heroic narrative of Fujimorism (Barrantes Segura & Peña Romero 2006) and aggressive media representations similar to those presented during the Fujimori regime, bloggers felt that critically “deconstructing” these narratives was an ethical imperative – an expression of “good citizenship”. Similarly, memories of historical media regimes served as interpretative resources in current events, directing vigilant citizenship towards certain problems and not others.

Narratives of power and marginality played an important role in the way in which these notions of vigilant and deliberative citizenship were translated into practice: for example, in the Panamericana case, the relationship of dismissed and newly appointed staff members with “powerful agents” received particular attention. Building on their collective memories of Fujimorism and their perceptions of structural and cultural continuity beyond the transition, bloggers mistrusted those who were perceived to be “close” to power. Likewise, in bloggers’ discussion of Fujimori’s self-coup and the San Marcos case, bloggers struggled with “powerful narratives” and highlighted alternative interpretations and suppressed information.

In this chapter, I shall take a closer look at the ways in which my interviewees talked about political blogging as a practice of vigilant and deliberative citizenship. I shall contrast two competing narratives of blogging as citizenship within the Peruvian blogosphere. In both of them, counter-public discourses and narratives of marginality play an important role.

Scholars of counter-public theory have stressed the binary character of counter-public discourses. The qualifier “counter-” points to the referential character of the concept of “counter-public”: a public can never be “counter-” on its own, but only in relation to another public which it opposes (Brouwer 2005, p.195). Counter-public narratives are therefore simultaneously based on the construction of a “main” public, and on a discursive movement of

dissociation from the latter. Because counter-public discourses often contain normative and utopian elements (the counter-public as a “better public”), this dissociation is also normatively charged. Counter-public discourses will therefore often stress a counter public’s distance and exclusion from the “mainstream” public and will try to distance it from those who are perceived as being situated closer to the “centre of power”.

Counter-public discourses informed most of my interviewees’ narratives of blogging in one way or another. However, it is possible to identify two main narratives, which differ with regard to the role counter-public discourses play within them: the first account, which I shall discuss on the following pages, uses counter-public narratives on a descriptive level. These bloggers perceived the blogosphere as a marginal and counter-public space in opposition to powerful agents in the wider public sphere. They saw blogging as a way of publishing and discussing ideas and information that, as one of my interviewees put it, “wouldn’t normally find an echo in the official media.”¹ For them, the blogosphere was thus a space in which vigilant and deliberative citizenship were possible in a way that couldn’t be realised in the wider public sphere.

The second narrative, which could be called a “critical” narrative of blogging, stressed counter-public values on a normative level, but was much more sceptical as to the degree to which these ideals could be realised in the “real-existing” blogosphere. For these bloggers, the political blogosphere of Lima was not sufficiently independent of the wider public sphere, but maintained important links with it. In their eyes, structural marginality formed a crucial precondition of discursive marginality, and in consequence of vigilance and deliberation. Bloggers who lacked this crucial credential were considered unable to fully engage in vigilance and deliberation. Being “powerful”, those bloggers were also accused of further marginalising other, less influential bloggers. A generally poor debating culture added to the problem, turning the blogosphere in a space of limited citizenship.

While these two narratives differed in their assessment of the real-existing blogosphere as a space for the construction of vigilant and deliberative citizenship, they shared an important normative idea: an overarching motif of both narratives was the discursive link between notions of marginality and conceptions of vigilant and deliberative citizenship. Bloggers constructed vigilance and deliberation by disassociation from the state and other powerful agents, stressing structural and discursive marginality as crucial preconditions of these civic

¹ “[El blog] intentó e intenta todavía contener expresiones que normalmente no encuentran eco en los medios de comunicación oficiales.”

practices. In this sense, vigilance and deliberation, as my interviewees saw it, could be conceptualised as forms of citizenship against the state.

Chapter Outline

I shall begin by discussing the first, “idealistic” narrative, which constructs the blogosphere as a counter-hegemonic space, where citizens can publish and discuss alternative ideas and information. This narrative frames the blogosphere as a space for the construction of vigilant and deliberative citizenship “against the state”. Possibly the most striking characteristic of this narrative is its “counter-public” framing, a discursive association with notions of marginal politics.

This counter-public notion of blogging exceeds the Peruvian context and is commonly found in narratives of blogging in the global South. I shall proceed by discussing some similarities with such a wider discourse on blogging, focussing mainly on the notion of marginality.

This utopian narrative was challenged by some of my interviewees, who offered a more sceptical account of the “real-existing blogosphere” as an aggressive and hierarchical space with multiple links and overlaps with the wider public sphere. While these bloggers adhered to counter-public values on a normative level, they nevertheless felt that the “real-existing” blogosphere was unsuitable for either vigilance or deliberation, and thus constituted a space of “limited citizenship”. The chapter concludes with a discussion of these criticisms.

An Idealistic Narrative of Blogging

On the following pages, I shall discuss the first, “idealistic” narrative of blogging. As mentioned above, this narrative frames blogging as a counter-public and counter-hegemonic activity. It thus constructs establishes the blogosphere as an alternative space in the face of a wider public sphere characterised by corruption and politically biased reporting. As one blogger argued, “in Peru you don’t need official media, they are all official, because all of them are useful to the system.”²

When asked about the history of their blog and their reasons for starting it in the first place, several of my interviewees began their narratives with such a reference to the wider public sphere. For example, one blogger explicitly linked the birth of her blog to changes in the editorial line of one of the country’s most important print media outlets, turning its media

“Much more conservative than what they already were. In a certain way they turned anti... eeh/ anti-topics related to the Truth Commission, uhm... much more pro-

² “En el Perú no necesitas medios oficiales pues, todos son oficiales, porque todos son funcionales al sistema.”

military, but in this very... tough, or.. or very... uhm... rigid line of the military. Right? Say/ I don't have a terrible opinion of the military, but it does exasperate me when they want to deny the things they did, right? During the internal armed conflict."

This situation was worrying her as much as the other journalists she discussed it with:

"Because, we said, if these are the media of the most important media corporation, that has the most resources, who supposedly value their credibility, their prestige from being 'The Quality Press', if this media group is changing like this, what can we expect from the rest who neither have resources, nor more or less well-educated journalists, uhm... and who don't care too much about being truthful or appearing truthful, etcetera, right?"

Knowing that their critical discussion of the recent changes in the media environment would not be covered by any newspaper, "because not very nice things had been said", she decided to open a blog and publish this information online: "That was my first text, giving an account of this debate about what was happening to the media as a result of these changes in the *El Comercio* Group board of directors."

Likewise, one of the founders of the Facebook group *No a Keiko*, which I shall discuss in greater detail in the final chapter, told me that he decided to launch the group because he disagreed with the way political events and presidential candidates were covered in the mass media:

"The feeling I got in May 2009 was that the traditional media, television, radio, newspapers were very complacent with Fujimori, no, with the candidacy of Keiko Fujimori, very eeh very light, the coverage was very soft, no? It wasn't firm, not really as I expected it to be, no, I mean how could a person who represents a very sad time in the history of Peru intend to return to power and the national media see it as something normal, like a good thing, as something maternal, as something familiar, as something pink, no, then this really irritated me and annoyed me and every day irritated me more because I really did not see any leaders of opinion, no political leader, no big media that faced the subject and said, hey, but you represent this, this, this, that, you represent Fujimori, Montesinos, dictatorship, violation of human rights, uh, repression of freedom of expression, and a series of misdeeds and crimes that, well, that somehow all of us remember, right? And the feeling I had was that they were trying to re-launch Fujimorism with a new face, so soft, it could pass smoothly like butter, no? So she wins the elections and then again, as they say, they screw us up."³

³ "La sensación que yo tenía en 2009 en mayo era que los medios de comunicación tradicionales, la televisión, la radio, los periódicos, eran muy complacientes con el Fujimorismo, no, con la candidatura de Keiko Fujimori, muy eeh muy light, la cobertura, muy suave, no, no era dura, no era realmente como yo esperaba que fuera, no, osea cómo es posible que una persona que representa a una época muy triste del Perú pretenda a volver al poder y que los medios de comunicación nacionales lo vean como si fuera algo normal, como si fuera algo bueno, como si fuera algo maternal, como si fuera algo familiar, como si fuera algo rosa, no, entonces a mí eso realmente me irritaba y me irritaba y cada vez

A third blogger explained:

“If I told you in a few words why I turned to writing, I turned to writing because I felt... like powerless for reading so many editorials of newspapers like *La Razón*, like *Expreso*, or like *Correo*, who were writing so much nonsense, so many lies! Deliberate lies, misrepresentations, and seeing how this was so well-received among the population.”⁴

Faced with such a problem-ridden media landscape, many of my interviewees felt that blogging allowed them to publish information and opinion that they perceived to be not simply neglected, but *actively excluded* from the mass media. The possibility to publish content “that wouldn’t normally find an echo in the official media”⁵, as one of them put it, was a leitmotif that kept reappearing in several of my interviews. For example, one of my interviewees explained that blogging provided her with the ability to publish what she called “the little seen”:

“Whenever I had a piece of information that I felt was the kind of information that would not receive coverage in the media, I published it. I mean, trying not to repeat what everybody could already find out through the media. (...) My aim was that [in my blog] one should be able to find what very likely wouldn’t... be of any interest, or wouldn’t pass the filters of the big media.”⁶

me irritaba más porque realmente no veía a ningún líder de opinión, a ningún líder político, a ningún medio de comunicación grande que le haga frente al tema y le diga, oiga, pero usted este representa a tal, tal, tal, tal, representa a Fujimori, a Montesinos, dictadura, violación de derechos humanos, eeeh, represión de la libertad de expresión, y una serie de faltas y crímenes que bueno, que todos de alguna manera recordamos, no? Y la sensación que tenía era que se estaba tratando de relanzar el Fujimorismo con una cara nueva, suavcita, que pase así como una mantequilla, no, y que gane las elecciones y luego como dicen otra vez nos meten la yuca.”

⁴ “Si yo te respondiera en pocas palabras por qué me [volqué a] escribir, me volqué a escribir porque me sentía... como impotente de leer digamos tantas editoriales de diarios como *La Razón*, como *Expreso*, o como *Correo*, que escribían tantas sandeces, ¡tantas mentiras! Mentiras deliberadas, tergiversadas, y ver cómo ello tenía tanta acogida en la población.”

⁵ “[el blog] intentó y intenta todavía contener expresiones que normalmente no encuentran eco en los medios de comunicación oficiales.”

⁶ “Eeem... [el blog] explotó en un momento en que varios medios del grupo del Comercio empezaron a cambiar de línea editorial y se volvieron bastante más conservadores de lo que ya son. Eeeh.. en cierto modo se volvieron anti... eeeh anti-temas vinculados con la Comisión de la Verdad, este.. mucho más pro militares, pero en la línea muy.. dura, o.. o muy.. emmm.. rígida de lo militar. No, digamos/ yo no tengo un.. yo no tengo un concepto terrible de los militares, pero si me desespera cuando quieren negar las cosas que hicieron, no? durante el conflicto armado interno. Y entonces el blog empezó a raíz de una discusión que hubo entre periodistas más o menos conocidos (...) sobre estos cambios que se produjeron en el grupo de/ en los diarios del Grupo El Comercio, cuando hubo un cambio de directores. Y.. y eso era/ nos preocupaba a los periodistas en general, porque decíamos si estos son los medios de la empresa más importante de medios de comunicación, que tiene más recursos, que supuestamente son los que valoran su credibilidad, su prestigio de ser diarios de referencia, si este grupo de medios se vuelve así, qué podemos esperar del resto que no tienen recursos, que no tienen periodistas más o menos bien formados, este.. y a los que no les importa tanto ser veraces o parecer veraces, etcétera, no? Entonces hubo una.. un debate (...) y yo sabía que lo que se discutió ahí seguro no iba a salir el día siguiente en casi ningún periódico, porque no se habían dicho cosas muy bonitas, no se habían dicho a medias, y entonces yo publiqué mi.. mi primer texto fue ese, dando cuenta de que ocurrió ese debate

This preoccupation with censorship and biased reporting and the importance attributed to social media such as blogs and Twitter was often particularly pronounced in bloggers' memories of media coverage of the riots in Bagua in 2009. The following excerpt from one of my interviews expresses this perception very well:

"The confrontation was on a Friday, in the morning, and the next day the newspapers were very biased against the natives, the protesters. When still no one knew of the deaths of police officers, right? Then I remember that Saturday I went to buy the newspapers, but thinking, almost expecting what the headlines would be, right? [Unintelligible] the newspapers, and I said: 'Well, OK. This is what I imagined and now the job is to find out what they have not said'. And then, as I didn't know anyone in Bagua, I started searching. So, I started looking on Twitter, also on Google, or Google Advanced Search, that is [unintelligible] I searched in several ways, until I began to get to some institutions, some blogs that I had never seen before, because I had never been interested in Bagua before. Eeem... and I found several things that were quite useful at that time. Eeeem... just like me, others did/ had a similar initiative, and suddenly that Saturday I think we were three or four blogs who began putting this kind of information, or links, in order to complement the official version. Because the official version was more or less what all the big media were repeating. And that dynamic continued on Twitter. So somehow we started it on the blogs, and it continued on Twitter."⁷

Several of my interviewees also felt that this alternative information was not only different, but in many cases "better". Discussing the importance of social media during the uprisings in Bagua in 2009, one blogger put it like this:

"And what this space in the social networks and the blogs etc. proved was that in this moment it was a vital tool to... to be able to be slightly better informed than with what one would usually have at one's disposition, on TV, radio, the well known websites, etc., no? I mean there are times where those spaces become decisive, very important, no? It's like if these spaces hadn't been there, the facts would have been

sobre qué cosa estaba ocurriendo con los medios a raíz de este cambio de miembros de directorio del Grupo El Comercio. (...) Y cuando tenía una información que me parecía que era el tipo de información que no iba a tener cabida en los medios, yo la publicaba. O sea, intentando no repetir lo que ya todos se podían enterar por los medios. (...) Pero bueno, pretendía que allí se encontrara lo que con mucha certeza no iba a.. a ser de interés, o no iba a pasar los filtros de los medios grandes."

⁷ "El enfrentamiento fue un viernes, en la mañana, y los diarios del día siguiente estaban muy parcializados contra los nativos, los manifestantes. Cuando todavía no se sabía de las muertes de los policías, ¿no? Entonces yo recuerdo que ese sábado yo fui a comprar los periódicos, pero así pensando, casi suponiendo como iban a ser las planas, ¿no? [Inentendible] los periódicos, y dije bueno, ya. Esto es lo que yo me imaginaba y ahora el trabajo es buscar que cosa no han dicho ellos. Y entonces como yo no conocía a nadie en Bagua, me puse a buscar. O sea, me puse a buscar en Twitter, también en google, o con búsqueda avanzada de google, o sea [inintendible] busqué de varias maneras, hasta empezar a llegar a algunas instituciones, algunos blogs que yo nunca antes había visto, porque nunca antes me había interesado Bagua. Este... y encontré varias cosas bien útiles para este momento. Este... así como yo, otros hicieron/ tuvieron la iniciativa parecida, y de pronto este sábado creo que éramos tres o cuatro blogs que empezamos a poner este tipo de información, o de enlaces como para complementar la versión oficial. Porque la versión oficial era la que estaban más o menos repitiendo todos los medios grandes. Y esa dinámica siguió en Twitter. O sea de alguna manera la empezamos en los blogs, siguió en Twitter."

others, no? (...) I think they are a/ I think that all these blogs or Facebook walls of different initiatives are indeed... they are helpful. Eeem... I think in particular for educational purposes.”⁸

Contrasting “traditional media” content to information available in blogs, another of my interviewees argued that the former was manipulative, while the latter offered more relevant and important information. In this sense, social media offered an opportunity to “set the agenda right”:

“I think that last year, with the Bagua phenomenon and the Croussillat phenomenon for example, those are cases of journalistic follow-up that had lots and lots of work in Internet, more than on TV, radio, newspapers, no? The TV, the traditional media are focussed on very soft contents right now, very light, crime stories, very eeem/ I really don’t like them, I don’t like TV, I think that the news is meant to scare you and nothing else, she died, he killed her, they robbed him, he was defrauded, she was kidnapped, they violated her, she had an abortion, everything is bad, everything is a disgrace, and everything is quotidian, no? Everything happens just around the corner, across the road, so I think there is a culture of fear that they want to sow and parallel to that there is no information, because they don’t tell you what is really going on in Peru. I mean you don’t see the important stuff on TV and when something important happens, when a journalist discovers something important, the fashionable thing to do now is to publish it on the Internet.”⁹

This counter-public account of blogging referred not only to information, but also to ideas. For example, one blogger described blogs as “some sort of *Meccano* where you can construct alternative narratives or propose alternative visions which you don’t find in the traditional spaces.”¹⁰ While the bloggers quoted above saw blogging mainly as a means to complementing what they perceived as a deliberately exclusionary and manipulative media environment, others focussed on the possibility to challenge particular interpretations of

⁸ “Y lo que probó este espacio en las redes sociales y los blogs etcétera es que fue una herramienta en ese momento vital, para... para poder estar un poco mas informado que con lo que normalmente uno tendría a disposición, en televisión, radio, las páginas web conocidas, etcétera, no? O sea hay algunos momentos en los que estos espacios se vuelven decisivos, muy importantes, no, como que si no hubieran estado estos espacios, los hechos después hubieran sido otros, ¿no? (...) Creo que son un/ creo que todos estos blogs o los muros de Facebook de diversas iniciativas sí son... son como una ayuda. Este... creo que especialmente para fines educativos.”

⁹ “Creo que el año pasado, con el fenómeno de Bagua y el fenómeno de Croussillat por ejemplo, son unos casos de seguimiento periodístico que tuvieron muuuucho mucho trabajo en Internet, más que en televisión, radio, periódicos, no? la televisión/ los medios tradicionales esteee están dirigidos a contenidos muy suaves ahora, muy ligeros, policiales, muy eem/ realmente no me gustan, no me gusta la televisión, los noticieros de televisión me parece que están enfocados a meterte miedo nada más, se murió, la mató, le robó, le engañó, la secuestró, la violó, la abortó, todo es malo, todo es una desgracia y todo es cotidiano, no, todo sucede a la vuelta de tu casa, cruzando la pista, entonces creo que hay una cultura ahí del miedo que se quiere sembrar y en paralelo a eso no hay información, porque no te cuentan realmente qué es lo que está pasando en el Perú, o sea las cosas importantes no las ves en la televisión y cuando sucede algo importante, cuando algún periodista descubre algo importante ahora lo que está de moda es que lo publiques en Internet.”

¹⁰ “Me parece que los espacios como los blogs deberían ser una suerte de... de *Meccanos* en los cuales puedas construir historias alternativas o proponer visiones alternativas que no encuentras en los espacios tradicionales.”

events, that they perceived to be “the official version,” or “hegemonic” narratives. To them, blogging meant to engage with media content in a critical way, as in the following example. While the focus on information in the examples quoted above points to vigilant notions of citizenship, this second aspect is more closely linked to the idea of deliberation:

“But what I’m trying to say (...) is the role of the press. No? I mean... how they had made all this stir. Something similar happens with Bagua. Only that there was no bullying there, what happened then was that there was an official discourse, which was the Government’s discourse, and that of many media outlets. Official discourse, official discourse, official discourse. (...) For example El Comercio, which is the most... no? Let’s say the most respected newspaper here. Its discourse is quite similar to the official discourse, because it’s a conservative newspaper. Nobody says that this is bad, plurality, ok, plurality. But the trouble is that there isn’t all that much plurality, no? Because they all go more or less along the same lines. And... and they all focussed on those natives who are eeem... ‘against progress’ and things like eeh/ (...) and ‘of course, if they were armed! How are our policemen not going to shoot! What would you do if you were there with [unintelligible]’/ Yes, I see what they mean, the... no? But this doesn’t [unintelligible] I mean, someone needed to say/ someone also needed to say things like, ‘Stop! But all this started because nobody consulted them about anything!’ No? This question behind it all, this primary question, nobody asked. And that’s where many bloggers appeared, with their own posts, to talk about that.”¹¹

Many bloggers I talked to combined deliberative and vigilant notions of citizenship by describing blogging simultaneously as a means to broadening the range of topics discussed in the public sphere, straightening out a perceived imbalance between different types of media content, and questioning interpretations of events in the mass media (as in the “corrective strategies” discussed in Chapter IV). In the media-historical and mnemonic context discussed in Chapter IV, the civic practices of deliberation and vigilance were inextricably intertwined with narratives of marginality. Blogs appeared in these accounts as spaces of discursive marginality, where information and ideas which were excluded from the wider public sphere could be published and discussed.

¹¹ “Pero a lo que voy (...) es el papel de la prensa. ¿No? O sea ... como habian hecho todo ese revuelo. Algo así también pasa con Bagua. Solo que no hubo un cargamontón, lo que pasa ahí es que hay un discurso oficial, que es el discurso del gobierno, y muchos medios: discurso oficial, discurso oficial, discurso oficial. (...) O sea tipo el Comercio, que es el diario mas, ¿no? reputado, digamos, de acá. Tiene un discurso bastante similar al oficial, porque es un diario conservador. Nadie dice que está mal, pluralidad, ya, pluralidad. Pero el problema es que pluralidad no tanto, ¿no? Porque todos más o menos se van por la misma onda. Y... y todos se enfocaron en estos nativos que están este... en contra del progreso, y cosas tipo eeh/ (...) y claro, ¡si es que ellos están con armas! ¡Cómo nuestros policías no van a disparar! Tú qué harías si estás ahí con [ininteligible]/ sí entiendo de lo que va, la... ¿no? Pero este no [ininteligible] o sea, alguien necesitaba decir, alguien necesitaba decir también cosas... alguien necesitaba decir cosas tipo, ¡ya! ¡Pero todo esto empezó porque no se les consultó nada! ¿No? Esa pregunta atrás, o sea, primigenia, no se la hacían. Y ahí es donde salen muchos blogueros, con sus propios posts, a hablar al respecto.”

Similarities with a Wider Discourse on Blogging in the Global South

This narrative of political blogging in Peru shares many aspects with a wider discourse on blogging in the global South, which exceeds the specific Peruvian context. One of these shared features refers to its counter-public framing. Narratives of blogging in the global South often frame blogospheres as marginal spaces, where the “voiceless” are able to gain a voice. For example, the following self-description of the international blogging community *Global Voices* stresses such a position of marginality:

“Global Voices is a community of more than 500 bloggers and translators around the world who work together to bring you reports from blogs and citizen media everywhere, with emphasis on voices that are not ordinarily heard in international mainstream media. Global Voices seeks to aggregate, curate, and amplify the global conversation online – shining light on places and people other media often ignore. We work to develop tools, institutions and relationships that will help all voices, everywhere, to be heard.” (Global Voices 2007a)

The language of “voices”, a term which has become profoundly associated with counter-public discourse, underlines the emphasis on marginal citizenship present in this statement. Apart from the main project, the community also runs a number of smaller projects which frame blogging as a praxis of marginal citizenship, such as *Global Voices Advocacy* (Global Voices 2007b), *Rising Voices* (Global Voices 2007c), *Voices without Votes* (Global Voices 2008), or *Threatened Voices* (Global Voices n.d.), among others. These examples encourage associations between blogging and marginality by offering a particular kind of stories and by framing blogging in a particular language.

Independently from their often quite sceptical findings, scholars of social media in the global South and Eastern Europe have also contributed to creating and reinforcing a link between blogging in the global South and notions of marginal politics by framing social media as “citizen media”¹² and discussing their function as political tools of opposition movements under authoritarian regimes¹³. Blogs and social networks are thus often discussed regarding their

¹² The term citizen media was coined by Clemencia Rodríguez (2000; 2004), who explicitly linked it to notions of marginal citizenship: “First, citizens’ media can give voice to the voiceless. By gaining access to the media, previously silenced communities can break the culture of silence and regain their own voices. Second, citizens’ media can foster empowerment. Social structures of inequality and injustice result in entire communities feeling disempowered and paralyzed. Involvement in citizens’ media projects strengthens people’s sense of self and their confidence in their own potential to act in the world. Third, citizens’ media can connect isolated communities and people who have much to gain from joining forces in projects for collective action. Fourth, citizens’ media can foster *conscientization*. Citizens’ media participants encode their own realities in their own terms, through processes of *conscientization* in the Freirean sense (Freire, 1980). And finally, citizens’ media can serve as alternative sources of information. Unlike most mass media, which are normally restricted by either economic or political forces, citizens’ media are able to maintain an independent position when gathering, processing, and distributing information” (2004, p.150).

¹³ Sima and Pugsley’s study of blogging in China is a welcome exception (2010).

potential to widen access to the public sphere and to allow citizens with limited access to mainstream media to discuss their (political) ideas in public. Similarly to my interviewees' accounts discussed above, narratives of blogging in nominally democratic and/or economically prosperous societies of the global South, for example South Korea, often point to a "closed and conservative" (Joyce 2007, p.4) media environment with a high concentration of media ownership or concentrate on marginalised groups in society (Petray 2011). Concurrently, research on blogging in more pluralist media contexts in the global South has been neglected. This "bias" has contributed to the further development of a common sense that frames social media primarily in terms of marginal citizenship.

The Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University in particular has contributed strongly to this discursive phenomenon through its Internet and Democracy Case Study Series, including studies on blogging in Burma (Chowdhury 2008), Ukraine (Goldstein 2007), Iran (Kelly & Etling 2008), the Arabic blogosphere (Etling et al. 2009), South Korea (Joyce 2007) and Kenya (Goldstein & Rotich 2008). Working on the intersection of discourses of blogging and democracy, this think tank is also an important agent of blogging discourse because of its overlap with activist spheres through their patronage of *Global Voices* and the *OpenNet Initiative*. Apart from those associated with the Berkman Center, other researchers have also concentrated on social media as a potential force for democratisation under authoritarian regimes, e.g. Iran (Khiabany et al. 2007; Alavi 2006), Russia and Ukraine (Semetko & Krasnoboka 2003; Lysenko & Desouza 2010; Krasnoboka 2002), Moldova (Lysenko & Desouza 2012), Malaysia (Smeltzer 2008; Steele 2009), Kyrgyzstan (Kulikova & Perlmutter 2007), and China (MacKinnon 2008), among others.

On an activist level, NGOs working in the field of media and politics (such as *Reporters Without Borders* and the *OpenNet Initiative*), as well as organizations working in the Human Rights sector more generally (such as *Amnesty International* and *Human Rights Watch*), have equally contributed to the formation of a discursive intersection between counter-public narratives and blogging discourse by (understandably) focussing on very precarious situations, mainly but not exclusively in the global South. For example, in 2009, *Reporters Without Borders* issued a "Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-Dissidents"¹⁴, which offered advice on how to blog safely under repressive regimes. The use of the term "cyber-dissident" frames blogging as a praxis of

¹⁴ The title is more "revolutionary" than the content. The handbook contains mainly practical advice, much of which is applicable to blogging everywhere. However, several chapters address tools and techniques to avoid the dangers of blogging under an authoritarian regime.

marginal citizenship. Addressing “bloggers” in general, the handbook seems to suggest that blogging is first and foremost a marginal and a political activity.

The same organisation publishes an annual list of “Enemies of the Internet” (Reporters Without Borders 2012b) and a corresponding report (Reporters Without Borders 2012a), suggesting that the Internet as such, rather than specific practices, agents and aspects of the Internet, is under attack¹⁵. It thereby equates “the Internet” with those practices, agents and aspects of the Internet that are subject to surveillance and repression, while at the same time symbolically “externalising” those practices, agents and aspects of the Internet that consolidate power and inequality. This narrow definition of “the Internet” is also reflected in the Reporters Without Borders report’s subtitle, which reads “beset by online surveillance and content filtering, netizens fight on”. By defining the subjects of the Internet in terms of citizenship (the term “netizen” is a neologism combining “citizen” and “Net”), the Internet appears as a space that is in the first place political, rather than, for example, commercial, recreational, etc. These civic representatives of the Internet are furthermore “beset” by online surveillance and content filtering, rendering them politically marginal.

Finally, journalism and mass media have participated in creating a counter-public discourse on global blogging. Like academic texts, media stories on blogging in the global South tend to focus on political blogging under repressive regimes by bloggers who are critical of the regime and fit with Western narratives of marginality in the global South (such as women’s rights or democracy activists in Iran). Anthony Loewenstein’s journalistic account “The Blogging Revolution” (2008), is a particularly striking example of marginality in blogging discourse. The book’s cover features the pixellated image of a raised fist against a scarlet background, which firmly places blogging inside the symbolic realm of marginal politics. The pixellated fist combines a long-standing and immediately recognisable icon of marginal politics with a reference to digital technology: blogging seems to descend directly from earlier political struggles, but it has also transformed these struggles. The book is dedicated “to imprisoned dissidents everywhere”. This dedication is surprising and interesting precisely because bloggers are *not* mentioned explicitly in it, but seem to be covered by the generic term “dissidents”. In the context of a book about blogging, this dedication suggests that blogging equals dissidence, and, going even a step further, points to the danger associated with this particular “dissident” activity: imprisonment.

¹⁵ For the case of the Iranian blogosphere, Kelly and Etling have shown that access to only a small percentage of mostly secular or reformist blogs is blocked by the government, while the majority of the blogosphere, including most secular and reformist blogs, is not censored (2008). Their results offer a more complex picture of social media and marginality.

Not surprisingly, bloggers from the global South who have become known in the North and whose work has been publicised by publishing houses or newspapers in the North usually live and write under difficult political conditions (or are at least perceived to do so¹⁶), such as the Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez,¹⁷ the “Baghdad blogger” Salam Pax,¹⁸ or Iranian Hossein Derakhshan¹⁹. On an individual level, these stories may or may not be correct, but they create a distorted impression of the larger picture of blogging in the global South and divert attention from marginalised groups that do not fit neatly with the counter-public framing of blogging discourse or fail to offer easy identification. Kelly and Etling’s study of the Iranian online public provides an example of such a distortion. They report that:

“The Iranian blogosphere is dominated by four major network formations (...). With the notable exception of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, most Western (e.g. academic, think tank, and journalistic) discussion about the Iranian blogosphere refers to bloggers who are found within just one of these structures, a large group dominated by expatriates and reformists and featuring frequent criticism of the Iranian regime and its political values and philosophy.” (2008, p.8)

This distortion is significant because, since counter-public blogging discourse is a narrative of democratisation of the public sphere, notions of marginality play a normative rather than

¹⁶ According to Kelly and Etling, “a significant proportion of the bloggers in what is thus popularly understood to be the ‘Iranian blogosphere’ do not live in Iran. Blogs in the remaining three groups appear to be authored almost exclusively by people living inside Iran, and reflect a diversity of interests and concerns that our analyses have identified and located to particular sectors of the map” (2008, p.8). Esfandiari has made a similar criticism, arguing that unlike the narrative in Western media suggested, Twitter did not play any significant role inside Iran during the 2009 uprisings: “It is time to get Twitter’s role in the events in Iran right. Simply put: There was no Twitter Revolution inside Iran. As Mehdi Yahyanejad, the manager of ‘Balatarin,’ one of the Internet’s most popular Farsi-language websites, told the Washington Post last June, Twitter’s impact inside Iran is nil. ‘Here [in the United States], there is lots of buzz,’ he said. ‘But once you look, you see most of it are Americans tweeting among themselves.’ (...) Twitter was definitely not a major communications tool for activists on the ground in Iran. Nonetheless, the ‘Twitter Revolution’ was an irresistible meme during the post-election protests, a story that wrote itself. Various analysts were eager to chime in about the purported role of Twitter in the Green Movement. (...) Western journalists who couldn’t reach -- or didn’t bother reaching? -- people on the ground in Iran simply scrolled through the English-language tweets posted with tag #iranelection. Through it all, no one seemed to wonder why people trying to coordinate protests in Iran would be writing in any language other than Farsi” (2010).

¹⁷ Posts from Sánchez’ blog *Generación Y* have been published in the *Washington Post*, the North American A-list blog *Huffington Post*, as well as in several languages by European, North- and South American publishing houses, among them Random House (Sánchez 2010) and Melville House Publishing (Sánchez 2011). Articles about and interviews with Sánchez have been published in international newspapers, such as Spanish daily *El País* (Vicent 2008), the German weekly *Die Zeit* (Schmidt-Häuer 2008), the *New York Times* (USA) (McKinley Jr. 2008), and the U.S. edition of the news agency *Reuters* (Israel 2007), among others. She has been awarded a number of prestigious prizes, among others the Ortega y Gasset Prize for Journalism in 2008, and has been listed as one of the 100 most influential people by several journals, such as the Time Magazine in the category “heroes and pioneers”, in 2008.

¹⁸ Salam Pax’s blogposts were published in the *Guardian*, and as a book by Atlantic Books on behalf of the *Guardian* (Pax 2003).

¹⁹ Hossein Derakhshan’s blog has not been published so far, but prior to his arrest in 2008 he regularly published in international newspapers, including a blog on the *Guardian* website.

descriptive role. As Hindman argues, “both praise and condemnation of blogging depend on widely shared beliefs about who reads blogs, and who writes them” (2009, p.103). The legitimacy and credibility of bloggers in the global South and their vigilant and deliberative activities thus depend on the degree to which they can pass for “marginal citizens”. In this context, the characters chosen as representatives of marginality in media stories often reflect wider political values of Western audiences and their narratives of marginality in the global South, which may be much more contested on a local level. The choice of “token subalterns” (Spivak 1996, p.292) in blogging discourse is thus a political act.

A Critical Narrative of Blogging

The “alternative space” narrative discussed above was not the only narrative of blogging among my interviewees. While on a normative level most of the bloggers I talked to subscribed to counter-public values, some of them were highly critical of the “real-existing” blogosphere and the degree to which it allowed for civic deliberation and vigilance. Marginality played an important normative role in this second narrative, too, where it appeared as a crucial precondition for a blogger’s ability to engage in civic deliberation and vigilance, as “closeness to power” was seen to have a negative effect on bloggers’ ability to come up with new and critical ideas and keep a check on power – and hence on their ability to practise deliberative and vigilant citizenship.

These bloggers agreed that the blogosphere *should* maintain a critical distance from the wider public sphere, oppose “official” narratives and offer alternative information and ideas. They thus constructed blogging expressly in opposition to the wider public sphere and as a praxis of deliberative citizenship “against the State”. However, compared to the “idealistic” blogging discourse discussed above, this narrative was much more critical of the “real-existing” blogosphere as a space for the construction of vigilant and deliberative citizenship. One of the most important reasons for this scepticism referred to bloggers’ relationship with power.

These bloggers questioned the neat separation between the blogosphere and the wider public sphere in counter-public blogging discourse, arguing that the two spheres actually overlapped and that the vices that restricted civic practices in the wider public sphere had long reached and “contaminated” the Peruvian blogosphere. As a result, marginality – a precondition of vigilance and deliberation – was contested and allegations that other bloggers “lacked marginality” were common. A “lack of marginality” affected a blogger’s ability to credibly engage in vigilant and deliberative practices.

A second factor which was seen to curtail bloggers' ability to practise vigilant and deliberative citizenship was "power". Narratives of power differed from those of a "lack of marginality" in two important ways: firstly, criticisms of power were based on different values from those which prompted criticisms of a "lack of marginality", namely egalitarian and democratic values in the former case, as opposed to oppositional values in the latter; and secondly, they affected different bloggers: while a "lack of marginality" had a negative impact on the accused person's ability to credibly practice vigilant and deliberative citizenship, "power" referred to the ability of the "powerful" to restrict the others – marginal bloggers – in exercising vigilant and deliberative citizenship. These bloggers saw the Peruvian blogosphere as a hierarchical space, which was governed by "power nodes" on the intersection of the blogosphere and the wider public sphere and which reproduced the patterns of inclusion and exclusion that govern citizenship in the wider public sphere.

The third problem that affected deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere according to my interviewees was a lack of debating culture. While many bloggers valued diversity of opinions and ideas, as well as unrestricted deliberation among bloggers of different political affiliations, many were sceptical of the degree to which these values were put into practice in the "real-existing" blogosphere: either because the blogosphere was perceived as a politically homogenous space, where everybody agreed with each other anyway, or because it was perceived as a highly polarised space, resulting in a "dialogue of the deaf", rather than in any meaningful conversation.

Finally, some of my interviewees perceived the blogosphere as an aggressive environment, where dissenting opinions met with antagonistic responses. In consequence, they had developed a variety of different approaches to conflict transformation or "resolution", ranging from conciliation, to exclusion, to counter-attack. Their approaches to dealing with conflict had often changed over time and reflected a learning process. However, even where they contradicted the "democratic" values of deliberative citizenship in praxis, bloggers did not seem to abandon these values on a normative level.

Marginality and Lack of Marginality

As in the idealistic narrative of blogging discussed above, marginality is a leitmotif within "critical" narratives of blogging, too. In the context of the post-transitional public sphere as bloggers perceived it, described in Chapter IV, assuming and maintaining a position of marginality was one crucial precondition for practising vigilant and deliberative citizenship on which most of my interviewees agreed. Both "remembering history differently", expressed in bloggers "corrective strategies", and the central role of "closeness to power" in their

discussion of the Panamericana case, underline the importance of marginality for practising deliberative and vigilant citizenship.

However, in some of my interviewees' accounts, narratives of marginality went hand-in-hand with allegations of what I shall call a "lack of marginality". It is therefore important to differentiate between different notions of marginality used in these different narratives: the "idealistic" narrative of blogging usually focussed on *discursive* marginality, referring to the message, rather than to the messenger. Only one of my interviewees directly referred to the "democratising work of blogs, which give a voice to those who didn't have one"²⁰, but only to lament that this virtue of blogging was no longer a reality in the Peruvian blogosphere. His statement was embedded in a sceptical assessment of the actual blogosphere, which he described as being too closely linked with business and mass media. "Critical" narratives such as this denounced a lack of marginality: they tended to approach marginality both in structural and discursive terms, and established a relationship between the two kinds of marginality.

Narratives of marginality among Peruvian bloggers were contested, as utopian notions of blogging were complemented by more sceptical views. Two important differences between the "idealistic" and the "critical" narrative of the Peruvian blogosphere are the blurring of the boundaries between the blogosphere and the wider public sphere, and the extension of criticism to fellow bloggers in the latter. These criticisms do not object to the counter-public values of the "idealistic" narrative, but rather reinforce them by critically assessing the degree to which bloggers comply or fail to comply with them in praxis.

Several of the bloggers I talked to did not draw a strict line between the blogosphere and the wider public sphere, but pointed out structural similarities, links and overlaps between the two spheres. In these accounts, the wider public sphere often included other agents apart from media outlets and the government, such as the Catholic University, NGOs, the Human Rights sector and private companies, among others. The following is one of the strongest accounts of structural links between the two spheres. While the picture painted by most of the bloggers I talked to was somewhat more moderate, the impression that these two spheres were not structurally separate was relatively common. According to this particular blogger, those he considered to be the most influential Peruvian bloggers "were on companies' payrolls":

"They were part of an apparatus, and this wasn't known, because when you looked at the blogs, [unintelligible] of the blogs, the community, but really they were being paid.

²⁰ "El lado de la labor democratizadora de los blogs, que da voz a aquella gente que no la tenía, como que se ha perdido."

This Sifuentes was paid by Albarracín! Albarracín paid him per post, he paid him, he had [unintelligible] posts per day. Other people didn't have this work dynamic. (...) And... later they formed an alliance with [unintelligible], Sifuentes began to work for [the newspaper] Perú 21 (...). This wasn't an... independent blogosphere, a grassroots blogosphere; it's a corporate, politicised, clientelistic blogosphere, where there were favouritisms at the point of linking. (...) But this demonstrates that there is no independent blogosphere, it's privatised, the big media already have control over it! It is already centralised! So you reproduce this in the blogosphere, this tendency to counteract the media is repeated, and no sooner said than done, these guys are all undercover journalists. You see?"²¹

Structural links between the blogosphere and mass media were sometimes perceived as neutral or even positive (an achievement of bloggers who were now "setting the agenda"), but more often, as in the case quoted above, they were seen as problematic. The problem here was not simply "power", but rather something that could be called a "lack of marginality".

I have argued that marginality is a core value in counter-public blogging discourse. In the context of post-transitional Peru, it also constitutes a crucial precondition of vigilant and deliberative citizenship, as to many of my interviewees, structural and discursive marginality were inseparably linked. Losing the former meant necessarily losing the latter as well, and thus the ability to come up with new ideas, to remember history and interpret the present "differently" (deliberation), and to check on "the powerful" (vigilance). Both the importance of structural and discursive marginality for deliberative and vigilant citizenship and the consequences resulting from their loss are very well expressed in the following excerpt from one of my interviews:

"So we once talked about (...) what could happen in the future and would be dangerous for bloggers, right? The fact that/ blogs right now, or the vast majority of blogs are individual, right? They are people, specific individuals. Who don't have any kind of institutional affiliation, or at least they don't show it, and if they have one, you don't perceive it in the text, right? But there are more and more institutional blogs, for example *El Comercio*, no? They have their blogs, and they have columnists who are also bloggers, right? So the danger that I anticipate, I don't know if it's paranoia, is that in a while from now, in an effort to have an institutional apparatus that supports them or in order to reach more people, bloggers could mortgage their... their stance, their credibility, or their ideas, to some kind of macro-institution, right? So, the loss of independence, right? That would be much more terrible, even if they win readers and

²¹ "Eran asalariados de empresas, no, que eran parte de una maquinaria, que no se sabía, porque cuando tu veías los blogs, [ininteligible] de los blogs, la comunidad, pero en realidad a ellos les pagaban. Este Sifuentes era asalariado de Albarracín! Albarracín le pagaba por post, le pagaba, tenía [ininteligible] posts al día. Otra gente no tenía esa dinámica de trabajo. (...) Y... después se alinearon con [ininteligible], Sifuentes empezó a trabajar para Perú21 (...). No era una... blogósfera independiente, una blogósfera *grassroots*, de base; es una blogósfera corporativa, politizada, clientelista, donde había pues este favoritismos a la hora del enlace. (...) Pero eso te demuestra pues que no hay una blogósfera independiente, está privatizada, ¡los grandes medios tienen ya el control! ¡Ya está centralizada! O sea reproduces eso en la blogósfera, esta tendencia a contrarrestar a los medios vuelve a darse, y dicho y hecho, todos estos tipos son periodistas encubiertos. ¿Te das cuenta?"

reach more people, losing independence, if there is one virtue that we can salvage now, for better or for worse, it's that many bloggers act for art's sake; you don't earn a penny on this. You don't earn a penny. Some are very well established, no? Like Marco Sifuentes, he has jumped up to the media, no? And let's say he has established himself very well in his project, LaMula, and he is in the newspapers, he writes, right? (...) But Sifuentes used to be more... more critical of the... of the government, before, he was more.../ right? ... Now he is at [the newspaper] Perú21 and now he isn't the old Sifuentes anymore, no? So that could happen with many bloggers, right? And hopefully, well hopefully it's not the case, no? Because the Internet, in spite of all its dangers, is a space of freedom that should still be (...) conserved, right?

Do you think that there are more independent discussions on blogs than, say, in mainstream media?

Comparatively, I think so. Because a columnist at [the newspaper] *Correo* will hardly dare to write something against their director. Even though there are many talented people at *Correo*. For example Alfredo Barnechea, I think he's an intelligent guy, but he'll know why he publishes in *Correo*, but I did not read a single line by him criticising/ by any columnist, they all played dead. On the Internet... a blogger can have their own ideas, they can join in with a [unintelligible] let's say... it's not their institutional affiliation that moves them, except if it's part of the newspaper's blog, of the magazine's blog, right? But [they have] institutional independence, right? At least for now it seems to me that the Internet, the bloggers, for better or for worse, have this independence. For example [the blog] *Gran Combo [Club]*, right? Although I disagree with many things, Silvio Rendón seems like an intelligent guy. I think he's a guy who has written very good things. I think his is an interesting dissenting voice."²²

²² "Entonces, cierta vez se comentaba (...) lo que podría suceder en el futuro y sería peligroso para los bloggers, ¿no? El hecho de que/ en este momento los blogs, o la gran mayoría de blogs son individuales, ¿no? son personas, individuos concretos. Que no tienen ningún tipo de afiliación institucional, o al menos que no la ventilan, y si la tienen, no se percibe en el texto, ¿no? Pero cada vez aparecen más blogs institucionales, por ejemplo El Comercio, ¿no?, tiene sus blogs, y tiene sus columnistas que son bloggers también, ¿no? Entonces el peligro que yo digamos anticipo, no sé si paranoicamente, es que de aquí en un tiempo, los bloggers en su afán de tener un aparato institucional que los respalde, o en el hecho de llegar a mayor cantidad de gente, puedan empeñar su... su postura, su credibilidad, o sus ideas, a algún tipo de macro institución, ¿no? O sea la pérdida de la independencia, ¿no? Sería mucho más terrible, aunque ganen lectores y lleguen a más gente, la pérdida de la independencia, si alguna virtud podemos rescatar ahora es que para bien o para mal, muchos bloggers actuamos por amor al arte, no se gana un centavo en esto. No se gana un centavo. Algunos muy bien instalados, ¿no?, como Marco Sifuentes, ha saltado, ¿no?, a los medios, ¿no?, y digamos él se ha instalado muy bien en su proyecto LaMula, y está en periódicos, escribe, ¿no? (...) Pero Sifuentes antes era más.. más crítico con el.. con el gobierno, antes era más, ¿no?... Ahora está en Perú21 y ahora ya no es el Sifuentes de antes, ¿no?, entonces eso podría suceder con muchos bloggers, ¿no? Y ojalá, bueno ojalá no ocurra así, ¿no?, porque Internet, con todos los peligros que entraña, es un espacio de libertad que se debe (...) conservar todavía, ¿no?" – "¿Te parece que son/ que hay debates más independientes en los blogs que en los medios tradicionales digamos?" – "Comparativamente me parece que sí. Porque un columnista de *Correo* difícilmente se va a atrever a escribir algo contra su director. Y eso que en *Correo* hay mucha gente capaz. Por ejemplo Alfredo Barnechea, me parece un tipo inteligente, pero él sabrá por qué publique en *Correo*, pero no le leí una sola línea respecto a criticar/ a ningún columnista, todos se hicieron el muertito. En Internet este.. el blogger puede tener sus ideas, puede aunarse a un [ininteligible] digamos este.. no es su afiliación institucional la que lo mueve, salvo que forme parte del blog del diario, de la revista, ¿no? Pero (tiene) independencia institucional, ¿no? al menos ahora me parece que Internet, los bloggers, ¿no?, para bien o para mal tienen esta independencia. Por ejemplo el *Gran Combo*, ¿no? A pesar de que yo discrepo con muchas cosas, Silvio Rendón me parece un tipo

Discursive marginality appears here as a function of structural marginality. In other words, a truly alternative and critical, vigilant viewpoint necessarily requires independence, which is only possible in the absence of any structural links between bloggers and influential agents outside the blogosphere. The language used to narrate blogger Marco Sifuentes's move towards mass media describes his loss of marginality very graphically in terms of the physical: Sifuentes has "jumped up" to the media and "established himself very well" – an imagery that evokes both a physical gap between those "above" and those "below", and a difference between those who are firmly established in an influential but discursively restricted "institutional apparatus" and those who are marginal in terms of influence and readership, but freely floating in a space of institutional independence and discursive freedom.

I have argued earlier in this chapter that bloggers' counter-public narratives of blogging pointed to activities that fit within the framework of deliberative and vigilant citizenship. I have also argued that in these narratives, vigilance and deliberation in blogging were linked up with histories of marginality and that the wider public sphere constituted an important discursive counterpoint. The interview excerpts quoted above are examples of a common criticism among my interviewees, who perceived the "real-existing blogosphere" as not sufficiently marginal, and therefore unsuitable for either deliberation or vigilance. I have termed this discursive figure "lack of marginality", in order to stress the normative role of marginality in this discourse and its status as a precondition for vigilant and deliberative citizenship. In this discursive framework, losing structural marginality inevitably has a strong negative impact on discursive marginality, as power and influence are traded for one's "stance, credibility and ideas" and hence for the ability to practise either deliberative or vigilant citizenship.

Power

Linked to narratives of marginality is the question of power. It is important to discuss the problem of power separately from the concept of "lack of marginality", as the two mean slightly different things and their criticism is grounded in different values of counter-public discourse. Lack of marginality, on the one hand, refers to structural closeness to "powerful agents" and is linked to losing the ability of the affected person to practise vigilant and deliberative citizenship. This concept is thus based on oppositional values in counter-public discourse and on the status of marginality as a precondition of vigilant and deliberative

inteligente. Me parece un tipo que ha escrito cosas muy buenas. Me parece que es una voz disidente interesante."

citizenship. Power, on the other hand, is framed as in my interviewees' "critical" narratives the capacity to restrict and govern space and "voice", and is thus mainly concerned with egalitarian values and narratives of democratisation of the public sphere in counter-public discourse. The impact of power is not on the powerful, but on the citizenship of those who are "truly" marginal. What is at stake here is the restriction of the deliberative and vigilant practices of marginal citizens by those "in power".

Relationships of power between bloggers were highly contested among my interviewees. Some of them perceived the Peruvian blogosphere as a hierarchical space consisting of "clusters" of bloggers, institutions and powerful individuals. These narratives presented the blogosphere as shaped by powerful nodes of influential bloggers that developed at points of intersection between the blogosphere and the wider public sphere discussed above. These "power nodes" were often described using terms such as "circle" [argolla], "confraternity" [cofradía], "apparatus", or "front", which evoke an aggressively exclusive character. Marginality still plays an important role in these narratives, but is constructed individually and in relationship to networks of influence that cut across the clear boundaries which separate the spheres in the "idealistic" narrative, rather than collectively and in relationship to an externalised other.

The following excerpt from one of my interviews represents a particularly compelling example of narratives of power inside the Peruvian blogosphere. According to this blogger, the history of the Peruvian blogosphere is a history of concentration of power and monopolisation. His account begins²³ with a narrative of concentration of bloggers and generation of power:

"Do you know the history of the Peruvian blogosphere?"

"No."

"At least my version of it [laughs]."

"Of course, of course."

"(...) There was [already] a blogosphere here in Peru, there were... groups of blogs. It's very easy to set up a blog. Wordpress, BlogSpot, there were several... several servers. But this begins to happen when groups, communities start to appear. The first community is BlogsPeru, by Juan Arrellano. But they had a very... let's say a communitarian approach. We'll be a group, we'll join up together, we'll form a nucleus. And this changes when PeruBlogs enters the scene, by Javier Albarracín. He's a guy who comes from Interbank, with an MBA, and he has a business conception. He continues to nucleate those blogs, right? To join them up on one server, in one directory, but with ads, with favourite blogs, with rankings, with days, blog days,

²³ Minor changes have been made to the sequence of different parts of the following quotations. This has been done for analytical reasons, to break up a long quotation, make it more readable and facilitate the separate discussion of different topics raised in it.

commercials, and he has a very commercial approach. And this is where the blogosphere as you know it today arises from, the blog stars arise from there. They arise from there. Pushed, promoted by Javier Albarracín's group. Now, of course, what happens with Javier is that he brings in a guy who comes from... who used to work for [TV journalist] Cecilia Valenzuela, a guy who did the reports for her, Marco Sifuentes, right? And that's something of the connections that he has, he sees this guy who has links with the media, who is able to move the camera, right? And that's his winning alliance, so to speak. And that was some sort of I would say golden age of the blogosphere, where they promoted themselves. (...) And also the media, like [the newspapers] El Comercio, eehm..., La República, are starting to have their own blogs. Who at first criticised and attacked the blogs, they now have their own blogs. Blogs by [the newspaper] Peru21, they begin to become a bit like chains, but concentrated around them, they begin to absorb independent blogs. You can see that in Twitter as well, they are incorporating them."²⁴

Stemming from a blogger with a radically different political perspective, the following interview excerpt offers a similar view of relationships between the blogosphere and the wider public sphere, which are described in terms such as "symbiosis", "[mutual] understanding", "media apparatus" and "solid front"²⁵:

"All the media have their blogs section, right? They distribute information from the.../ the blogs started by distributing media reports, now it's the other way around, right? Because... mainly those people who are dedicated to blogging, right? Now blogs create their own content and the press distributes them. [The press] adopted them, and they formed a symbiosis and then everything... (...) I mean first was the encounter, somewhat/ a not so friendly encounter, because we blogs started by claiming independence from the media, the traditional press, but then there was understanding, adoption, symbiosis, and now they all form a nice apparatus... a nice media apparatus, so... almost... solid. More or less a... a front/ it's a solid front, right?"

²⁴ "Tu sabes la historia de la blogosfera peruana?" – "No" – "Al menos mi versión de ella [risas]" – "Claro, claro" – "(...) Aquí en el Perú había una blogósfera, había... había ya... grupos de blogs. Que es muy fácil abrir un blog. Wordpress, este... blogspot, tenía varios este... varios servidores. Pero esto se empieza a dar cuando empieza a haber grupos, comunidades. La primera comunidad es BlogsPerú, de Juan Arellano. Pero ellos tenían una concepción muy... por decirlo así, comunitaria. Vamos a ser un grupo, vamos a juntarnos, vamos a nuclearnos, y esto cambia a partir de que entra en escena PerúBlogs, de Javier Albarracín. Es un chico que viene de Interbank, de la maestría en negocios, y él tiene una concepción empresarial. El que sigue nuclear pues estos blogs, ¿no? juntarlos en un servidor, en un directorio, pero con avisaje, con blogs favoritos, con rankings, con días, blogdays, comerciales, y tiene una concepción muy comercial. Y de ahí es que surge esta blogosfera como la conoces ahora, las estrellas de blogs, los blogstars surgen de ahí. Surgen de ahí. Promovidos, promocionados por este grupo de Javier Albarracín. Ahora, claro. Lo que ocurre con Javier es que el trae a un chico que viene de... que trabajaba con Cecilia Valenzuela, un tío que le hacía los reportes, Marco Sifuentes, ¿no? Y eso es un poco la alianza que tiene, que ve a este chico que está conectado con los medios, tiene capacidad para mover la cámara, ¿no? Y este es un poco su alianza ganadora, por decir así. Y esta fue una especie yo diría de época de oro de la blogósfera, en los cuales ellos se promueven. (...) Y también los medios, como el Comercio, eeh... La Republica, empiezan a tener sus propios blogs. Que antes criticaban, atacaban a los blogs, ellos tienen ya blogs de la casa. Blogs de Peru21, empiezan a ser un poco cadenas, pero nucleadas alrededor de ellos, empiezan a absorber a blogs independientes, en Twitter se nota también, los va incorporando."

²⁵ Note, however, that this blogger doesn't seem to include himself in this process: While the initial claim of bloggers to independence is made in the first person plural, the subject of the "nice apparatus" is "them".

(...) And they are/ I think they are representing interests... a political agenda and a political interest, which is very/ fairly... fairly clear, no?"²⁶

These two narratives are not so much concerned with a "lack of marginality" resulting in the inability of the affected subject to practise vigilant citizenship, but with the problem of *power within* the blogosphere. Describing a process of structural concentration around and absorption by "powerful agents" (who have come to the initially grassroots-led blogosphere from "outside") these accounts form a foundation for a critique of the restriction of the deliberative and vigilant citizenship of *others* in the Peruvian blogosphere. Some bloggers thus argued that the centralised structure of "power nodes" described above correlates with the concentration of discursive space and the marginalisation of dissenting bloggers inside the blogosphere, a problem that affects their deliberative as well as vigilant citizenship.

This criticism refers to "the difference between speaking and being heard" (Hindman 2009, p.16, ff.) as an important aspect of inequality among bloggers, emphasised by Hindman in his study of the US blogosphere: although blogging is indeed, in theory, open to anybody who has access to the Internet and the necessary basic skills, in praxis most of the vast number of existing blogs attract only minimal readership, while most of the traffic is concentrated in a small number of highly visible blogs. Explanations for differences in readership were contested among Peruvian bloggers (some explained their success in more meritocratic ways), but for some of my interviewees this difference depended on a blogger's social capital or networks in "real life" and the enabling or restricting activity of powerful actors within the blogosphere.

Rather than imagining the blogosphere as an egalitarian space where the inequalities that shape society offline can be overcome, these bloggers described it as reproducing the patterns that govern participation and structure deliberative and vigilant citizenship in the wider public sphere. This was the perception of one of my interviewees, who concluded that "in reality we reproduce the structure of power in Peru. There are people who are *arribistes*, who get into power. There are marginal people. And... there are people who are out"²⁷. According to the

²⁶ "Todos los medios tienen su sección de blogs, ¿no?, rebotan información de la... de la.../ los blogs comenzamos rebotando información de los medios, ahora es al revés, ¿no? Porque... sobre todo esta gente que se dedica a bloguear, ¿no?, ya los blogs crean sus propios contenidos y ahí ya la... la prensa los rebotó, pues. Los adoptó y crearon una simbiosis y ahí ya todo... (...) o sea primero fue el encuentro, algo de con/ el encuentro no tan amistoso, porque los blogs comenzamos reclamando independencia frente a los medios, a la prensa tradicional, pero después se dio el entendimiento, la adopción, la simbiosis, y ahora ya todos están formando un bonito aparato de... un bonito aparato mediático, así... casi... compacto. Mas o menos un... un frente/ es un frente compacto, pues, ¿no? (...) y que están, me parece que están manifestando pues intereses... una agenda política y un interés político muy/ bastante... bastante claro, ¿no?"

²⁷ "En realidad reproducimos los esquemas del poder en el Perú, ¿no? Hay gente que es arribista, que llega al poder, ¿no?, hay gente que es marginal, ¿no? Y... hay gente que es afuera."

same blogger, the key to being read in the blogosphere is in the “real world” networks a blogger can mobilise:

“The blogger arrives at the blogosphere like a newborn who is helpless, naked, with nothing. Very good. What do you need? Because nobody is going to read them just because of their pretty face. No? (...) No one will read them, right? If they don’t have networks. Friends, admirers, curious people, fans, right? Talibans, etcetera, who want to read them, who want to defend them, who want to attack them, who want to sacrifice themselves for them, OK? If they have that, they will be read, if not, they won’t read, nor discuss them. So a blogger is successful to the extent that they already have previous contacts with the real world”²⁸

For some of my interviewees, the “power nodes” described above, in particular, played a crucial role in the distribution of readership among different blogs. From this point of view, an individual blogger’s readership depended substantially on the quality of his or her relationship with the “power node”. One of my interviewees likened the politics of linking in the Peruvian blogosphere to controlling the flow of water on a farm:

“Of course, if you are not a part of this node of insiders, then you are out! Right? They didn’t give you any links, they didn’t give you any traffic, you were not a part, like that... (...) If you aren’t in, you are out. You are out! Then... and on top of that, well, it’s like an aggressive group, monolithic, they stick together. (...) It’s like you can have a blog and say very interesting stuff, but if nobody reads you, nobody invites you, you are out! This is very clear in the case of the provinces. (...) The linking thing, I see it like this: it’s like you have a piece of land and you want to irrigate it. So there is another person who owns the piece of land above, where the water flows though. And that person says, since I don’t own that land, I’m going to cut your water supply. Right? Something like that. So they are actually privatising the flow. It’s true that the river flows through their piece of land, through that person’s field. But of course, you may own the land, but not the water! So by denying you the water, you [sic] are ruining your land. What can one do without water? (...) So these links are a bit like a part of the flow.”²⁹

²⁸ “El bloguero llega a la blogósfera pues como un recién nacido, o sea indefenso, desnudo, sin nada. Muy bien. ¿Qué necesita? Porque por su linda cara no lo van a leer. ¿No? (...) No lo va a leer nadie, ¿no? si no tiene redes. Amigos, admiradores, curiosos, fans, ¿no? Estee talibanes, etcétera, que quieran leerlo, que quieran defenderlo, que quieran atacarlo, que quieran inmolarse por él, ya. Si tiene eso, será leído, si no lo tiene, no lo leerán, ni lo comentarán. Entonces, un blogger es exitoso en la medida en que ya tenga contactos previos con el mundo real.”

²⁹ “Claro, si tú no eres parte de ese núcleo de insiders, ¡estás out! ¿Ya? No te daban enlaces, no te daban flujo, no eras parte, así... (...) si no estás in, estás out. ¡Estás out! Entonces este... y además, bueno es un grupo como agresivo, monolítico, se concentran entre ellos. (...) Es que tú puedes tener un blog y decir cosas muy interesantes, pero si nadie te lee, nadie te invita, estás out. Es muy claro en caso de provincias. (...) Esto del enlace yo lo veo como que tú tienes un fundo, una tierra, y tú... y tú quieres regarlo. Entonces tienes a una persona que tiene el fundo arriba, por el cual pasa el agua. Y la persona dice, como el fundo... como este fundo no es de mi propiedad yo te corto el agua. ¿No? Una cosa así. Entonces el flujo en realidad ellos lo privatizan. Es verdad que el río pasa por su fundo, de esta chacra de esta persona. Pero claro, será tuyo pues el fundo, pero no el agua. Entonces al negarte el agua, arruinas a tu fundo. ¿Uno que hace sin agua? (...) Entonces estos enlaces son parte un poco del flujo.”

For these practitioners, the extent to which a blogger was able to practise citizenship (be it deliberative or vigilant) depended not only on their own virtue, expressed in their capacity to maintain structural and discursive marginality or lack thereof, as described above; it furthermore depended on their position within a field of power and the degree to which this *allowed* them to participate in any meaningful way. In their accounts, deliberative and vigilant citizenship is thus not only a question of personal virtue, but one of patterns of inclusion and exclusion that are beyond their own individual influence and, to a certain degree, go hand-in-hand with the virtue of marginality.

These criticisms mirror Peruvian social scientists' observations regarding the middle classes' government of space, which stress the coexistence of egalitarian discourses of citizenship with exclusionary practices, a topic that shall be addressed in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis. In this sense, Díaz-Albertini Figueras affirms that

"[The absence of a generalised egalitarian political culture in Peru] does not mean that the middle classes in general have not interiorised the modern discourse of citizenship, equality, and efficiency. But this discourse has not been appropriately accompanied by practices, which are more strongly marked by the dynamics of close relationships. (...) Instead of trying to substantially influence the character of economic and political society, they have sought a way of adapting to the political see-saw. Hence the importance our middle classes attribute to social relations which allow for a better adaptation to the political and economic circumstances. As a culture, it is more predisposed to attribution (who are you, whom do you know) than to acquisition (merits)." (2000, p.32, f.)

He concludes that in the spaces whose inhabitancy defines the middle class, "the notions of equality so characteristic of the middle class as bearers of modernity were practiced, although this was not their social and political praxis in the public sphere" (Díaz-Albertini Figueras 2000, p.34). A similar observation has been made by Fuller:

"The world view of the Peruvian middle classes is characterised by the ambivalence of shared values typical of hierarchical societies which adopted, formally, the judicial and ideological principles of a republic of citizens (freedom and equality). Although the members of the middle class subscribe to egalitarian values, the institutions which give coherence to them – the family and networks of kinship and friendship – and the representations which allow them to identify each other as *decent people*, are based upon hierarchical, contextual, and particularistic principles. The hierarchical world view has not been substituted by a set of ethical principles or social practices grounded in citizenship. The two models coexist in everyday interactions and in the institutional life of Peruvian society." (1997b, p.57)

This critique points to an important problem of citizenship in general: the problem of exclusion. As Isin and Turner have argued, citizenship is "an exclusionary category. This is a generic problem, since that which includes must by definition exclude" (Isin & Turner 2002, p.5). I shall discuss the regulation of speech in the Peruvian blogosphere (and thus both the

limits of deliberative citizenship and the sometimes excessive expressions of vigilant citizenship) in Chapter VI.

On the following pages, however, I shall concentrate on a third criticism of deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere. This criticism referred to the way bloggers dealt with dissent and conflict, and questions the way their normative emphasis on free and equal deliberation translates into praxis.

Dissent and Conflict

Some scholars of social media have stressed the conflict-prone and polarisation-prone character of the Web 2.0, both empirically and theoretically. Arguing that the Internet is embedded in wider socio-political and cultural contexts and therefore also reflects their conflicts, Bräuchler approaches the Internet as a “conflict tool”:

“Precisely because cyberspace is embedded in local sociopolitical and cultural contexts and is therefore not a sphere isolated from ‘real’ daily interests and politics, the Internet’s potential is not only used for the good. People do not only use it to promote good governance and democratization, (...) but also to counter these and to foster war. The Internet as a conflict tool is far from being a neutral playground” (2007, p.332; see also Deibert & Rohozinski 2008).

In a similar vein, Kelly and Etling have criticised simplifying narratives of online dissent that localise conflict mainly in the space between the blogosphere and its outside:

“If the Iranian blogosphere is a place where women speak out for their rights, young people criticize the moral police, journalists fight against censorship, reformists press for change, and dissidents press for revolution, it is also a place where the Supreme Leader is praised, the Holocaust denied, the Islamic Revolution defended, Hezbollah celebrated, Islamist student groups mobilized, and pro-establishment leaders, including President Ahmadinejad, reach out to their very real constituencies within the Iranian public.” (2008, p.5)

Sunstein (2009; 2008) has even argued that conflict is built into the structure of the Web 2.0, whose technological make-up might foster fragmentation, polarization, and even extremism. By allowing users to customise and filter content according to their interests, they are given greater possibilities to consume content that confirms their views and ignore challenging opinions:

“The rise of blogs makes it all the easier for people to live in echo chambers of their own design. Indeed some bloggers, and many readers of blogs, live in information cocoons. Shared identities are often salient on the blogosphere, in a way that makes polarization both more likely and more likely to be large.” (2008, p.94)

Lawrence et al. confirmed this view, arguing that:

“Blog readers appear highly polarized relative to non-blog readers and other news consumers, and are very nearly as polarized as US senators. Because the typical blog

reader is rarely exposed to the views of blogs on the opposite side of the political spectrum, the deliberative potential of blogs likely suffers.” (2010, p.149)

While the “idealistic” narrative of blogging largely ignored conflict within the blogosphere, some of my interviewees offered a different account of the Peruvian blogosphere. While most valued diversity of opinion and ideas, as well as unrestricted deliberation among bloggers of different political affiliations, these bloggers were sceptical about the degree to which these values were put into practice in the “real-existing” blogosphere. There were two main reasons for this scepticism: some of my interviewees perceived the blogosphere as a space of limited political diversity. These bloggers, who usually found themselves disagreeing with what they perceived to be the “hegemonic” political narratives in the blogosphere, were often frustrated with this lack of discursive diversity. Others perceived the Peruvian blogosphere as a highly polarised space, which reproduced the conflicts that existed in wider society. In the words of one blogger, “the tendency to conflict which Peru already has, this tendency is reflected very much in the Peruvian blogosphere”³⁰. These bloggers described the blogosphere as a predatory environment.

My interviewees’ practical responses to conflict varied, including withdrawal, conciliation, exclusion, and attack. Both conciliatory and more aggressive attitudes to conflict resolution were often rooted in bloggers’ lived experience of conflict in the blogosphere, as a result of which several had changed their approach to conflict over time. Nevertheless, it was rare for bloggers simply to dismiss the utopian counter-public values: rather, their critical assessment of the “real-existing blogosphere” emphasised the importance of critical deliberation on a normative level, and their sometimes cynical approach to dealing with conflict seemed to reflect resignation rather than conviction.

Many of the bloggers I interviewed subscribed to pluralistic values, at least on a normative level. The pronounced interest in broadening the range of subjects, ideas, and interpretations in the public sphere, which informed the narratives of discursive marginality discussed above was noticeable in bloggers’ approaches to dissent as well: many of them attributed great value to pluralism of ideas and free deliberation, stressing the importance of blogs as spaces of critical debate in the context of a wider public sphere which they perceived as restricted and biased.

Deliberation between dissenting parts was often explicitly framed in terms of citizenship. For example, one of my interviewees argued that “we are citizens, let’s say... to promote

³⁰ “La conflictividad que ya tiene el Peru, esta conflictividad se refleja mucho en la blogosfera peruana.”

democratic institutions one has to promote civic debate, right?”³¹ Sometimes narratives of blogging as deliberative citizenship were framed in strikingly Habermasian terms, as in the following example:

“And so, at events such as *Blog Days* and things like that, little by little, I got to know in person the people I had discussed with, whom you had quoted and who had commented in your blog, criticising you, or who had written a counter-critique, right? And... It’s interesting because in the end it’s people who/ one thing is knowing people by [unintelligible] Internet, the classical people, by chat, no? Who [unintelligible], but this is different because it’s some sort of confluence of ideas, and I feel that in these days where there are no forums any more, where there are no town squares where people have time to go to and discuss and offer an opinion, [raise issues] and give an opinion and discuss, the blogosphere, even though it is very elitist, very small, still very reduced, and has a very, very, very, very small impact, is a first step, no? Towards this kind of political discussion. This interaction in which the citizen with time maybe doesn’t stop in... the street to talk any longer, but stops in this public street, no? And of course, it is also an interested public, because in the blogosphere there are thousands of topics, right?”³²

As these examples from my interviews show, on a normative level, diversity of opinion was often framed positively. However, while many of my interviewees valued blogs as sites of civic deliberation and productive dissent, they were often more sceptical about the extent to which this kind of debate was actually practised or even possible in the “real-existing blogosphere”. In spite of the great value attributed to civic debate in blogging discourse, several of the bloggers I talked to criticised the Peruvian blogosphere as a highly homogenous space in terms of political views. Not surprisingly, this homogeneity was considered a problem mainly by those of my interviewees who, although they held diverse political opinions, disagreed with the narratives they perceived to be “hegemonic” in the blogosphere.

Examples mentioned by my interviewees often referred to problems and policies relating to the post-transitional condition (such as attitudes towards the Truth and Reconciliation

³¹ “Somos ciudadanos que digamos este... para promover instituciones democráticas hay que promover la discusión cívica, ¿no?”

³² “Y... y de ahí, así, o sea en estos eventos de Blogdays y cosas así poco a poco llegué a conocer personalmente a la gente con las que he discutido, que con las que... eeh que has citado y que han comentado en tu blog, criticándote o te han escrito un post de contra crítica, ¿no? Y... es interesante porque finalmente es gente pues que/ una cosa es conocer a gente por [ininteligible] Internet, la/ la gente clásica por chat, no, que [ininteligible] pero esto es distinto porque es una especie de confluencia de ideas y siento que en esta época donde ya no hay foros, ya no hay plazas donde la gente se tenga tiempo para llegar y discutir y poner una opinión, [levantar] y opinar y discutir, la blogósfera a pesar de que sea/ es muy elitista, muy chiquita, todavía muy reducida, y tiene un impacto muy muy muy muy pequeño, es un comienzo, ¿no? Para esta clase de discusión política. Esa interacción de que/ el ciudadano con tiempo ya de repente no se para en... en la calle a hablar, pero se para en esta calle pública, ¿no? Y claro, siendo un público interesado también, porque en la blogósfera pues tienen mil temas, ¿no?”

Commission, competing narratives of the internal armed conflict, etc.³³), a political field that is highly contested in contemporary Peruvian society in general (Barrantes Segura & Peña Romero 2006). The following quote discusses a perceived lack of political diversity, describing post-transitional discourse in the Peruvian blogosphere as a “monotonous” and “self-affirming” *“pensée unique”*. Using the pejorative term *caviar* – a Peruvian equivalent to the “champagne socialist” in the English-speaking world – this blogger described the local blogosphere as a *caviarosphere*, pointing both to its demographic and political homogeneity:

“You will have heard this term already for having lived here for so long, that term *caviar*, right? (...) Now, let’s say that the Peruvian blogosphere is like a *caviarosphere*, right? I mean eeh there/ yes/ it’s a *caviarosphere*, because eighty percent of the opinions of the eehm blogs... well known blogs, because there are many radical blogs, but they are unknown or marginalised, or simply because of their low quality they are not known, but most of the/ of this *caviarosphere* are super well-intentioned people, young people, education mostly San Marcos [University], Catholic [University], who come from... I do not know if you realise that they come from a certain... I mean they share certain characteristics, which... which... which turn them into an entity, right?”

“Like what?”

“For example... eeh... many of them are/ I mean, they are between twenty- ... three and twenty-eight years old. So, for example when they refer to the era of the ‘80s there is a much more diffuse memory. Bloggers who are a little bit older, let’s say they take it... I mean... they dwell on this sort of thing a little longer. They can equally be... say, just to call them something/ not to call them *caviar*, but to give them a nickname of a certain/ somewhat left-leaning. They are very critical of... the ‘90s. Of what was... Fujimori’s regime, right? (...) And it isn’t fashionable to remember certain things in certain ways. Because it is a kind of intellectual fashion. Here is/ in Lima the Catholic [University] and San Marcos have the dominant thought of the intelligentsia. In particular with regard to sociology, political science, anthropology, all this is absolutely dominated [by them]. And obviously all this is a view from a leftist perspective, there could be a different view, but the trouble is that as they are/ there are no... right-leaning people in these same disciplines, because these are disciplines that always attract people on the left. Eeem... this generates a monotonous discourse, right? Which gets very similar and self-affirming, right? I mean someone says something and the other says the same thing and they affirm themselves and they quote themselves, and a circuit of self-assertion is generated and this generates a truth that ends up

³³ It is possible that these examples were influenced by my introduction of the research project to interviewees. At the time of my interviews, the post-transitional condition had greater relevance in the overall project, than it has in the final outcome. However, the strong presence of post-transitional problems and conflicts surrounding these problems in the Peruvian blogosphere, which inspired my initial focus on blogging and the post-transitional condition, is independent of my research project.

being a solid thing. And that to me is something that exasperates me, right? (...) There is some sort of *pensée unique* pullulating there.”³⁴

A similar perception was expressed by another blogger, who described the Peruvian blogosphere as biased, linking a perceived lack of diversity in political thought to the homogenous and relatively unrepresentative demographic of the blogosphere:

“Peruvian blogs are politically correct. Peruvians appeal to indignation. They appeal to... yes, to indignation, to political correctness, they are very... emotional. They are indignant about everything and anything. And what they don’t realise is that if university students and the academic community already have a bias, then blogs have an even greater bias. No/ eeehm... in the sense that/ in the end it’s an elite, it’s a progressive elite, eeehm/ *caviar*, cynical, those who write in this kind of social networks. Eeehm... there are two or three critics who have a different point of view, but it seems to me that the majority and the general tendency in the blogs is politically correct.”³⁵

The examples quoted above criticised a lack of plurality of political thought in the Peruvian blogosphere, resulting in a dynamic of “self-assertion”. These bloggers argued that civic debate in the Peruvian blogosphere – and thus the possibility of deliberative citizenship – was limited by a high degree of political consensus among Peruvian bloggers.

³⁴ “Habrás conocido este término ya por vivir tanto acá este el término *caviar*, ¿no? (...) Ya, digamos que la blogósfera peruana es como una caviarósfera, ¿no? O sea eeh ahí/ sí, la/ es una caviarósfera, porque el ochenta por ciento de las opiniones de los blogs estee.. conocidos, porque hay muchos blogs radicales, pero son desconocidos o marginados o simplemente por su poca calidad no son conocido, pero la mayoría de los/ de esta caviarósfera o sea son gente superintencionada, jóvenes, la mayoría de educación San Marcos, Católica que proviene.. no sé si te das cuenta que proviene de determinado.. o sea comparte determinadas características, que... que.. que los vuelve un conjunto, ¿no?” – “¿Como qué?” – “Por ejemplo.. eeh.. muchos de ellos tienen/ o sea oscilan entre los veinti...tres a veintiocho años. Entonces por ejemplo cuando se refieren a la época de los 80s hay una memoria mucho más difusa. Los blogueros que tienen un poco mas de edad digamos que lo toman.. o sea.. dan más vueltas a este tipo de asunto. Igual pueden ser.. digamos por ponerles/ no llamarlos caviares, pero por ponerles un mote de determi/ de algunas tendencias de izquierda. Tienen una visión muy crítica con los.. con los ‘90s. Con lo que fue.. el régimen de Fujimori, ¿no? (...) Y no está de moda recordar de determinadas maneras algunas cosas. Porque es una especie de moda intelectual. Acá hay/ en Lima el pensamiento dominante de la inteligencia lo tiene la Católica y San Marcos. En materia sobre todo de la sociología, ciencia política, antropología, todo esto es un dominio absoluto. Y obviamente todo esto es una visión del punto de vista izquierda, que podría tener otra visión, pero lo malo es que como son/ no hay.. gente de derecha metida en esas mismas ciencias, porque son ciencias que atraen siempre a gente de izquierda. Eem... se genera un discurso monotónico, no, que comienza a ser estee bien parecido y autoafirmante. ¿No? O sea alguien opina algo y el otro opina lo mismo y se autoafirman y se autocitan, se genera un circuito de autoafirmación y genera una verdad que al final es una cosa sólida. Y eso a mí es algo que me desespera, ¿no? (...) hay un pensamiento medio único ahí que es que pulula.”

³⁵ “Los blogs peruanos son políticamente correctos. Los peruanos apelan a la indignación. Apelan a la... sí, a la indignación, a la corrección política, son muy... emotivos. Se indignan por cualquier cosa. Y lo de que no se dan cuenta es que si ya de por sí los estudiantes universitarios, la comunidad académica ya tiene un sesgo, los blogs tienen un sesgo mayor. No/ este... eeeh en el sentido que/ es finalmente una élite, es una élite progresista, eeeh *caviar*, cínica, que son los que... eh... escriben en este tipo de redes sociales. Este... por ahí aparecen dos, tres críticos, que tienen otro punto de vista, pero me parece que la mayoría y la tendencia generalizada en los blogs es políticamente correcto.”

However, narratives of dissent in the blogosphere were often similarly sceptical. The use of terms such as “politically correct”, “indignant”, or “emotional” in the interview excerpt quoted above suggest that political views about controversial topics are often passionately held, leaving little room for negotiation. As one blogger put it:

“There are no intermediate positions. I mean, my intermediate discourse [unintelligible] is a tiny little voice speaking out there, which is talking to one hundred people, and there are four more voices around. Because the other voices are voices of the extreme right, who defend the system, or of the left, who want to change everything, or of people who don’t know what to do. Who don’t know what to do and say, ‘Well... It’s all bad!’”³⁶

Under such circumstances, many of my interviewees found it difficult to have meaningful debates with other bloggers. These bloggers described the blogosphere as a highly-polarised environment, which was characterised by a clash of opinions, rather than by the “confluence of ideas” mentioned in an interview quotation further above. However, as the following quotation exemplifies, bloggers did not abandon utopian notions of blogging in the face of a polarised and inflexible blogosphere:

“In general I feel that these spaces should try to construct visions that in some cases complement, or disagree with the kind of common sense that has been elaborated about the Truth Commission’s report, for example, right? So there are many people who take the Truth Commission’s report as the basis of... of what we know about what happened, and eehm... and there is some sort of... of... I don’t know, of a view that it’s either everything or nothing, right? It’s like... those who defend the TRC almost defend it against everything, and on the other side there are those who attack its conclusions and its recommendations, and it’s like in the middle... there aren’t many people, right? It’s a bit like... it’s everything or nothing, and I think that there is more and more polarisation, the debate is getting somewhat pointless. So I think that there are a few blogs who try to put something in between, right? But I get the impression that those are still just a few, most of the people in the blogosphere are like... either very... glued to what the Truth Commission says, and I think there aren’t many blogs on the other side, right?”³⁷

³⁶ “Las posiciones intermedias no existen. O sea mi discurso intermedio [ininteligible] mi blog es una vocecita así que habla por ahí, que le habla a cien personas y cuatro voces más por ahí. Porque las otras voces son voces de derecha extrema, que defienden el sistema, o de izquierda que quieren cambiar todo, o de gente que no sabe qué hacer. Que no sabe qué hacer y dice bueno... ¡todo está mal!”

³⁷ “En general es cómo que estos espacios me parece deberían tratar de construir visiones que complementen en algunos casos, o que disientan de la suerte de sentido común que se ha elaborado sobre el informe de la Comisión de la Verdad, por ejemplo, ¿no? Entonces hay mucha gente que toma como que el informe de la CVR es la base del... de lo que sabemos sobre lo que pasó, y este... y hay una suerte de... de... no sé, ¿no? de visión es todo o nada, ¿no? es como que... los defensores de la CVR como que la defienden así contra todo, y por el otro lado están los que la atacan en sus conclusiones y en sus recomendaciones, y como que en el medio... no hay mucha gente, ¿no? Es como que es... un todo o nada, y yo creo que cada vez hay más polarización, el debate se vuelve medio ¿no? inútil. Entonces creo que hay algunos blogs que tratan de poner cosas en el medio, ¿no? Pero me da la impresión de que todavía son pocos, la mayoría de la gente de la blogósfera esta como que... o muy... pegada a lo que dice la Comisión de la Verdad, y creo que no hay muchos blogs por el otro lado, ¿no?”

In this example, the political divisions of the Peruvian blogosphere are described quite graphically in spatial terms, as two opposing parties separated by a yawning chasm. Due to the Manichaeic character of the views, this seems impossible to bridge, rendering debate “somewhat pointless” – yet at the same time, the ideal of free deliberation and pluralism is upheld.

Dealing with Conflict and Dissent

Bloggers who disagreed with the narratives they perceived to be “hegemonic” in the blogosphere, often felt that their contributions were met with a less-than-tolerant response from other bloggers. They described the blogosphere as an aggressive environment, where dissenting opinions were met with antagonistic responses. Arguing that due to strong political opinions “true debate” was limited in the Peruvian blogosphere, a third blogger also pointed to a certain degree of aggressiveness in debates between bloggers of different political opinions:

“I think that there are few blogs where there is true debate. (...) Because what you get are opinions: ‘Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! Very good!’ Or: ‘No, no, no, no, no! That’s rubbish!’ But there is no ‘In reality, look, it seems to me that this for these and these and these reasons’. (...) In the topics that interest me, the possibility of debate is very limited because positions are very polarised. OK? So, they either say, ‘Oh, yes, it’s great, the article is great, right? I’ve always said that this is a farce!’ Right? This is the favourable argument number one, there are variations, but more or less that’s it. Or the contrary argument, ‘You are paranoid (...), I’ve always said so and you are talking nonsense without any proof’. OK? This is the counter argument, which has its multiple variations.”³⁸

Contrary to the narratives of marginality which stressed free deliberation in a space that was unrestricted by the restraints of mass media, these bloggers perceived the blogosphere as a space that generated its own restrictions and mechanisms of control.

“The blogs (...) to a large degree transmit or reproduce this kind of perception that exists in Peruvian society about the conflict, and the whole post-conflict process, and about how memory has been constructed about what happened. Eem... and... people who suggest some sort of/ I mean if I write this in my blog, many people will turn up, right? Insulting me, saying pro-Fujimorista, right? For saying this. For saying that/... I mean if I write this with confidence, [if I] say that I find it very difficult to accept the link between Fujimori’s role in the massacre and what the sentence says, I

³⁸ “Yo creo que los blogs donde verdaderamente hay debate son pocos. (...) Porque lo que tienes son opiniones, ah sí sí sí sí sí, ¡muy bien! o: nonononono, jeso es una porquería! Pero no tienes en realidad, mira me parece que esto por tales y tales y tales razones. (...) En los temas que son de mi... de mi interés, la posibilidad de debate es muy poca, porque las posiciones son muy polarizadas. ¿Ya? Entonces, o me dicen, ah ya, está chévere, está chévere el artículo, ¿no? ¡Siempre dije que esto era una farsa! ¿No? El argumento favorable, tipo uno, hay variantes, pero que digamos. O el argumento en contra, eres un paranoico (...), siempre lo he dicho y estás hablando tonterías sin pruebas. Ya. Esto es el argumento en contra tipo uno, que tiene sus múltiples variantes”

find it hard to accept, logically, right? (...) So this is valid under the assumptions A, B, C, D, and it's not so obvious that these assumptions are... no? Are completely valid, no? So if I write that, they'll call me a pro-Fujimorista, everything [unintelligible]. But if I write the other thing, that in reality I think that the armed forces were the main responsible party in terms of deaths during the armed conflict, all those from the radical right will come out, right? Who'll accuse me of being leftist, of being pro-terrorist, of being.../ So there is... no? There is a lot of that in Peruvian society in general and in the blogs in particular."³⁹

Faced with a blogosphere full of conflicts, my interviewees had developed a variety of different approaches to conflict transformation or resolution, ranging from conciliation, to exclusion, to attack. Some, but not all of them, made reference to notions of deliberative citizenship, using a conciliatory language and pursuing a "civilised" relationship. Others were more aggressive. The following two interview excerpts exemplify two very different approaches to conflict transformation or resolution. I shall address conflict resolution by exclusion in greater detail in Chapter VI, where practices of inclusion and exclusion in the Peruvian blogosphere will be discussed.

"I'm against... stigmatising positions too much, right? Even for example [in the case of] a blog that I completely disagree with in many topics, like Silvio Rendón's blog, I try to keep things peaceful with him, too. I've had discussions with him, about several topics. He is a very aggressive interlocutor. Very... very... / he doesn't try to [unintelligible] discussion like that, right? Bam! He puts the shoe right in front of you, right? And I know that if he puts a shoe right in front of you, and I put a few shoes [in front of him], that won't generate any... any benefit. If you put the shoe there right away, I say, 'Hmmm... yeah, but that's a shoe. But let's look at the other...' So, like this, in this way I [unintelligible] to keep things civilized with this kind of interlocutor. No?"⁴⁰

³⁹ "Los blogs (...) en gran medida transmiten o replican este tipo de percepciones que en la sociedad peruana existen sobre lo que fue el conflicto, y todo el proceso post conflicto y de como se ha ido construyendo la memoria sobre lo que pasó. Eeeh... y... la gente que plantea alguna/ o sea si yo escribo esto en mi blog, o sea va a aparecer un montón de gente, ¿no? Insultándose, diciendo pro fujimorista, ¿no? por decir esto. Por decir que... o sea si yo lo escribo con seguridad, decir que es/ me parece muy difícil que la conexión entre el rol de Fujimori en la matanza y lo que dice la sentencia me parece difícil aceptarlo, lógicamente, ¿no? (...) O sea esto es válido bajo el supuesto a, b, c, d, y no es tan obvio que estos supuestos sean este... ¿no? sean totalmente válidos, ¿no? O sea si escribo eso, me van a dar/ me van a decir pro fujimorista, todo lo [inintendible]. Pero si escribo lo otro, de que creo que en realidad ha sido el ejército y las fuerzas armadas los principales responsables en términos de muertes del conflicto armado, van a salir todos los del lado de derecha radical, ¿no?, que me van a acusar de izquierda, o de izquierdoso, pro terrorista, de.../ Entonces hay... ¿no? hay mucho de eso en la sociedad peruana en general y en los blogs en particular."

⁴⁰ "Aparte, no, yo estoy en contra de... de estigmatizar mucho las posiciones, ¿no? Incluso por ejemplo un blog con el que estoy totalmente en desacuerdo en muchos temas, como el de Silvio Rendón, con él intento llevar la fiesta en paz también. He tenido discusiones con él, sobre varios temas. Eee es un tí/ es un interlocutor muy agresivo. Muy estee... muy eem/ No... no trata [inintendible] discusión así, ¿no? ¡Bam! Te pone la zapatilla de frente, ¿no? Y yo sé de que si te pone la zapatilla en frente, y yo pongo algunas zapatillas, no genera ninguna... ningún fruto. Si pones la zapatilla de frente yo digo mmya, sí, pero esto es una zapatilla, pero veamos el otro... Entonces así de esta manera me [inintendible] a llevar o sea civilizadamente con esa clase de interlocutores. ¿No?"

“My policy is to respond. I strongly dislike this Peruvian policy, say, when someone attacks you, you don’t answer. No? ‘[Unintelligible] are silly arguments.’ (...) I do not like this oligarchic, aristocratic thing: ‘Ah, I do not respond’. I like to respond. ‘Ah, this is not my level’, right? My policy is to respond, even.../ It depends, no? But there are things I like to respond to. And in this issue (...) I chose to respond, and to attack. I believe... I believe in an eye for an eye. I’m not into the idea... of... of the other cheek. I believe in an eye for an eye, I think it’s a way to recover the dignity of the attacked, I think it’s a way to prevent the person who attacks you continuing to do it, to take the incentive away, a way to make them feel what they make you feel. No? And to put some of the weight onto the other person’s shoulders. (...) Someone hits me, I hit them back. [Unintelligible] ‘Police, this person hit me!’ And the other would be, well, a fist fight. A street fight in an Irish bar. No? And that was a bit my... my.../ And it worked! I’m pleased to tell you that it worked.”⁴¹

Approaches to conflict were often grounded in bloggers’ personal experiences of conflict in the Peruvian blogosphere and had sometimes changed over time, both from an aggressive to a more conciliatory approach and in the opposite direction. As in the following two examples, several of my interviewees described the development of their individual approach to conflict as a learning process, in the first case moving towards a more conciliatory approach, and in the latter in the opposite direction:

“Even though I’ve had fights in the blogosphere, I never got to have any bitter enemies, precisely because I’ve been participating in the Internet since ‘95, ‘96. In that epoch, when you are only just discovering the Internet, you think you’re the one who will have the final say, because as you’ll invest time in writing the answer, you’ll give an ironic answer, you’ll, in quotation marks, pardon my French, screw the other guy, right? And everybody who first enters the Internet believes that. (...) When you don’t look into the other person’s eyes, when you see a screen, it is easier to insult them. And your disagreements turn into something very aggressive. (...) And I had already lived through that, you could see that in the ‘90s already. Then, in the year 2004, 2005, 2006, it was the birth of/ the heyday of the blogs, (...) and I did not like to quarrel anymore, quarrel this badly. No? I liked to obtain some benefit from a conversation, and if a conversation went/ I mean I’ve fought with others, but [if a conversation] generates too much of that, I leave it. I can’t be bothered, because I know what it means to go to bed thinking about the other’s response and in the end

⁴¹ “Yo soy de la política de responder. A mí me disgusta mucho la política peruana digamos de cuando alguien te ataca, tu no respondes. ¿No? ‘[inintendible] son argumentos tontos’. (...) No me gusta esta cosa oligarca, aristocratica, ‘ah, yo no respondo’. A mí me gusta responder. ‘¡Ah, esto no es mi nivel!’ ¿No? Yo soy de la política de responder, incluso.../ depende, ¿no? Pero hay cosas que me gusta responder. Y en este tema (...) yo optaba por responder. Y por atacar. Yo creo... yo creo en el ojo por ojo. Yo no soy de la idea de... de... de la otra mejilla. Yo creo en el ojo por ojo, yo creo que es una forma de recuperar la dignidad del atacado, creo que es una forma de evitar que la persona que te ataca siga haciéndolo, desincentivarlo, una forma de hacerlo sentir lo que te está haciendo sentir a ti. ¿No? Y cargarle el peso también a la otra persona. (...) Alguien me mete un golpe, yo le meto un golpe también. [inintendible] policía, esta persona me ha golpeado. Y el otro sería bueno pues una *fist fight*. Una pelea callejera en un bar Irlandés. ¿No? Y fue un poco mi... mi.../ ¡y ha funcionado! Te puedo decir con gusto que ha funcionado.”

something/ a discussion that supposedly should be something that entertains you... will generate a loop in your head which is quite destructive, right?⁴²

"Last year (...) the blog decides to consider itself no longer open to dialogue. I mean we closed the comments, no? Say, because (...) I assumed that it was a farce to pretend that I was conversing with someone who really doesn't listen, and well, that (...) happens in blogs in general, right? In fact, as far as I can see, blogs don't converse with anyone. (...) At some point (...) I had to take ten or twenty insults every day, no? Insult insults, right? Which didn't lead anywhere, right? Which didn't lead to discussing anything, but were insults, and ugly ones at that, right? So I said, now, why should I maintain the illusion that I am debating with someone, right? In any case if I debate, it'll be on [another blog], but not on [my blog]. On [my blog] I won't debate with anyone, right? Then/ or I don't debate with anybody *any longer*, right? And this has been part of the evolution of [my blog]. (...) I would prefer/ I'd prefer to open it up. But... let's say at this moment I don't want to do it."⁴³

As the latter example shows, bloggers sometimes embraced counter-public values and deliberative notions of citizenship, but simultaneously took very different practical approaches to the resolution or transformation of conflicts. However, I found that these practical approaches to dealing with conflict seemed to reflect resignation rather than conviction and did not usually affect bloggers' allegiance to notions of deliberative citizenship "in theory".

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined my interviewees' accounts of blogging in post-transitional Peru from a perspective of deliberative and vigilant citizenship. I have identified two main narratives, both of which draw on a counter-public discursive framework. An "idealistic" narrative of blogging framed the blogosphere as a counter-hegemonic space, where

⁴² "A pesar de que he tenido broncas en la blogosfera nunca llegué a tener ningún enemigo acérrimo. Porque justamente yo... yo vengo participando en Internet desde el '95, '96. En esta época, cuando recién descubres Internet, tú crees de que eres el que tiene la última palabra porque como vas a poner tiempo para escribir la respuesta, vas a dar la respuesta irónica, vas a, digamos entre comillas, perdona la palabra, cagar al otro, ¿no? Y todo el mundo, que entra al comienzo al Internet cree esto. (...) Tú cuando no miras a los ojos a la persona, tú ves una pantalla, es más fácil insultarlo. Y tus discrepancias se transforman en una cosa muy agresiva. (...) Y eso yo ya lo viví, ya lo viste en los 90s. Entonces, en el año 2004, 2005, 2006 nació la/ el florecimiento de los blogs, (...)/ ya no me gustaba pelearme/ pelearme así duramente, ¿no? Me gustaba obtener un fruto en una conversación, y si la conversación se iba/ o sea me he peleado, pero [si una conversación] genera demasiado de eso, la abandono. No me da la cabeza, porque sé lo que es dormir pensando en la respuesta del otro y que al final una cosa/ una discusión que supuestamente tendría que ser algo que te entretuviera te... te genera un *loop* en la cabeza bien... bien destructivo, ¿no?"

⁴³ "El año pasado (...) ya el blog decide asumirse a sí mismo como ya no dialogante, o sea cerramos los comentarios, ¿no? Y este, digamos porque (...) asumí que era una farsa fingir que estaba dialogando con alguien que en realidad no escucha, y bueno, eso (...) es en los blogs en general, ¿no? En realidad los blogs hasta yo entiendo no dialogan con nadie. (...) En algún momento (...) tenía que encajar pues diariamente 10 o 20 insultos, ¿no? Insultos-insultos, ¿no? Que no llevaban a nada, ¿no? No llevaban a discutir nada, sino eran insultos, y feos, ¿no? Entonces yo dije, ya, para qué voy a mantener la ilusión que estoy debatiendo con alguien, ¿no? Ya en todo caso si debato, será en [otro blog], pero no en [mi blog], en [mi blog] no debato con nadie, ¿ya? Entonces/ o ya no debato con nadie, ¿no? Y esto ha sido parte de la evolución de [mi blog]. (...) Ya, yo preferiría, yo preferiría abrirlo. Pero... digamos que en este momento no lo quiero hacer."

alternative ideas and information could be published and discussed. This narrative described the blogosphere as an enabling and empowering space for the construction of vigilant and deliberative citizenship “against the state”. This account was challenged by a more sceptical account of the “real-existing blogosphere” as an aggressive and hierarchical space with multiple links and overlaps with the wider public sphere. While these bloggers adhered to counter-public values on a normative level, they nevertheless felt that the “real-existing” blogosphere was unsuitable for either vigilance or deliberation, and thus constituted a space of “limited citizenship”.

I have shown that the counter-public core value of marginality played an important role in these negative assessments of blogging as vigilant citizenship, arguing that some of my interviewees accused their fellow bloggers of “lacking marginality”. I have termed this discursive figure “lack of marginality”, rather than “power”, in order to stress the normative role of marginality in counter-public blogging discourse. In this discursive framework, losing structural marginality inevitably has a strong negative impact on discursive marginality, as power and influence are traded for one’s “posture, credibility and ideas” and hence for the ability to practise either deliberative or vigilant citizenship.

I also used the concept “lack of marginality” in order to distinguish these criticisms from another set of complaints, linked to the problem of “power” in the Peruvian blogosphere. While the “lack of marginality” criticism was more closely linked to a blogger’s credibility as a vigilant citizen, the problem of power referred to the degree to which an individual blogger was able to participate in public deliberation. Bloggers who worried about this aspect perceived the Peruvian blogosphere as a hierarchical space consisting of “clusters” of bloggers, institutions and powerful individuals who controlled the flow of readership (one of my interviewees used the image of a stream of water being cut off by a neighbouring farmer). The problem of power affected both deliberative and vigilant citizenship on the very basic level of inclusion and exclusion. It was thus less about individual civic virtue than about being allowed to act and participate as a citizen.

I finally discussed bloggers’ accounts of and approaches to dissent, conflict, and conflict resolution in the Peruvian blogosphere. I noted that while most of my interviewees adhered to deliberative notions of citizenship and valued productive dissent and pluralism of ideas, many were rather sceptical about the degree to which these ideals could be realised in the Peruvian blogosphere. There were two main reasons for this scepticism: some bloggers perceived the Peruvian blogosphere as a highly homogeneous space, where deliberation could not flourish due to lack of ideas. Others, in turn, found that deliberation was restricted by a high degree of

polarisation and due to the aggressiveness with which bloggers defended their ideas. In such a context, one blogger described debate as “somewhat pointless.”

Bloggers’ practical approaches to conflict resolution or transformation reflected these experiences, and several of them had changed their approach over time. However, they did not agree on a single best way of solving conflicts; rather, civically-minded and conciliatory approaches coexisted with more aggressive solutions. However, I found that these practical approaches to dealing with conflict seemed to reflect resignation rather than conviction and did not affect bloggers’ allegiance to deliberative democracy and counter-public values “in theory”.

The first step in the process of behavior change is the identification of the target behavior. This involves a clear and specific definition of the behavior that is to be modified. The second step is the assessment of the current level of the behavior. This is done through direct observation or self-report. The third step is the identification of the antecedents and consequences of the behavior. This is done through a functional analysis. The fourth step is the development of a behavior change plan. This plan should include the identification of the target behavior, the assessment of the current level of the behavior, the identification of the antecedents and consequences of the behavior, and the development of the behavior change plan. The fifth step is the implementation of the behavior change plan. This involves the use of various strategies to modify the behavior. The sixth step is the evaluation of the behavior change plan. This involves the measurement of the behavior over time to determine if the plan is effective.

The behavior change plan should be based on the principles of behavior change. These principles include the use of positive reinforcement, the use of punishment, the use of extinction, and the use of modeling. The behavior change plan should also be based on the principles of behavior change. These principles include the use of positive reinforcement, the use of punishment, the use of extinction, and the use of modeling. The behavior change plan should also be based on the principles of behavior change. These principles include the use of positive reinforcement, the use of punishment, the use of extinction, and the use of modeling.

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CHAPTER VI: THE OUTSIDE OF CITIZENSHIP – LIMITS OF DELIBERATION, VIGILANCE, AND EXCLUSION IN THE PERUVIAN BLOGOSPHERE

As I have argued in Chapter I, research on practices of citizenship in Peru has often emphasised their inclusive and democratising potential, partly because of the normative character of citizenship discourses and as a result of its focus on marginalised people; however, as Barnes et al. have argued, citizenship in praxis can involve exclusionary practices (Barnes et al. 2004), an interpretation that was also suggested by my interviewees' criticisms of power and conflict, discussed in Chapter V. In fact, one of the central problems of citizenship throughout history revolves around issues of inclusion and exclusion. As Isin and Turner argue, "while cast in the language of inclusion, belonging and universalism, modern citizenship has systematically made certain groups strangers and outsiders" (Isin & Turner 2002, p.3). According to these two scholars, the logic of exclusion from citizenship is inherent to its politics of inclusion. Citizenship is "thus an exclusionary category. This is a generic problem, since that which includes must by definition exclude" (Isin & Turner 2002, p.5).

In this final chapter, I shall argue that deliberative and vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere produced such exclusionary practices, which can be understood as exclusion "through" citizenship, rather than simply "from" citizenship. By using this expression, I wish to draw attention to the exclusionary practices inherent to citizenship. Drawing on a variety of examples, I shall show that "deliberation", while embedded in a pluralist discourse, has clear boundaries; I call these boundaries the "limits of deliberation". Speech acts beyond these limits were considered illegitimate and could therefore be censored, without needing to abandon an equally important democratic discourse of deliberative citizenship. Bloggers have various ways of policing the blogosphere in order to ensure that these limits are not violated, or otherwise to sanction those who do violate them. This meant that vigilant citizenship was not only directed against "those in power", e.g. politicians, the government, or big companies, but also took place within the blogosphere and among bloggers and commentators.

This leads me to the question of the regulated subject. As Barnes et al. have argued, "citizenship has a history rooted in ancient Greece where the concept was used to distinguish legitimate members of a community (...). The counter side to being a member is the condition of not being a member and thereby the exclusion of the individual from those rights (and obligations) that are commensurate with membership" (2004, p.187, f.). I shall argue that those who are excluded from participation in public discourse for overstepping the "limits of deliberation" can be thought of as "non-citizens", who may be excluded from participation

and subjected to abuse. Using the case of the Facebook group No a Keiko, I shall show in detail how such an exclusionary discourse of non-citizenship was constructed and how members (or “citizens”) of the community reconciled these practices with an equally important democratic discourse.

Chapter Outline

The chapter is structured as follows: I shall begin by discussing scholarly approaches to the regulation of speech online, arguing that most research in the field has tended to approach the restriction of free deliberation as a praxis that is contrary to the ethics of citizenship and imposed on blogger-citizens by “powerful actors”. These works have tended to focus on the regulatory power of external agents, painting an image of blogospheres as egalitarian spaces, and of citizenship as a praxis that is inherently inclusive. However, some research suggests that the regulation of speech also takes place on a micro-level between bloggers. Often, values play an important role, suggesting that deliberative citizenship is not unrestricted, but that blogger-citizens establish and enforce “limits of deliberation” – a tacit consensus between bloggers about forms of speech and contents that do not constitute legitimate dissent and can (or even must) be censored. I shall thus argue that the regulation of speech is not necessarily opposed to, but rather forms an integral part of bloggers’ conceptions of deliberative citizenship.

In the second part of this chapter, I shall turn to Peruvian bloggers’ regulatory practices, including censorship of comments, marginalisation within the blogosphere, harassment and threats aimed at encouraging self-censorship. Some bloggers had composed written comment policies, while others followed “ad hoc” policies. As in the studies discussed in the first part of this chapter, I shall argue that both the “regulatory incidents” which I observed throughout my fieldwork and the written and “ad hoc” comment policies were based on widely accepted “limits of deliberation”. Bloggers generally emphasised that these limits referred to abusive speech only and that political dissent was protected. However, particularly in the field of memory politics and transitional justice, I found that the line between the offensive and the political was not always easy to draw.

Finally, in the third part of this chapter, I shall discuss the case study of the Facebook group No a Keiko, whose aim was to prevent Alberto Fujimori’s daughter Keiko from winning the 2011 presidential elections. This case is particularly interesting, because it shows how the “limits of deliberation” enable the coexistence of a strong democratic discourse with the creation of a

category of “non-citizens”, who can be legitimately excluded from deliberation and subjected to abuse, thus turning into the object, instead of subject of vigilant citizenship.

The Regulation of Speech Online

While early utopians celebrated the Internet as a space beyond regulation, substantial evidence now suggests that the contrary is the case (Bendrath & Mueller 2011; Faris & Villeneuve 2008; Gillespie 2007; Goldsmith & Wu 2006; Lessig 1999). This insight has prompted a wealth of research on governance and regulation of speech on the Internet. However, while the exclusionary practices that govern wider public spheres “from within” have received much scholarly attention (Baker 1992; Benhabib 1992; Calhoun 1992; Fraser 1990; Fraser 1992; Eley 1992; Felski 1989; Fernald 2005; Hoberman 2002; Landes 1988; Ryan 1992), particularly following the publication of Habermas’ *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Habermas 1989; Habermas et al. 1974), research on the regulation of speech in online “counter publics” has tended to focus on externalised “powerful” agents, such as governments and companies (Deibert et al. 2008; Deibert et al. 2010; Deibert et al. 2011a; Gillespie 2007; Lessig 2006; MacKinnon 2011; York 2010; Zittrain & Palfrey 2008; Zuckerman 2010). Practices on the micro-level have received much less attention. Whenever the latter have been addressed, research has tended to focus on socio-political groups who support the respective government, or practices beneficial to it, while the regulatory activities of opposition groups have been ignored. As a result, regulatory practices on a micro-level have often been interpreted as just another element of wider government strategies, thereby implicitly dismissing the possibility of regulation “from below” (Deibert & Rohozinski 2010; Deibert et al. 2011b) and “through citizenship”.

In these scholarly narratives, the “limits of deliberation” appear to be imposed on “marginal” citizens “from above”, rather than forming an integral part of citizenship. At first sight, online public spheres thus seem to be a case of what Lessig calls “merchant-sovereignties” (Lessig 2006, p.287): spaces where people act as consumers but don’t get to define the rules. In “citizen-sovereignties”, in turn, people act as “members, not consumers – or, not just consumers. These institutions give consumers control over the rules that will govern them” (Lessig 2006, p.287).

However, some studies of online regulation hint at (but rarely expand on) cases that complicate Lessig’s clear-cut distinction between citizen- and merchant-sovereignties, suggesting that even in the latter, citizens have considerable power to govern participation on a micro-level according to their own agendas: while companies define and ultimately enforce

basic rules for entire platforms, these same platforms host a myriad of smaller communities and “spaces”, in which users are allowed to establish and enforce their own rules, not necessarily in compliance with those endorsed by their hosting platform. These studies suggest that citizenship and its limits are negotiated on a micro level between citizens, rather than being granted or withdrawn by external “powerful” agents. Building on these studies, some of which I shall discuss on the following pages, we can better understand the regulation of speech on the Internet as an integral part of, rather than simply a threat to citizenship in praxis.

Micro-Level Approaches

As York and others have noted, the companies that provide social media often rely on users to help police these spaces and provide them with tools to report users who fail to comply with their terms of use: “The company [Facebook] has not spoken publicly about how this process works, but one hypothesis is that when a critical mass of users reports a profile, that profile is automatically disabled, possibly for later review by a staff member” (York 2010, p.8). However, these tools can be used for different purposes and according to users’ own agendas, which may or may not be in accordance with companies’ initial intentions. This means that users can act according to their own notions of citizenship, restricting the participation of others.

York quotes several examples in which Facebook’s tool for reporting inappropriate content has been employed by users in order to forcibly remove political opponents from Facebook, including for example Facebook groups “created for the sole purpose of deactivating the profiles of Arab atheist users of Facebook” (York 2010, p.11). Online communities also employ a diverse array of other strategies and techniques to police their own spaces, of which Facebook’s reporting tool is but one example.

Focussing on online forums catering to Israeli Jewish Orthodox communities, Campbell and Golan’s (2011) study of bounded groups’ creation and regulation of digital enclaves addresses the negotiation of social control, authority and community boundaries online and points to the importance of community rules and norms for dealing with deviant behaviour: “Official and unwritten policies of these websites relating to contributors’ behavior become ways of creating a controlled social context in the fluid online social environment” (2011, p.715). Identifying “the regulation of who can contribute content to these sites” as “one of the clearest attempts at social control” (2011, p.715), the authors examine the screening and editing processes which regulate access and content on a micro level and ensure compliance with community values and beliefs.

Ramasoota (2011) argues that Thai users report cases of *lèse-majesté* on Web sites to authorities out of a sense of patriotic duty and refers to these activities as “participatory censorship”. In the context of the Burmese Saffron Revolution, Villeneuve and Crete-Nishihata (2011) question, perhaps counter-intuitively, the attribution of attacks against Burmese independent online media to the Burmese government. The evidence found during their investigation of an attack against the opposition Web site *Mizzima News* suggested that, while the hack benefitted the Burmese government, those responsible seemed to have acted based on their own agendas and political views, rather than on behalf of the government. They conclude:

“The characteristics of the attackers and the opportunistic nature of the attacks may reflect a ‘swarming effect’ in which private individuals, inspired by patriotic sentiments, voluntarily participate in cyber attacks during political events without clear approval or direction from state entities. This phenomenon has been observed in a number of recent conflicts and political events, including the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, the 2009 Gaza conflict, and the 2009 Iranian elections.” (2011, p.169)

Examining a gendered regime of online speech in Malaysia, Jensen et al. also argue that, alongside states and companies, “private individuals engage in surveillance on their own, often in accordance with social norms” (2011, p.69). Approaching control through a cultural, rather than a state policy lens, the authors argue that

“The censorship of women and their points of view has come about through their structural and ideological exclusion from the public sphere and its media, but it has also happened more directly through the use of sexist language and threats of sexual violence. Both strategies to silence women’s speech continue to thrive on the Internet. (...) Here we find a pattern common to many media, in which women as a gender group tend to be predominantly confronted with attempts of censorship by nonstate actors.” (2011, p.71)

These examples show two things: firstly, they demonstrate that the regulation of speech online, and thus the granting or withholding of citizenship, is not necessarily imposed from “above”, but practiced by citizens on a micro-level as well; and secondly, the repeated emphasis on values as a source of regulatory action suggests that deliberative citizenship is not unrestricted; quite to the contrary, “blogger-citizens” establish and enforce what I shall call “limits of deliberation” – forms of speech and contents that are not recognised as legitimate dissent and can (or even must) be censored.

Linking back to the topic of citizenship, I would thus like to suggest that the regulation of speech is not necessarily opposed to bloggers’ conceptions of deliberative citizenship, but rather forms an integral part of them. In the Peruvian case, I found that bloggers and social media users not only engaged in all kinds of regulatory practices, thereby actively limiting

deliberation; these practices furthermore often coexisted with a strong democratic and pluralist discourse. I shall argue that for Peruvian bloggers, “deliberation” had clear limits. Overstepping these limits could result in losing one’s status as a deliberative citizen. Vigilance, the second civic practice described in Chapter I, was not limited to “powerful agents”, but could also be turned against these “non-citizens”.

The Regulation of Speech and the Limits of Deliberation in the Peruvian Blogosphere

As discussed in Chapter V, Peruvian bloggers tended to perceive their blogosphere as an aggressive and predatory environment, where the ideal of respectful deliberation was rarely achieved. At the same time, some of my interviewees “admitted” to regulating speech on their own blogs, thus taking a vigilant stance vis-à-vis the debates taking place on their blogs. These regulatory techniques took many different forms, ranging from subtle marginalisation over stigmatisation to threats and the censorship of comments. On the following pages, I shall describe and discuss some of these regulatory techniques and show how they often reflected what I call “limits of deliberation” – a tacit consensus among bloggers that distinguished between acceptable, protected types of speech, and those who were not.

Regulatory Practices in the Peruvian Blogosphere

Throughout my fieldwork, I was able to compile a rich collection of “regulatory incidents”, which represented a wide range of different techniques. Often, these measures were directed against controversial bloggers and commentators. Marginalisation was one such technique. In Chapter V, I discussed how several of my interviewees criticised the formation of “power-nodes” of influential bloggers, who could concentrate and direct readership to friendly blogs, while withholding it from those who opposed them. This form of “regulation” builds on the insight that speech is irrelevant when nobody listens to it. Exclusion or marginalisation as a way of dealing with conflict in the blogosphere was described by one of my interviewees as follows:

“They are starting a bit to play the ‘politics of silence’. They don’t comment on you any longer. At first they comment on you and then they say ‘Oh no, I can’t get at you, I’d better ignore him. Ignore. Ignore. How terrible, no! Just ignore him!’ And on top of this is the policy of blogs such as Sifuentes’, ‘No, no! ignore him! Don’t talk about him! Don’t link to him, even worse! If you comment against him you are giving him traffic.’ It’s the logic of denying you the flow, denying you the river that waters your piece of land. (...) Bullying by silence, no?”¹

¹ “Ya empiezan un poco a jugar la política del silencio. Ya no te comentan. Al comienzo te comentan y luego dicen ‘Ah no, a ti no puedo hacer nada, mejor voy a ignorarlo. Ignorar. Ignorar. Ya. Qué horror, no, ¡ignórenlo!’ Y a eso se suma pues la política de los blogs tipo Sifuentes, ‘¡No, no! ¡ignoren! ¡No hables

Others mentioned mechanisms of social control that targeted a blogger's reputation or credibility, such as being stigmatised as a "terrorist", "Fujimorista" or "troll", or being otherwise insulted or harassed. Some bloggers have had blogs and Facebook pages dedicated specifically to attacking them personally. One such page tried to ridicule and discredit a well-known (for the Peruvian blogosphere exceptionally right-wing) commentator, by insinuating that he was being paid by a local politician for participating in debates on Facebook and other people's blogs.

In some cases, bloggers' "real lives" were used as resources in attempts to regulate speech, which sometimes led them to exercise self-censorship in order to avoid further confrontation. One blogger temporarily closed his blog after angry readers had threatened to damage his academic career:

"Three or four months after [I had closed down my blog for the first time] I returned, I didn't mess with the Truth Commission anymore, but I kept needling about the frivolities and the.../ the lack of rigour in the work of intellectuals in Peru. Right? It so happens that there is an um.../ cultural studies seminar um.../ which was organised by the Catholic University and there were all those guys who interview two watchmen and tell you that/ what's the history of oppression in Peru. Right? So, um.../ I made fun of this seminar by creating an alternative programme, an alternative seminar, just for fun, to annoy them, my intention is always to poke fun and annoy. To annoy with jokes, right? Because um.../ No. That was/ You have no idea of the impact of this... this post. When I wrote it I would never have thought/ [unintelligible] I wrote this with a relaxed attitude, with all possible humour, I'd never have thought that [unintelligible] such an impact, to the point that they called me from Lima, I was in the United States, and they tell me, 'Listen, you went too far, there are people who take this very seriously, um.../ and they want to send a letter to [your University] in order to somehow try to tell you off for this'. Um.../ and I said, well, that's it, it's over, it's not that I want to um.../ damage my academic career in the United States. Um.../ it was the pressure, finally, they wanted/ and there are actually people who are prepared to do this, ah? [Unintelligible] intellectuals, progressives, who want to send a letter to a university in the United States, to say this kind/ yes/ they said/ their argument was that I was sabotaging the event. I rather made publicity for their event! Um... um.../ and I closed my blog for the second time."²

de él! No lo desenlaces, peor. Si lo comentas en contra le estas dando flujo.' Es la lógica de negarte el flujo, negarte el río pues que riega tu chacra. (...) Cargamontón de silencio. ¿No?"

² "A los tres, cuatro meses retorne nuevamente, ya no me metía con la Comisión de la Verdad, pero siempre fregando las frivolidades y las/ la poca rigurosidad del trabajo de los intelectuales en el Perú. ¿No? Da la casualidad que hay un estee.. seminario de estudios culturales estee.. que organizaba la Universidad Católica y era pues todos estos tipos que hacen entrevistas a dos huachimanes y te dicen que/ cuál es la historia de la represión en el Perú. ¿No? Entonces este.. me burlé del seminario este, haciendo un programa alternativo del seminario, un seminario alternativo, en broma, en joda, o sea mi intención siempre es bromear y joder. Joder con la broma, no, porque/ estee... no. Esto fue/ no sabes el impacto que tuvo este.. este post. Nunca pensé cuando lo escribí/ [ininteligible] lo escribí en un horario de relax, con todo el humor posible, nunca pensé que [ininteligible] tanto impacto al punto que me llaman de Lima, yo estaba en Estados Unidos, y me dicen oye, se te pasó la mano, hay gente que lo toma muy en serio, eeeh y te quieren enviar una carta a [tu Universidad] para de alguna manera tratar

A similar example is the blog *Gustavo Faverón Patriau – His True Face* [Gustavo Faverón Patriau – Su Verdadero Rostro]. As in the cultural studies seminar case, bloggers drew on “offline” resources (their ability to potentially affect Faverón’s academic career) in order to regulate his speech and behaviour online. This blog emerged from a conflict involving several bloggers, including said Faverón, a literary critic, blogger and professor of literature at a US University. In the context of this conflict, Faverón had sent an obscene email to another blogger, Ernesto Reaño. Fed up with Faverón’s generally aggressive and confrontational style, the latter set up a blog consisting of just two posts: the first contained Faverón’s initial email, and an email by Reaño to blogger Marco Sifuentes (who had received a similar email from Faverón earlier), in which he suggested to send a letter of complaint to Faverón’s employer. In the second post, Reaño explained why he had decided to publish Faverón’s email and asked others to sign the letter:

“We present this email sent by the cultural critic Gustavo Faverón Patriau from his account of Bowdoin College (...) because it constitutes evidence of the erratic behaviour of a public figure. This letter simply pretends to be another element of judgement for a blogging community fed up with useless fights. We, the undersigned, are not supporters of a *pensée unique*. Among ourselves, we have agreed many times, and differed on others. We have done this – or tried to do it – without letting it degenerate into useless battles circling around our own navels. However, Gustavo Faverón is a person who has had a truly dirty attitude in our community: attacks, insults, persecutions, demonstrations of rudeness. A lot of the so-called rubbish which exists in blogs has been provoked directly or indirectly by him. The attached letter demonstrates this.”³

Reaño’s letter is particularly interesting for an analysis of the “limits of deliberation”, because it combines a strong democratic and pluralistic discourse on civic deliberation with the construction of an “outside” of such deliberation: Reaño first affirms the undersigned’s positive attitude to productive dissent, pointing to multiple cases of such peaceful

de llamarte la atención por eso. Este... y dije bueno, se acabó, se acabó, quiero/ tampoco quiero este.. manchar mi carrera académica en Estados Unidos. Este.. fue la presión, finalmente, lo quisieron/ y hay gente bien que lo hace, ¿no? [inintendible] intelectuales, progresistas, que quieren mandar una carta a una universidad de los Estados Unidos, para decir este tipo/ sí/ decían/ su argumento era que yo estaba sabotando el evento. ¡Yo hice publicidad al evento más bien! Este.. eem.. y cerré por segunda vez el blog.”

³ “Presentamos este correo electrónico enviado por el crítico cultural Gustavo Faverón Patriau desde su cuenta de Bowdoin College (...) porque es una evidencia del comportamiento errático de un personaje público. Esta carta pretende ser tan sólo un elemento más de juicio para una comunidad bloguera harta de peleas inútiles. Los adherentes no somos partidarios del pensamiento único. Entre nosotros hemos coincidido muchas veces y discrepado las más. Lo hemos hecho -o hemos intentado hacerlo- sin que derive en batallas inútiles alrededor de nuestro ombligo. Sin embargo, Gustavo Faverón es una persona que ha tenido una actitud francamente sucia en nuestra comunidad: ataques, insultos, persecuciones, demostraciones de patanería. Mucha de la llamada basura que hay en los blogs ha sido provocada directa o indirectamente por él. La carta adjunta es la demostración.”

disagreement. He then proceeds to explain how Faverón's contributions differed from these, thereby exceeding the "limits of deliberation".

Comment Policies

Similar distinctions between speech acts that constitute deliberation (and are therefore legitimate) and those that do not (and can therefore be censored without affecting egalitarian notions of deliberative democracy) can be found in bloggers' comment policies.⁴ Several of the bloggers I talked to said that they monitored and sometimes censored comments.

One-third of the bloggers I interviewed had composed and published a comment policy, which regulated speech on their blog. The following table lists the restricted and explicitly not restricted types of speech on the blogs of those of my interviewees who had a written comment policy:

Restricted (Not Deliberation)	Not Restricted (Deliberation)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anonymous denunciations • Changing identities • Defamation • Comments about others' private lives • References to family • Personal issues • Personal attacks • Aggressive comments • Discriminatory language • Offensive language • Insults • Insults without arguments • Rude comments • Trolls ("commentators who only comment in order to antagonise") • Off-topic comments • Frequent comments • Promoting one's own blog • Spam • Comments written in upper-case 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political opinion • Critical comments • Dissent • Anonymous/pseudonymous comments

⁴ It is important to keep in mind that these regulatory practices are not applied by all bloggers. There seems to be substantial variation between bloggers' willingness to censor offensive speech; those who set great value on the blogger's potential to redefine debating culture were most likely to restrict "offensive" speech. I concentrate in this chapter on those who do, in one way or another, regulate speech.

Some of the bloggers I interviewed did not have a written comment policy, but claimed that they moderated comments, “so there is no rudeness.”⁵ These bloggers had what could be described as an “informal” or “ad hoc” comment policy, although it is important to keep in mind that those bloggers who did have a written policy were faced with the problem of interpretation and definition on a case-by-case basis as well. This interpretative process was expressed in two comment policies, as follows:

“It’s I who qualifies a comment as aggressive, offensive, insulting, rude, and my opinion may differ from that of the commentator, therefore I send an email to that person explaining it.”⁶ (Vigil n.d.)

“It’s all so subjective. What’s politically correct to one person may be incorrect to another. Furthermore, political incorrectness is sometimes so heavily charged with conservatism that one doesn’t know what’s hidden underneath the rock. That’s where the *ad hoc* judgement of the blog’s administrator comes into play.”⁷ (Bustamante n.d.)

One of my interviewees, who used his Facebook page as a subscription blog, said he had never removed a comment, but had twice asked commentators to remove offensive comments themselves:

“I sometimes feel... then I feel that they become excessive very easily, right? So I don’t [like]... So, of course, Facebook obviously is a much more protected space, right? There are... your friends. Eehm... although in my case there are many more, eehh... but it’s like I try to preserve the space. No? I’ve twice asked two friends to delete the comment they had made, by chat: ‘You see, I told you, please, OK?’ I think in one case it was an insult to [journalist] Jaime de Althaus. And I was going to have an interview that night with Jaime de Althaus, and Jaime de Althaus is my friend on Facebook and I know he checks things [unintelligible], so I said, ‘You are getting me into trouble, I mean don’t...’ and the person deleted it. They said, ‘Yes, sure’ [unintelligible]. (...) So maybe that’s why I stayed in this space [Facebook], I always say I’ll post stuff on my blog (...), but I can’t be bothered.”⁸

Both the types of restricted speech listed in written comment policies and those mentioned by bloggers who used an “ad hoc” policy referred mainly to “offensive speech” (this was also the

⁵ “Algunos blogs como el mío ponen moderación de comentarios, que no haya lisura.”

⁶ “Quien califica de agresivo, ofensivo, insultante, descortés un comentario soy yo y mi opinión puede ser distinta a la del/ la comentarista, por ello es que mando un correo a la persona explicándoselo.”

⁷ “Todo es tan subjetivo. Lo que es políticamente correcto para uno es incorrecto para el otro. Además la incorrección política viene a veces tan cargada de conservadurismo, que uno ya no sabe qué se esconde debajo de una roca. Allí entra el juicio *ad hoc* del administrador del blog.”

⁸ “Me parece a veces... entonces me parece que caen en el exceso muy rápidamente, ¿no? Entonces eso no me... Entonces claro, obviamente el Facebook es un espacio mucho más protegido, ¿no? Están... tus amigos. Este... aunque en mi caso están muchos más, eehh... Pero es algo así como que yo trato de que el espacio se preserve. ¿No? Dos veces he pedido a dos amigos que borren el comentario que han hecho, por el chat. ‘Yes, es que te lo he dicho, por favor, ¿no?’ Creo que en un caso era un insulto a Jaime de Althaus. Y yo iba a ir a una entrevista en la noche con Jaime de Althaus y Jaime de Althaus es mi amigo en el Facebook y yo sé que chequea cosas [ininteligible], entonces yo dije ‘estás metiéndome en un problema, o sea no...’ y la persona lo eliminó. Dijo ‘sí, claro’ [ininteligible]. (...) Entonces quizás por eso es que me he mantenido en ese espacio, siempre digo voy a subir cosas al blog (...), pero me da flojera.”

motivation behind the Faverón case). At the same time, comment policies reassure commentators that nobody shall be censored for political reasons or for criticising or disagreeing with the blog's author. "Deliberation" thus explicitly included and protected political dissent, while it excluded "offensive" speech. The "limits of deliberation" thus referred to "quality", rather than content. This is well expressed in the following quote from one of my interviews:

"There are serious bloggers who do filter and don't allow them to be published, and there are others who, say, have an open door policy for whatever may come. And this often impoverishes the discussion, because the commentator doesn't read the post. No, they simply read the comments. Right? So, the blogger's job also... has a lot to do with the following: when a blogger feels that they have readers, a readership, they are faced with the dilemma, I think, because it's what happens to me, to... let's see. I have several readers and I accept any comment, or I'm/ or I filter, right? I cut, cut, cut. Maybe I'll have fewer comments, right? Maybe I'll lose many readers, but... I'll gain in another sense. I'll gain in terms of quality of the interventions that are there. And sometimes friends like Gonzalo Gamio have lost in that, no? Gonzalo Gamio is a very intelligent guy, he knows a lot, but... sometimes he falls into the trap, no? He falls into the trap, as we say, and ends up responding to people who... who have no intention of contributing whatsoever, right? Then... it's also a... it's a difficulty bloggers face, no?"⁹

As in the Faverón case, this quote suggests that supervising comments and enforcing the "limits of deliberation" also formed part of bloggers' understanding of vigilant citizenship. However, it is not always easy to clearly distinguish "the political" from "the offensive"; this is particularly true in the highly contested discursive fields of memory politics and post-transitional justice. The following excerpts from two of my interviews are excellent examples both of bloggers' attempts to define the border between the "political" and the "offensive", and of the particular role post-transitional conflicts play in these definitions:

"The blog has been well received and has generated intense debate, some of it quite fruitful (...) and on the other hand there are also, well, everyday discussions of say lower... academic quality, right? That has to do with... very conservative people, who are in the blogs, too, and who for example support Cardinal Cipriani¹⁰, against human

⁹ "Hay bloggers serios que sí filtran y no permiten que salgan, hay otros que digamos dan tienda abierta para lo que venga. Y empobrece muchas veces la discusión, porque el comentarista no lee el post. No, lee comentarios simplemente. ¿No? Entonces, la chamba o el trabajo de blogger también este... tiene mucho que ver con lo siguiente: cuando un blogger siente que tiene lectores, lectoría, se enfrenta al dilema, creo yo, porque me pasa a mí, de... a ver. Tengo varios lectores y acepto cualquier comentario, o soy/ o filtro, ¿no? Corto, corto, corto. Tal vez me quedo con menos comentarios, ¿no? Tal vez voy a perder muchos lectores, pero... voy a ganar en otro sentido. Voy a ganar en la calidad del... de las intervenciones que hay allá. Y a veces amigos como Gonzalo Gamio han perdido en eso, ¿no? Gonzalo Gamio es un tipo muy inteligente, sabe mucho pero... a veces pisa el palito, pues, ¿no? Pisa el palito, como decimos, y termina respondiendo a gente que... que no tiene ningún ánimo de aportar, ¿no? Entonces... también es un... es una dificultad que enfrentan los bloggers, ¿no?"

¹⁰ Cardinal Cipriani, Archbishop of Lima and a member of the Opus Dei, has been involved in many political disputes that occupied the Peruvian blogosphere. He is infamous for his opposition to the Human Rights movement during the internal armed conflict and for calling the Human Rights

rights, anyhow, no? And who occasionally intervene and either giving their name or anonymously or using pseudonyms, right? Not everything that turns up is what I publish as comments, right? Because sometimes there are also offensive comments, completely out of place, which I simply prefer not to publish. The blog has a filter, because since it's a blog for academic reflection and debate, what's not worth it isn't released."¹¹

"I have open/ I don't have any restrictions, right? Whenever there have been/ whenever there have been, like, insults, I've removed them, no? But I left them there at first. I mean when I first see it, when it appears, I leave it there, um.../ if they can be identified, right? Because there are some who identify themselves. And they are commentators from other blogs. Who are, well, ultra-super-conservatives [unintelligible] and demand that [the 1990s death squad] *Colina*¹² should be pardoned,

Coordinator a "cojudez" [bullshit] (though this statement is often remembered incorrectly as referring to human rights as such). According to the TRC, during the internal armed conflict, when Cipriani was Archbishop of Ayacucho, the door of the Archbishop's office had a sign saying "We don't accept Human Rights claims" ["No se aceptan reclamos sobre Derechos Humanos"] (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.426). In a homily on the occasion of the Day of the Armed Forces, Cipriani described the Human Rights Movement's activities in the La Cantuta case, in which a professor and nine students of the La Cantuta University in Lima were abducted and disappeared by the military death squad "Grupo Colina" in 1992, as "'treason against the fatherland": "The La Cantuta case is being used politically, and under the pretext of defending human rights the ultimate attempt to affront the freedom of the Peruvian people is happening. This freedom which we have already achieved is still meeting small voices of Peruvians who don't love their country and continue creating doubts about the moral integrity of the armed forces and the authorities who govern the country. And these doubts constitute treason against the fatherland, therefore we mustn't allow this to be discussed any longer under the pretext of human rights which is nothing but the ultimate attempt to affront that which the majority of Peruvians are enjoying right now: freedom" ["El caso La Cantuta está siendo utilizado políticamente y bajo el pretexto de la defensa de los derechos humanos se está dando el último intento de atropellar la libertad del pueblo peruano. Esa libertad que ya la hemos consolidado todavía encuentra pequeñas voces de peruanos que no tienen cariño a su pueblo y siguen creando dudas acerca de la integridad moral del ejército y las autoridades que gobiernan el país. Y esas dudas son una traición a la patria, por lo tanto no debemos permitir que se siga discutiendo, bajo pretexto de los derechos humanos lo que no es otra cosa que un último intento de atropellar lo que la mayoría de los peruanos gozamos en este momento: la libertad"] (Cipriani, 1993, quoted in: Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003, p.417).

¹¹ "El blog ha tenido acogida y también ha generado debates intensos, a veces muy fructíferos (...), y por otro lado bueno pues también hay unas discusiones cotidianas y ... ya de menor calidad digamos estee... académica, no? Que tiene que ver con... gente muy conservadora que también está en los blogs y que pues apoyan al Cardinal Cipriani, en contra de los derechos humanos, en fin, ¿no?, y que de cuando en cuando intervienen y ya sea poniendo su nombre o como anónimos o usando pseudónimos, ¿no? No todo lo que aparece es lo que yo publico como comentarios, ¿no? Porque a veces hay comentarios también ofensivos, completamente fuera del lugar, que simplemente prefiero no publicar. Tiene un filtro el blog porque como es un blog de reflexión académica y de debate, pues, lo que no merece la pena, no sale."

¹² The military death squad "Grupo Colina", active under Fujimori between 1990 and 1994, is best known for committing the *La Cantuta* massacre (ten victims, including one professor and nine students), the *Barrios Altos* massacre (fifteen victims, including one child), the *El Santa* massacre (nine victims, all of them peasants), and the disappearance of journalist Pedro Yauri. During his presidency, Fujimori made extensive efforts to protect its members from prosecution, including an amnesty law and, as this was contested by the courts, a follow-up law which established that the amnesty law could not be subject to judicial review but was in the remit of the Congress, which was dominated by Fujimori's faction. In 2009, Fujimori was found guilty of ordering the Grupo Colina in the Barrios Altos case and the La Cantuta case, and received prison sentences for these crimes. In late 2010, members of the group, including Montesinos, also received prison sentences between 15 and 25 years for their role in the

and many things, no? I leave it there for a day so other readers can see it, so they see it and realise who it is, no? And, let's say, what they are up to, what they are seeking to achieve; after that I delete it."¹³

The coexistence of a democratic discourse with regulatory practices was particularly striking in the Facebook group *No a Keiko*, which I shall discuss in detail on the following pages. This case study is particularly interesting for a number of reasons: firstly, because it shows how the "limits of deliberation" are not fixed, but need to be constantly negotiated and redefined. In this process, they can become strongly political. Secondly, this case study demonstrates how trespassing the "limits of deliberation" can result in losing one's citizen status. I shall use the figure of the "troll" – essentially a non-citizen, who can be legitimately excluded from public debate and subjected to abuse – to explore this process. Thirdly, it is interesting because it shows how vigilance as a praxis of citizenship is not always directed against "powerful agents", but can be used against fellow citizens as well.

No a Keiko

The Facebook group *No a Keiko* (No to Keiko, NAK) was created in May 2009 as a response to the decision by Keiko Fujimori (daughter of ex-President Alberto Fujimori) to run for president in the 2011 general elections. Initially a movement based exclusively on the Internet (particularly Facebook), it quickly attracted a large number of followers¹⁴. From its early days and well beyond the 2011 elections (in which Keiko Fujimori came second to the nationalist candidate Ollanta Humala), the group has been the target of attacks similar to those described by York (2010), using Facebook's reporting tool: in November 2009, the group was blocked temporarily by Facebook, allowing members and administrators to see its content but not to publish anything new. Following protests in print media and blogs, Facebook lifted the

Barrios Altos, El Santa, and Pedro Yauri cases (Godoy 2010b). However, accountability for human rights abuses continues to be a contested and precarious field. In 2010, shortly before the La Colina sentences were passed, the García administration issued a legislative decree which, if successful, would have resulted in the closure of a large part of the human rights cases that were still in process. The accused in the Colina case were the first who tried to take advantage of the decree, applying for their proceedings to be closed (Godoy 2010c). The decree was revoked by the president following public outcry and high profile protest. In July 2012, Peru's Supreme Court, led by Justice Javier Villa Stein, decided to reduce the sentences, arguing that the Barrios Altos and La Cantuta massacres did not constitute crimes against humanity. Even though the Inter-American Court of Human Rights swiftly ordered the Peruvian state to annul it (El Comercio 2012), Villa Stein's sentence demonstrates how fragile the sentences against the members of Grupo Colina are.

¹³ "Yo tengo libre/ no tengo restricción. ¿Ya? Cuando han habido/ cuando ha habido así insultos, cosas así, los he borrado, ¿no? Pero los dejé la primera vez/ O sea la primera vez que lo veo y que aparece lo dejo, este, cuando está identificado, ¿no? Porque hay quienes se identifican. Y son comentaristas de otros blogs. Que se caracterizan por ser pues ultra-recontra-conservadores [ininteligible] y exigen el perdón a Colina y muchas cosas ¿no? Lo dejo un día para que los demás lectores lo vean, lo vean y se den cuenta quién es, ¿no? y digamos qué pretende, qué busca; después luego lo elimino."

¹⁴ At the time of writing (September 2012), the group had 191,047 followers.

restrictions and sent the administrators a letter explaining that the measure had been taken in response to user complaints. On the 4th of January 2010, one day after the Peruvian Supreme Court had ratified Alberto Fujimori's 25-year prison sentence for crimes against humanity, the page was deleted by Facebook, but was gradually restored throughout the next day. In this instance, Facebook apologised and promised that similar incidents would not be allowed to happen again. However, in late November 2011, the group's administrators decided to close the page temporarily, as Facebook was threatening to shut it down permanently. On their blog, the movement's leaders wrote:

"The computer attack in social networks has been able to mobilise hundreds of users of unknown or unverified identity who use Facebook and Twitter in order to massively denounce NAK's communication channels. This type of 'factory of false denunciations made by false profiles' has managed to cause Facebook's monitoring system to observe NAK's page to such a degree, that in less than a month, the NAK moderators have received several warnings, suffered the deletion of 'reported' content and received a warning that said account might be eliminated permanently. In this context, NAK has decided to suspend its official page on Facebook and denounce the existence of a demolition campaign aimed at harming the reputation of said collective, as well as intimidating its members and eliminating its most visible spaces on the Internet and social networks. This offensive seeks to 'clear' the ground so Fujimorism will once again have a favourable scenario with a view to the 2016 elections. NAK is opposed to any form of censorship of the free expression of political ideas. Fujimorism clearly doesn't share this point of view."¹⁵ (No a Keiko 2011c)

Administrators of the group have also been the target of acts of defamation, often issued from the anonymity of "false" accounts, as in the following example where a user posted aggressive images on the group's profile (see figure 2).

Against the backdrop of the NAK logo, the first image reads "Traitors to the Fatherland", the second says "Pro-terrorists, lazy *vende-patria* [lit. "Seller of the fatherland"]", while the allusion to "Sendero" (the Shining Path) alleges a link with terrorism. The third image reads "Entirely pro-Shining Path site". The administrators eliminated the posts from NAK's Facebook page, but then posted a screenshot with the comment:

¹⁵ "El ataque informático en redes sociales ha logrado movilizar centenares de usuarios de identidad desconocida o no validada, que utilizan Facebook y Twitter para denunciar masivamente los canales de comunicación de NAK. Esta suerte de "fábrica de denuncias falsas hechas por perfiles falsos" ha logrado que el sistema de monitoreo de Facebook observe la página de NAK, a tal punto que en menos de un mes los moderadores de NAK han recibido varias llamadas de atención, sufrido la eliminación de contenidos "reportados". y recibido la advertencia de que se podría inhabilitar dicha cuenta de forma
Figure 1

decidido suspender su página oficial en Facebook y denunciar que existe una campaña de denuncia que tiene como propósito dañar la reputación de dicho colectivo, así como amedrentar a sus integrantes y eliminar sus espacios más visibles en Internet y las redes sociales. Esta ofensiva buscaría "limpiar" el terreno para que el Fujimorismo tenga nuevamente un escenario favorable con miras a las elecciones del año 2016. NAK está en contra de cualquier forma de censura a la libre expresión de las ideas políticas. El Fujimorismo, evidentemente, no comparte ese punto de vista."



"THIS IS A FUJITROLL ATTACK. This time they used the pseudonym 'Keiko Fuerza Usa-Illinois' [lit. "Keiko Strength Usa-Illinois"]. The truth is that every once in a while we receive visits like this. They aren't doing us any harm. They only make us stronger."¹⁶ (No a Keiko 2011b)

Both NAK administrators and bloggers who sympathised with the group also received personal threats, which were sometimes posted on the group's Facebook page. In late 2011, the groups' administrators claimed that

"Violent hate messages and death threats are sent on a daily basis from anonymous accounts or profiles of

users who don't reveal their true identity. This harassment has reached the point where two of the collective's representatives have found themselves forced to disable their personal Twitter accounts."¹⁷ (No a Keiko 2011c)

So far, these incidents are similar to those described in other research on regulation and governance of the Internet: they are attacks directed against an opposition group¹⁸ and some evidence suggests that some of the attacks may have been carried out by professionals and possibly been commissioned by Fujimori or other politicians close to her. These attacks are an important factor in understanding the community's response.

I shall concentrate on the following pages on regulatory practices and related discourses that developed inside NAK in response to such attacks, and discuss their relationship with the issue of citizenship. I shall argue that while NAK started out with a strong democratic discourse that valued freedom of speech, free deliberation and pluralism, the community and its leadership became gradually more intolerant of dissenting members, increasingly restricting the "limits of deliberation". They developed a series of rules and regulatory practices to govern speech on NAK, turning vigilant citizenship – initially directed towards Keiko Fujimori and her political allies – against members of their own community. Members and leaders of NAK were able to

¹⁶ "ESTE ES UN ATAQUE FUJITROLL. Esta vez utilizaron el seudónimo 'Keiko Fuerza Usa-Illinois'. Lo cierto es que cada cierto tiempo recibimos visitas como ésta. Daño no nos hacen. Solo nos hacen más fuertes" (7 February 2011, <https://www.Facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=498688662107&set=a.109825787107.110262.109775807107&type=1>).

¹⁷ "Mensajes de odio, violencia y amenazas de muerte se envían diariamente desde cuentas anónimas o perfiles de usuarios que no revelan su verdadera identidad. Este acoso ha llegado a tal punto que dos representantes del colectivo se han visto obligadas a deshabilitar sus cuentas personales en Twitter."

¹⁸ While Fujimori was not in government at the time when NAK was established, many of NAK's members were equally hostile towards Alan García's government, which they perceived to be cultivating links with Fujimorism and supporting Fujimori's candidature. It thus makes sense to describe NAK as an "opposition group" under the García administration.

reconcile these increasingly harsh policing practices with their strong democratic discourse with the help of the discursive figure of the “troll”, essentially a “non-citizen”, who can legitimately be excluded and subjected to abuse.

Democratic Discourse on No a Keiko

No a Keiko started out with a strong democratic discourse. The value members of NAK attributed to pluralism and freedom of speech was often grounded in memories of Fujimorism as a time when free expression and debate were limited. Drawing on such a democratic discourse, NAK constructed itself explicitly in contrast to historical and contemporary Fujimorism. In November 2009, moderators posted a description of the group as “promoting pluralism of ideas :-)”¹⁹ This statement was embraced by members of the group who replied with encouraging comments:

“Pluralism of ideas as long as it’s done with respect and for the synergy of reaching a higher good: a better Peru. When debate turns into a battle of egos, change the topic or ignore the *caudillistas* of ‘divide and conquer’, because united we’ll achieve great things.”²⁰

“I feel that by listening to other people’s opinions we learn many things, sometimes things which suggest that we shouldn’t repeat the errors of the past, in other cases a zest for overcoming and for not always contenting ourselves with the minimum or worse... In this sense I think we are getting better, gradually, but we are doing it”²¹

Freedom of speech was an important topic on NAK, as from its very start not all members endorsed the group’s stated aims. As described above, the group struggled with antagonistic users and their aggressive attacks. However, initially most members advocated dialogue and free speech on NAK, and only a minority suggested removing dissenters from the site. This was very clear when administrators asked members in October 2009 if they agreed with a “flexible approach to opinions which are critical of and/or opposed to ‘No a Keiko’”²², including

¹⁹ “promoviendo la pluralidad de ideas :-)” (5 November 2009, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/341269135392>).

²⁰ “Pluralidad de ideas siempre y cuando sea con respeto y para la sinergia de llegar al bien mayor: un Perú mejor. Cuando el debate se vuelve una lucha de egos, a otro tema o ignorar a los caudillistas del ‘divide y vencerás’, porque unidos estamos logrando grandes cosas (...)” (5 November 2009, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/341269135392?comment_id=7376887&offset=0&total_comments=6).

²¹ “A mi me parece que al escuchar las opiniones de los demás aprendemos muchas cosas, a veces cosas que nos sugieren no repetir errores pasados, otras, ganas de superación y de no conformarse con lo minimo o peor siempre...En ese sentido creo que vamos mejorando de a poquitos pero lo hacemos...” (5 November 2009, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/341269135392?comment_id=7383267&offset=0&total_comments=6).

²² “Desde hace un mes hemos sido mucho más flexibles con las opiniones críticas y/o contrarias a “No a Keiko”, inclusive varios fujimoristas han publicado abiertamente sus comentarios. ¿Estás de acuerdo con este cambio en la moderación? ¿Qué opinas al respecto?” (26 October 2009, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/164266184628>).

comments by supporters of Fujimori. At that time, almost all of the 30 comments supported dissenters' freedom of expression, and many of them drew on memories of Fujimorism to strengthen their argument. For example, one member thus argued that:

"Fujimori was a dictator, freedom of opinion was limited during his abusive and corrupt government, that's why I believe in free and diverse opinions, with foundation and respect; this would be a lesson of freedom of opinion for them, BUT RESPONSIBLY (without crudeness, nor offences, nor insults) and on both sides, ah?). Besides, the opinions of fanatics strengthen our concepts and give us better arguments."²³

Precisely because freedom of speech had been curtailed during those years, members of NAK felt that the group should not limit its opponents' freedom to express their opposition.

The Limits of Deliberation on No a Keiko

However, in spite of the importance of the democratic discourse described above, speech on NAK was not unrestricted. As I shall show on the following pages, users and administrators agreed that there should be certain "limits of deliberation", and that it was legitimate to limit freedom of speech in some cases. Following the orchestrated denunciations which led to blocking and deletion of the site in late 2009 and early 2010, the group's administrators introduced a first regulatory measure. They asked users to comply with the rules established by Facebook in order to avoid future blocking and announced that they would delete comments which used "offensive, discriminatory or provocative" language:

"Once more we reiterate the request not to use offensive, discriminatory or provocative terms. We must comply with Facebook's norms. We are not trying to be repressive, but we are under the obligation to 'dissolve'²⁴ those contents which go against these indications. Thank you. The No a Keiko Team"²⁵

²³ "fujimori fue un dictador, la libre opinión estaba limitada en su gobierno abusivo y corrupto, por eso q creo en opiniones libres y diversas, con fundamento y respetuosas, sería darles una lección de libertad de opinión PERO RESPONSABLE (sin greoserias, ni ofensas, ni insultos) y en ambas partes ah). además, las opiniones de fanáticos fortalecen nuestros conceptos y nos dan mejores argumentos" (26 October 2009, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/164266184628?comment_id=6454523&offset=0&total_comments=30). Note also the emphasis on the "limits of deliberation" in this quote.

²⁴ The term 'dissolve' is a reference to Alberto Fujimori's famous speech delivered on TV moments after his self-coup in 1992, in which he informed the audience that he had decided to "dissolve, DISSOLVE, temporarily the Congress of the Republic (...)" ["disolver, DISOLVER, temporalmente el Congreso de la República"] (Fujimori Fujimori 1992). The doubling of the term "to dissolve" is not included in the script, but was introduced by Fujimori when reading it to the public. This particular moment in his speech has become one of the central *lieux de mémoire* of Fujimorism.

²⁵ "Reiteramos nuevamente el pedido de no usar términos ofensivos, discriminatorios o provocadores. Debemos guardar las normas de Facebook. No buscamos ser represores pero estamos en la obligación de 'disolver' aquellos contenidos que vayan contra estas indicaciones. Gracias, El equipo de No a Keiko" (26 November 2009, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/342593030435>).

Some users were angry with Facebook and those who had denounced the group for limiting their freedom of expression; for example, criticising Facebook's terms of service, one member wrote: "I'm glad that you have returned, but I lament that Facebook has limited our expression, it's true some people are abusive and use rough words; but it's the people (...)." ²⁶

However, at the same time many of NAK's members accepted and even endorsed the administrators' decision to police the site and to censor potentially offensive content. These users felt that abusive language exceeded the "limits of deliberation", and they stressed "civilised" debate as a civic value which, just like freedom of speech, should set NAK apart from the political culture of Fujimorism. In this sense, one user wrote: "Justice and freedom of speech... but no licentiousness!!" ²⁷ Another user wrote:

"A people that doesn't express itself is one that lives oppressed, that's what the *Fujimoristas* did, they wouldn't allow people to express themselves but rather muzzled all kinds of political thought. Freedom of the press was destroyed, leaving furthermore a generational gap of new politicians by gagging political parties, by using the technique of dulling people's minds with trash TV that lacks any degree of culture. So, friends, let's not fall into bad language. I know it's hard to bear but if we continue with our goal of not taking a single step back, then we must keep expressing ourselves with phrases that do not lapse into offensive, discriminatory or provocative terms, as the moderator says, and let other people know that this website exists, especially the generation that could not make use of their reason in political life in the '90s, this generation which will vote for the first time. To them let us say ... No to Keiko! ..." ²⁸

These two examples demonstrate that for members of NAK, the exclusion of certain kinds of speech did not contradict freedom of speech, but was perfectly compatible with it. They reflect a sentiment shared by many of NAK's members that their space on Facebook should

²⁶ "ME ALEGRA, QUE HALLAN VUELTO, PERO LAMENTO QUE EL FACEBOOK, HALLA LIMITADO NUESTRA EXPRESION, ES CIERTO ALGUNOS ABUSAN Y USAN PALABRAS DE GRUESO CALIBRE; PERO ES EL PUEBLO (...)." (26 November 2009, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/342593030435?comment_id=8295809&offset=0&total_comments=29).

²⁷ "Justicia y libertad de expresion... pero no Libertinaje!!" (26 November 2009,

https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/342593030435?comment_id=8284900&offset=0&total_comments=29).

²⁸ "Un pueblo que no se expresa es uno que vive oprimido, eso fue lo que hicieron los fujimoristas, no dejaron que el pueblo se exprese sino mas bien amordasaron todo tipo de idea politica, la libertad de prensa fue aniquilada; dejando edemas un hueco generacional de nuevos politicos con la mordasa a los partidos politicos: con la tecnica de idiotizar al pueblo con una television basura sin grado de cultura, por eso amigos no caigamos en la mala expresion, se que es dificil de aguantar pero si queremos continuar con nuestro objetivo de no dar un paso atras, debemos de seguir expresandonos con frases que no caigan en los terminos ofensivos, discriminatorios o provocadores como dice el moderador y dar a conoser esta pagina a las demas personas, en especial a esa generacion que no tenia uso de razon de la vida politica en los 90, esa generacion que vota por primera vez. a esa le decimos... No a keiko!!!" (26

November 2009, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/342593030435?comment_id=8297620&offset=0&total_comments=29).

not simply enable them to speak their minds freely; in addition to that, users believed that their space should cultivate an alternative civic culture which would enable society to overcome many of the negative legacies of Fujimorism. To them, being a good citizen did not equal simply debating opinions, but doing so in a specific way – namely respecting the “limits of deliberation”. In order to achieve these goals, a certain degree of regulation of speech (including both self-regulation and censorship) seemed acceptable to many members of NAK.

What were the “limits of deliberation” on NAK? Initially, and similarly to bloggers’ comment policies discussed above, these boundaries were clearly limited to “offensive” language. As described above, the “licence to censor” was coupled with a strong pluralist discourse. However, this pluralist attitude changed over time, partly as a result of the attacks and repeated blocking of the Facebook page²⁹. In some cases, “false profiles,” which did not represent actual people, had apparently been set up with the sole purpose of political campaigning³⁰. Faced with these attacks, the administrators raised the problem of dealing with what they called “fujibots” or “trolls”. I shall argue that in this context, the “limits of deliberation” became more and more political. At the same time, overstepping them could result in being branded a “troll”.

The Figure of the “Troll”

As the following posts demonstrate, the terms “fujibot” and “troll” were ambiguous from the very start, including both the “false profiles” implicit in the term “robot” and actual people who disagreed with the group’s political discourse: in October 2009, the group’s administrators asked members, “What do you think of fujibots? They are *Fujimontesinistas* who have infiltrated No a Keiko and many other spaces.”³¹ One month later, they asked for

²⁹ An alternative explanation would draw on Dargent Bocanegra’s work on political elites in Peru and Latin America. According to this author, Peruvian and Latin American elites’ attitudes to liberal democracy depend on their momentary political situation, rather than being grounded in strong convictions and principles. He argues that elites both on the political left and on the right tend to be willing to support authoritarian practices if they benefit their interests. Conversely, elites on both ends of the spectrum would draw on liberal democratic discourses when they find themselves in a weaker situation. He refers to these agents as “precarious democrats”: “‘Democrats’, because they will act as *true democrats* when they feel weak and democratic resources serve them to protect their interests faced with abusive governments; ‘precarious’, because they will abandon democratic values once they have power and consider that their interests can be guarded through non-democratic measures” (2009, p.13).

³⁰ Peruvian politicians of different parties have been accused of using “false profiles” for image management and campaigning purposes, most prominently Manuel Masías, then Mayor of the Limeño district of Miraflores (Sifuentes 2010). According to blogger Marco Sifuentes, these strategies have now been extended to private companies who find themselves involved in new social conflicts (Sifuentes 2012). Blogger Roberto Bustamante also offers evidence for both accusations (Bustamante 2010).

³¹ “¿Qué opinas de los fujibots? Es decir, de los fujimontesinistas infiltrados en No a Keiko y muchos espacios más...” (22 October 2009,

advice on “what to do with fuji-robots and users who don’t seem to be fuji-robots but still publish content which only makes us lose time and energy (on top of compromising the security of this page)?”³² In March 2010, one of the group’s founding members explained the meanings of “fujibot” as follows: “In the group we call fujibots all those members of ‘No a Keiko’ whose only form of participation on the page is by using sneering or distorting messages. They are hidden *Fujimoristas* who only seek to debilitate us.”³³

While these definitions mention aggressive behaviour, in practice fairly peaceful expressions of dissent or even doubt were sometimes singled out as cases of “trolling”. In January 2011, one user asked the group’s creators about their motivation: “To the administrator of No a Keiko... Dude, what moved you to create this page? Some sort of grudge?... Some sort of?”³⁴ While the administrators initially responded with arguments, they changed their attitude when the user continued criticising and questioning their argument. Even though his contributions were by no means aggressive, disrespectful or distorting, one administrator finally threatened to ban him from the site, if other users should “democratically” decide so. The administrator also “inspected” this user’s profile and called upon other members to do the same. By doing this, the administrator simultaneously questioned this user’s status as a full citizen and made him an object of civic vigilance:

“If you are not a troll, you do look a lot like one. You are friends with Ollanta [Humala]³⁵. He is in your Facebook. You have 138 friends and this [removes?] some of the suspicions which arise from your words and your ‘reasoning’. I suggest that the NAK visit your page and draw their own conclusions. If they democratically ask for you to be deleted, we’ll do it.”³⁶

<https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/193176899407>).

³² “¿Qué hacer con los fuji-robots y los usuarios que no parecen fuji-robots pero igual publican contenidos que solo nos hacen perder tiempo y energía (además de comprometer la seguridad de esta página)?” (28 November 2009, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/188197107479>).

³³ “en el grupo les llamamos fujibots a todos aquellos miembros de ‘no a keiko’ cuya única forma de participar en la página es utilizando mensajes de burla y/o tergiversadores. son fujimoristas ocultos que solo buscan debilitarnos” (2 March 2010, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/334165294957?comment_id=11772758&offset=0&total_comments=21).

³⁴ “Al Administrador de No a Keiko...tio que te animo a crear esta pagina....algún rencor...una?” (25 January 2011, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/492716177107>).

³⁵ The reference to the “friendship” with Ollanta Humala, the opposition candidate supported by the NAK leadership, is here seen as a positive sign, which could save the accused from being considered a “troll”. The same is true for his number of friends, which is seen as an indicator of an “authentic” Facebook profile, rather than one that has been set up for the sole purpose of political campaigning and doesn’t represent a “real” person.

³⁶ “si no eres un troll, te pareces bastante. Eres amigo de Ollanta. esta en tu Facebook. Tienes 138 amigos y eso bitrra [sic. borra?] un poco las sospechas que nacen de tus palabras y de tus ‘razonamientos’. Sugiero a los NAK que visiten tu sitio y saquen sus conclusiones. Si democraticamente piden que te borren, lo haremos” (25 January 2011,

In February of the same year, members of the group argued over the acceptability of users promoting other candidates on the site (in particular Alejandro Toledo, the first democratically elected president (2001 – 2006) after Fujimori, who had many supporters among members of NAK). The debate was initiated by a member who described the group as “Toledista”, an accusation which angered several members. The leadership quickly put him in his place:

“Dear Juan Bueno. If this is a joke, we have a sense of humour and we can laugh about your phrase. If you think we are *Toledistas* (or partisans of any other candidate) you are wrong. If you are a troll, we’ll be entertained for a while and after that we’ll delete you”³⁷

Another user rushed to his defence, pointing out that he was not a “troll”, and that he was right in criticising other members for promoting their own candidates and the leadership for not sanctioning these activities sufficiently. Discussing other candidates’ merits and faults would only cause conflict and divisions, members should instead “stick to the rules” and concentrate on being “anti-Keiko”. Moderators in turn should enforce these rules by deleting inappropriate comments. She expressly requested a particular comment to be deleted for being “*Toledista* or *Fujimorista*”, which the administrators seem to have done (the comment is no longer visible). It is therefore not possible to reconstruct its content, but its author replied, denying these accusations and complaining that her request to delete his comment “when I ask you an uncomfortable question and you don’t respond is DICTATORIAL (...)” He suggested “not to provide this disturbed person with a showcase (...) to vent her personal frustrations and distract from NAK’s primary objective any longer.”³⁸ The affected member, in turn, explained her position again and called her adversary a “troll”.

These examples demonstrate that neither the “limits of deliberation” nor the civic status of NAK members were fixed, but subject to constant negotiation. As Barnes et al. put it, “citizenship is not automatically conferred upon individuals but is always being revised and

https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/492716177107?comment_id=14587252&offset=0&total_comments=31).

³⁷ “Estimado Juan Bueno. Si es una broma, tenemos sentido del humor y podemos reírnos con tu frase. Si te crees que somos toledistas (o partidarios de cualquier otro candidato) te equivocas. Y si eres un troll, nos divertiremos un rato y despues te borraremos” (15 February 2011,

https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/163442187039002?comment_id=1858235&offset=0&total_comments=30).

³⁸ “no tengo NINGUNA afiliacion politica, decido mi voto 10 o 15 dias antes de las elecciones, y pedir que borren mi comentario cuando te hago una pregunta incomoda que no respondes es DICTATORIAL y defiendes a bueno que es un personaje AGRESIVO contra el moderador y los Nakers....ademas observo que eres una persona problematica que solo busca distraer y llamar la atencion que no recibes en casa....sugiero no darle mas vitrina a este personaje perturbado que usa dos perfiles en Facebook para derramar sus frustraciones personales y distraer el objetivo primario de NAK. Saludos” (15 February 2011,

https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/163442187039002?comment_id=1860045&offset=0&total_comments=30).

argued over. Likewise, the nature of rights and obligations are also always a matter for debate” (2004, p.190). On NAK, there was no absolute consensus in this question either; rather, boundaries often had to be defined “ad hoc”, which introduced a moment of unpredictability and insecurity and made expressing even moderate dissent or criticism a potentially risky endeavour. However, they also demonstrate that in spite of their vague character, the “limits of deliberation” on NAK grew progressively stricter³⁹. While “trolls” and “robots” were usually described as aggressive characters linked to *Fujimorism*, in practice the rhetoric of trolling was soon used to govern dissent more broadly, both by administrators and by ordinary members of the group.

The Troll as a Non-Citizen

How could NAK members reconcile these practices with their equally important democratic discourse? I suggest that this was possible, because the community developed a narrative of “trolling”, which served to criminalise and dehumanise the “troll” or “robot”, thereby putting their claims to citizenship into question. When someone was branded a “troll”, the democratic values described above did no longer apply. Instead, the “troll” became the object of vigilant citizenship, who, as a “non-citizen”, could be legitimately excluded from deliberation and subjected to abuse.

Butler’s theory of discourse, which argues that the process of discursive construction involves a moment of constriction and exclusion, is a useful theoretical tool at this point. According to her theory, the construction of any object (here, the “citizen”) is a “differential operation”(Butler 1993, p.8), which simultaneously produces a “constitutive outside”, since the formative ability of discourse depends on the “constitutive force of exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection” (Butler 1993, p.8). Butler described “abjects” as

“Those who are not yet ‘subjects,’ but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. The abject designates here precisely those ‘unlivable’ and ‘uninhabitable’ zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the

³⁹ These limits became increasingly tight as the presidential elections drew closer. After the first electoral round, the group’s leadership decided that they would support the candidature of Ollanta Humala, Fujimori’s rival in the second round. This move, which was interpreted by many members as a change from “No to Keiko” to “Yes to Ollanta”, was very controversial. Faced with a choice between Fujimori and Humala (a situation which Peru’s most important “public intellectual”, Mario Vargas Llosa, had earlier described as a choice between cancer and AIDS, although he would later change his mind and support Humala), several members of the group contemplated spoiling their vote. This was rejected by the group’s administrators, who claimed it would benefit Fujimori, as it was highly unlikely that sufficient citizens would choose this strategy for the elections to be annulled. They consequently banned “publicity for spoiled votes or for None of the Above”, threatening to remove users who would advocate this strategy (3 May 2011, https://www.Facebook.com/notes/no-a-keiko/tercer-mensaje-a-la-naci%C3%B3n-nak/10150168564602950?comment_id=16017834&offset=150&total_comments=211).

'unlivable' is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. (...) The subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, 'inside' the subject as its own founding repudiation." (1993, p.XIII)

If we approach communities such as NAK as sites of production of citizenship in praxis, then we can understand "trolls" and "robots" as the "constitutive outside" or "abject" of citizenship. As such, the figure of the "troll" thus constitutes a "non-citizen", who need not (and must not) be allowed to participate in practices of citizenship, and who can legitimately be expelled and subject to violence. The construction of the deliberative and vigilant citizen-subject on NAK thus went hand-in-hand with the construction of a "non-citizen abject". These practices mirror regimes of "citizen security," where the rights of those who are defined as "non-citizens" are sacrificed in the interest of those who qualify as "citizens".

One of my interviewees, who had been labelled a "troll" as a result of his controversial participation in debates in the Peruvian blogosphere, offered a striking account of this effect. Pointing to their status as "non-citizens", he described "trolls" as "civically dead":

"I've been accused of being a 'troll', I mean in theory you are/ I mean if we accept [this narrative] then you are talking to someone who doesn't exist. You are talking to an image. Well."

"Yes, when I told a friend that my next interview would be with [you], he said, 'HE EXISTS?!'"

"HE EXISTS?! Of course! [Laughs] They have suspected me/ He doesn't exist, he doesn't exist, it's not possible that someone/ someone like that could exist. Look how far the denial has come, no? Of course he exists, and the author's friend [sic.] knows me personally, but oh well, now, for the purpose of/ Look, note the degree of rejection, because it can lead even to negation, I mean they give you civil death, [unintelligible] civically dead, you don't exist, you are virtually dead, I mean civically, the only thing that's missing is that you are physically dead. Nothing else. [Laughs] Nothing else."⁴⁰

In the case of NAK, the terms that were used to describe "trolls" – ranging from "criminals" to "moles" and "dogs", "little orange rats", "e-beasts", and "fujirats" – had furthermore a dehumanising effect and emphasised their status as "abject" beings. In February 2011, the administrators declared that "this is a cyber war. They are clones, robots and trolls. We are

⁴⁰ "A mí me han sindicado como 'troll', o sea en teoría estás/ o sea si le hacemos caso estás hablando con alguien que no existe. Estas hablando con una imagen. Bueno."

"Sí, a mí, cuando.. le conté a un amigo que mi próxima entrevista sería [contigo], me dijo: ¡¿EXISTE?!"

"¡¿EXISTE?! ¡Claro! [Risas] Me han sindicado/ no existe, no existe, no puede existir alguien/ alguien así. Mira hasta donde llega la negación, ¿no? Claro que existe, y el amigo de la autora este me conoce personalmente, pero bueno pues, ya, para efectos de la/ mira fijate pues al grado pues de rechazo, porque puede, ¿no?, llegar hasta la negación, o sea te dan la muerte civil, [ininteligible] muerto civilmente, no existes, estás muerto virtual, o sea civilmente, solo falta que físicamente estés muerto. Nada más. [Risas] Nada más."

flesh-and-blood people.”⁴¹ This effect was amplified by juxtaposing “trolls” to “authentic members” and using an “us versus them” dichotomy when addressing the community about these members.

Dealing with the Non-Citizen: Civic Pest Control

The construction of “trolls” as non-citizens (and non-humans) went along with a discourse of security and hygiene. In this logic, a “healthy” community could only be achieved by “eliminating” those who were seen as “contaminators”, or even vermin. Administrators usually reported the removal of members to the community by posting an update on the group’s wall. These messages often used a language of hygiene and cleanliness, as in the following examples:

“Cleaning our house: we are reporting all highly conflictive users. This means those who come looking for gratuitous dispute. Also fujirobots, especially those who only distort, cheat and try to manipulate authentic members of No a Keiko. Don’t fall into the trap. If you encounter an infiltrated user, REPORT THEM!”⁴²

“Thinking that a “Dislike” button would be an excellent way to expose infiltrated users who come here to dirty this page...”⁴³

“Every day we receive more attacks: robots, trolls, infiltrated users, now clones... All with just one goal: to BESMIRCH the collective No a Keiko. You, who know the truth, stay with us.”⁴⁴

Members responded in a similar way. In July 2010, the administrators posed the question “Fujirobots: to dissolve or not to dissolve?”⁴⁵ In response, several members encouraged violent solutions. Suggestions included the following:

“DISSOLVE!!! But all the *Fujimoristas*, in acid :)”⁴⁶

⁴¹ “Esta es una ciberguerra. Ellos son clones, robots y trolls. Nosotros somos personas de carne y hueso” (16 February 2011, <https://www.Facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10150090213572108&set=a.109825787107.110262.109775807107&type=1>).

⁴² “Limpiando nuestra casa: Estamos reportando a todos los usuarios altamente conflictivos. Es decir, aquellos que vienen a buscar pleito gratuitamente. También a los fujirobots, especialmente los que solo tergiversan, engañan y tratan de manipular a los auténticos miembros de No a Keiko. No pises el palito. Si te encuentras con un infiltrado, ¡REPÓRTALO!” (10 June 2010, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/129243577104184>).

⁴³ “pensando que el botón “No me gusta” sería una excelente manera de exponer a los infiltrados que vienen a ensuciar esta página...” (17 October 2010, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/134062066644436>).

⁴⁴ “Cada día recibimos más ataques: robots, trolls, infiltrados, ahora clones... Todos con un solo propósito: ENSUCIAR al colectivo *No a Keiko*. Tú, que sabes la verdad, sigue con nosotros (...)” (22 October 2010, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/163456167011338>).

⁴⁵ “Fujirobots: ¿disolver o no disolver?” (15 July 2010, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/113009685415632>).

⁴⁶ “DISOLVER!!! pero a todos los fujimoristas en ácido :)” (15 July 2010, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/113009685415632?comment_id=341375&offset=0&total_comments=16).

"Put them into the drain with all the rats and filth"⁴⁷

"It's best to hand them over to their friend, the popular kerosene"⁴⁸

"Here I have Kreso [a disinfectant] and bleach... to disinfect all the scum"⁴⁹

"We must invite them for a ceviche [marinated fish]... but prepare it with bleach instead of lime..."⁵⁰

"Fat is dissolved by burning it, right? What about a stake?"⁵¹

These reactions sound extreme. However, they made up more than a third of the 16 comments on this post, and (apart from two comments which simply said "dissolve") were the only ones which actually gave an answer to the initial question⁵². These comments were not challenged by other users who might have disagreed with them based on the values described above.

This "public hygiene" discourse, which cast "trolls" and "robots" as vermin and suggested violent methods of "pest control" for dealing with them, is especially troubling because similar discourses existing in Peruvian society in relationship to indigenous and poor communities would most likely cause outrage and be strongly rejected by members of NAK⁵³. Although it would certainly be a stretch to suggest that members might have been willing to put them into practice in "real life", outside of Facebook, the fact that these violent suggestions could go completely unchallenged by other members of the community suggests a substantial degree of consensus regarding the status and value of "trolls" and "robots"⁵⁴.

⁴⁷ "meterlos al buzón de desagüe con todas las ratas e inmundicia!!!!" (15 July 2010, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/113009685415632?comment_id=341483&offset=0&total_comments=16).

⁴⁸ "Mejor se lo encargamos a su amiguito el popular Kerosene!" (15 July 2010, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/113009685415632?comment_id=341796&offset=0&total_comments=16).

⁴⁹ "ACA TENGO KRESO Y LEJIA..PA desifectar toda las lacras" (15 July 2010, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/113009685415632?comment_id=341833&offset=0&total_comments=16).

⁵⁰ "Hay que invitarles ceviche.. pero preparando con legía en lugar de limón.." (15 July 2010, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/113009685415632?comment_id=347484&offset=0&total_comments=16).

⁵¹ "La grasa se disuelve quemandola no? Que tal una hoguera?" (15 July 2010, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/113009685415632?comment_id=345406&offset=0&total_comments=16).

⁵² Other comments said simply "hahaha" or consisted of general comments about Fujimori.

⁵³ In June 2009 in the aftermath of indigenous uprisings in Bagua, Andrés Bedoya Ugarteche, columnist of the right-wing tabloid *Correo*, suggested the government should use napalm against violent protesters (Bedoya Ugarteche 2009). NAK's current Facebook page only goes back to October 2009, so possible reactions to this suggestion among users of NAK can't be verified. However, the column caused considerable anger among political bloggers at the time. Given the similar socio-cultural and political background of both groups it is highly likely that NAK members would have reacted in a similar way.

⁵⁴ The increasingly strict policing of NAK did prompt some criticism and several members abandoned the group as a result of it. However, in this case, no opposition was voiced.

“Participatory Security” as a Praxis of Vigilant Citizenship

Some of the group’s members were uncomfortable with the leadership’s “firm hand” approach. In spite of their criticism, however, governance and regulation of participation in NAK was by no means a top-down procedure, but could better be described (in Marquardt’s words) as a form of “participatory security” (Marquardt 2012)⁵⁵. While it was ultimately in the hands of the leadership to delete members from the group, and while the administrators certainly promoted vigilance and denunciation as NAK-members’ “civic duty”, ordinary members also participated directly in the process of policing the space. In the case of NAK, vigilant citizenship was thus not only directed against “powerful agents”, but was extended to target members of the group as well.

The most common way this was done was by denouncing members, either directly to Facebook (with the purpose of blocking the profile entirely) or to the group’s leadership (with the purpose of excluding them from the group). The group’s administrators asked members to help with policing the space for the first time after the second blocking incident in January 2010:

“MESSAGE TO OUR FANS/MEMBERS: when you encounter a conflictive user, who seems to be an infiltrated *Fujimontesinista* or who keeps criticising and/or discrediting without proposing anything, don’t respond. This is precisely what they want (for us to fall into the trap). Instead report them by clicking the button ‘Report’. Thanks!”⁵⁶

The following call for denunciations, posted by the administrators in February 2011, suggests that “participatory security” constituted part of “vigilant citizenship” on NAK, which was thus not exclusively directed against “powerful agents”, but affected “non-citizens” within NAK as well:

“We *Nakers* aren’t in favour of any candidate. Among 105.120 people there is something for everybody and we must respect everybody, except the *fujirats*. We are against the *fujirats*. But we [administrators] are not enough people in order to moderate and we need you to be alert and denounce trolls and those who want to

⁵⁵ Morozov observed a similar dynamic in Iran: “Another disturbing group that suddenly got its fair share of action in cyberspace were citizen vigilantes; blogs and Twitter accounts that looked ‘suspicious’ – that is, appeared to be spreading ‘misinformation’ about the venues and times of the protests as well as the reaction from authorities – were publicly named and shamed on dedicated sites (Twitterspam.com was one such site). Getting off the lists was not easy; the *Twitterati* didn’t have much tolerance or appetite for dissent” (2009, p.13).

⁵⁶ “MENSAJE PARA NUESTROS FANS/MIEMBROS: cuando se encuentren con un usuario conflictivo, que parece infiltrado *fujimontesinista* o que se la pasa criticando y/o descalificando sin proponer nada, no le contesten. Eso es precisamente lo que ellos quieren (que pisemos el palito). Más bien repórtenlos haciendo clic en el botón “Denunciar” (Report). ¡Gracias!”
(6 January 2010, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/236214668805>)

take advantage of the situation by posting propaganda for their candidates or products, services or business.”⁵⁷

Between October 2009 and June 2011, I counted 14 calls for denunciation and 16 reports of removal of “trolls” or “robots”. It is impossible to say how many users complied with these requests, but comments posted in response to them suggest that many agreed with this policy and were willing to participate in policing the space by monitoring other members’ activities on the site and denouncing those who they felt did not comply with the increasingly tight and political “limits of deliberation”. Users also contributed by suggesting “improvements” and giving each other advice on how to denounce others “properly”. These are two examples of the latter situation, which were added to the first call for participation quoted above:

“And when doing it, don’t forget to include a comment about the reasons for denunciation (e.g. ‘user is trying to sabotage the page’). This way the denunciation will be better processed!”⁵⁸

“You are back yehhh =) Wouldn’t it be easier to block the user so they can’t have permission to comment on the No a Keiko account???”⁵⁹

Both the “limits of deliberation”, the figure of the “troll”, and the “participatory security” on NAK suggest that deliberative and vigilant citizenship on NAK – as in the Peruvian blogosphere more generally – included important exclusionary practices. These were not “exceptions” or “contradictions”, but formed an integral part of the way in which deliberative and vigilant citizenship were constructed in the context of post-transitional Peru and can thus be understood as “exclusion through citizenship”.

Why did group leaders and ordinary members regulate their space so tightly and went to such great lengths to police it? Just as there was not one fixed set of banned behaviours and opinions (as the examples quoted throughout this case study suggest, the acceptability of behaviours and opinions was constantly being negotiated between members of the group and changed over time), neither is there one single most important reason which could explain all regulation and policing practices on NAK. Different kinds of behaviour were banned for

⁵⁷ “Los naker's no estamos a favor de ningun candidato. Entre 105.120 personas hay para todos los gustos y a todos debemos respetarlos, excepto a los fujiratas. estamos contra los fujiratas. Pero somos pocos para moderar y necesitamos que ustedes esten alertas y denuncien a los trolls y a los que a rio revuelto quieren colar propaganda a sus candidatos o a sus productos, servicios o empresas” (15 February 2011, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/163442187039002>).

⁵⁸ “y al hacerlo, no olviden incluir un comentario del porque de la denuncia (ej: “usuario intenta sabotear la pagina”). de esta manera, la denuncia sera mejor procesada!” (6 January 2010, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/236214668805?comment_id=9375936&offset=0&total_comments=15).

⁵⁹ “Volovieron yehhh =) No seria mas facil bloquear al usuario para que no pueda tener el pemiso de comentar en la cuenta No a Keiko???” (6 January 2010, https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/236214668805?comment_id=9376851&offset=0&total_comments=15).

different reasons (some of them strategic and others political), just as responses to misbehaviour differed.

For example, abusive comments against Keiko Fujimori and her followers were not allowed, because they could potentially threaten the group's existence. Users who broke this rule would run the risk of having their comment deleted (as the "hygienist" comments quoted above and a plethora of racist and sexist comments about Fujimori suggest, however, this did not always happen), but would not be expelled from the group. The following comment by one of the group's moderators is an example of such a situation:

"Aris A. Ramos Robles, I apologise for deleting your comment. Facebook's policy is very clear in questions of insults and for a few too many words they can delete us. Please, the same thing can be said in other words... I'm sure you can do this better."⁶⁰

Similarly, discussions of other candidates' merits and faults, as well as electoral propaganda for other candidates were banned because leaders feared that this would distract from the primary cause behind which citizens of diverse political backgrounds had united (preventing Fujimori from winning the elections), and could potentially divide the group. This changed after the first electoral round, from which Fujimori and Humala emerged as runoff candidates: in this situation, the group's new policy was openly to support Humala; advocating vote-spoiling or criticising Humala was banned, as these behaviours were considered beneficial to Fujimori. Shortly after the first round, the group's leadership formally forbade criticising Humala by adding a new paragraph to its "basic rules": "5. New rule (18 April 2011): users who make propaganda or counter-campaign for Keiko or [against] Ollanta [Humala] will be immediately reported"⁶¹ (No a Keiko 2011a). Those who were uncomfortable with this change in direction now faced exclusion if they expressed their discomfort. The following reply to one member's announcement of her decision to leave the group because she did not want to vote for either of the two candidates, is an example of such a case: "Thank you Carla for your

⁶⁰ "Aris A. Ramos Robles te pido disculpas por borrar tu comentario. La política de Feisbook es muy clara en cuestiones de insultos y por un par de palabras de mas nos pueden borrar. Por favor, se puede decir lo mismo con otras palabras... Seguro que tu puedes hacerlo mejor" (14 January 2011, <https://www.Facebook.com/noakeiko/posts/186073641411053>).

⁶¹ "5. Nueva regla (18 abril 2011): los usuarios que hagan propaganda o contracampaña para Keiko u Ollanta serán inmediatamente reportados." This phrasing is ambiguous and could be read either as banning propaganda for Keiko and counter-campaigning against Ollanta, or propaganda and counter-campaigning for or against either of the candidates. However, in the context of No a Keiko, the latter makes little sense, both because NAK is by definition a counter-campaign, and because administrators did actively campaign for Humala in the weeks following the first round. This was also how users interpreted the new rule. Two days later, a member paraphrased the rule as follows: "Users who campaign in favour of Fujimori or counter-campaign against Humala will be immediately reported" ["los usuarios que hagan campaña pro Fujimori o contracampaña anti Humala serán inmediatamente reportados" (18 April 2011, <https://www.facebook.com/noakeiko/info>). Even though Humala is now president, this rule is still in place.

support until now. You may stay with us without making propaganda for spoiling votes or voting 'None of the Above', but participating in the NO A KEIKO activities."⁶² In these cases, regulation was mainly strategic and not primarily political or grounded in values.

The exclusion of Fujimori supporters and other members who did not agree with the group's objectives, practices or policies, was in part strategic, too: dealing with these members and engaging in debates with them was seen as a waste of energy and a distraction from the group's main objective. But in these cases regulation was not entirely strategic. I suggest that it also reflected and responded to narratives, values, experiences and memories shared by members of NAK and its leadership, which influenced the way in which the "limits of deliberation" – the line between the "political" and the "offensive" – were drawn: as I have mentioned above, NAK's democratic discourse was inextricably intertwined both with memories of Fujimorism and with perceptions of structural continuity beyond the political transition in 2000. The following quote from an interview I conducted with one of the movement's founding members during my fieldwork in 2010, describes the political and media context NAK was responding to:

"The feeling I got in May 2009 was that the traditional media, television, radio, newspapers were very complacent with Fujimori, no, with the candidacy of Keiko Fujimori, very eeeh very light, the coverage was very soft, no? It wasn't firm, not really as I expected it to be, no, I mean how could a person who represents a very sad time in the history of Peru intend to return to power and the national media see it as something normal, like a good thing, as something maternal, as something familiar, as something pink, no, then this really irritated me and annoyed me and every day irritated me more because I really did not see any leaders of opinion, no political leader, no big media that confronted the subject and said, hey, but you represent this, this, this, that, you represent Fujimori, Montesinos, dictatorship, violation of human rights, uh, repression of freedom of expression, and a series of misdeeds and crimes that, well, that somehow all of us remember, right? And the feeling I had was that they were trying to re-launch Fujimorism with a new face, so soft, it could pass smoothly like butter, no? So she wins the elections and then again, as they say, they screw us up."⁶³

⁶² "Gracias Carla por tu apoyo hasta este momento. Puedes quedarte con nosotros sin hacer publicidad al voto nulo, blanco o viciado, pero participas en las acciobnes de NO A KEIKO." (3 May 2011, https://www.Facebook.com/notes/no-a-keiko/tercer-mensaje-a-la-naci%C3%B3n-nak/10150168564602950?comment_id=16017834&offset=150&total_comments=205).

⁶³ "La sensación que yo tenía en 2009 en mayo era que los medios de comunicación tradicionales, la televisión, la radio, los periódicos, eran muy complacientes con el Fujimorismo, no, con la candidatura de Keiko Fujimori, muy eeeh muy light, la cobertura, muy suave, no, no era dura, no era realmente como yo esperaba que fuera, no, osea cómo es posible que una persona que representa a una época muy triste del Perú pretenda a volver al poder y que los medios de comunicación nacionales lo vean como si fuera algo normal, como si fuera algo bueno, como si fuera algo maternal, como si fuera algo

The narrative of threat and urgency expressed in the quotation from my interview with one of NAK's founding fathers – as well as in many of the blogposts discussed in Chapter IV – allowed administrators and common members to reconcile strict and sometimes shocking regulatory practices with an equally important and – so I believe – sincere democratic discourse. The construction of a category of “non-citizens” eased this process: paradoxically, in order to preserve freedom of speech, those who were perceived to endanger it had to be silenced.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that rather than overcoming exclusion, citizenship in praxis often produces exclusionary practices, which can best be understood as “exclusion through”, rather than simply “from citizenship”. For the Peruvian case, I have shown that deliberative and vigilant citizenship in the political blogosphere was characterised by such exclusionary practices. These drew on a tacit consensus, which I termed “the limits of deliberation”. I have shown that many bloggers did not perceive these restrictions to be at odds with democratic narratives of blogging and freedom of speech, but rather incorporated them into their ethics of citizenship. They were careful to stress that the “limits of deliberation” referred to abusive (non-civic) speech, but should not affect political content. However, I have argued that in the context of post-transitional Peru, it was not always easy to draw a clear line between the political and the offensive.

I have shown that those who overstepped the “limits of deliberation” could be subjected to censorship, marginalization, stigmatization, or threats. I discussed several cases where bloggers' publications had been met with such reactions. This meant that vigilant citizenship was not only directed against “those in power”, e.g. politicians, the government, or big companies, but also took place within the blogosphere and among its bloggers and commentators.

I have explored these aspects in greater detail in relation to the Facebook group No a Keiko. I have argued that on NAK – as in the wider Peruvian blogosphere – the “limits of deliberation” were coupled with a strong democratic discourse, which valued freedom of speech and plurality. However, while initially restricted to abusive speech, over time these limits became

familiar, como si fuera algo rosa, no, entonces a mí eso realmente me irritaba y me irritaba y cada vez me irritaba más porque realmente no veía a ningún líder de opinión, a ningún líder político, a ningún medio de comunicación grande que le haga frente al tema y le diga, oiga, pero ustedes este representa a tal, tal, tal, tal, representa a Fujimori, a Montesinos, dictadura, violación de derechos humanos, eeeh, represión de la libertad de expresión, y una serie de faltas y crímenes que bueno, que todos de alguna manera recordamos, no? y la sensación que tenía era que se estaba tratando de relanzar el Fujimorismo con una cara nueva, suavcita, que pase así como una mantequilla, no, y que gane las elecciones y luego como dicen otra vez nos meten la yuca.”

progressively tighter and were soon used to govern dissent more broadly. I have discussed the discursive figure of the “troll”, which I conceptualised as the “constitutive outside” or “abject” (Butler 1993) of the citizen, and which emerged as a result of “overstepping” the “limits of deliberation”. As a “non-citizen”, the “troll” was excluded from the practices of deliberative citizenship and became the object of vigilant citizenship. A dehumanising discourse, which cast the “troll” as vermin, fuelled this process and prompted members of the group to suggest and engage in “participatory security” measures akin to pest control.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have discussed political blogging as an example of urban middle-class citizenship in the context of post-transitional Peru. I have approached citizenship as a meaningful praxis – something people do in order to be “good” citizens and in ways that reflect their understanding of what it means to be a citizen and where the limits of citizenship are.

This approach is inherently empirical, as it focuses on people’s views about and ways of doing and restricting citizenship. As a result, it is also inherently sociological, as it necessarily situates and explains notions and practices of citizenship within and in relation to a particular historical, social and political context, rather than aspiring to universal concepts.

Starting off from this sociological viewpoint, I have argued that notions – and hence practices – of citizenship are not uniform across society, but vary along the lines of difference and inequality that structure societies in general. In the Peruvian case, these differences and inequalities are substantial and have strongly shaped the national imagery, in spite of the ever-growing diversification of the big cities since the second half of the 20th century. One of the tropes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s work that has been repeated over and over again, and that reflects the strength of this imagery, is the idea of two separate nations inside Peru: an urban, coastal, *mestizo*, Spanish-speaking, and (at least aspiring to be) middle-class nation on the one hand, and one that was Andean and Amazonian, rural and poor, and spoke indigenous languages, such as Quechua and Asháninka, on the other (Root 2012, p.15).

Research on citizenship as a meaningful praxis has tended to focus on the latter, while the urban upper and upper-middle classes have been largely neglected, a bias which reflects broader patterns of interest in the social sciences in Peru. Although more privileged agents have sometimes been included in studies of citizenship in Peru, this has often been done in a complementary way. However, it is often urban middle-class people who develop and carry out citizenship-related policies and programmes. For this reason, it is important critically to examine what they understand by citizenship and how these understandings translate into praxis. As a praxis which belongs mainly to the civic “habitus” (Bourdieu 1977) of the (“traditional”) urban middle classes, political blogging offered an ideal field for the study of notions and practices of citizenship in this social sector. By focussing explicitly on urban middle-class notions and practices of citizenship, my thesis offers a significant contribution to citizenship studies in Peru and Latin America.

The diversity of notions and practices of citizenship across society necessarily impacts on the theoretical output of empirically-grounded citizenship studies. Resulting from its strong focus on marginalised sectors of society, research in Peru has tended to stress inclusion-based and rights-based notions of citizenship. However, some research suggests that members of the urban middle classes tended to attribute a different set of meanings to their own citizenship, emphasising mainly deliberation and vigilance. In the case of blogging in particular, citizenship is framed in this way. Inclusion, exclusion and rights, in turn, appear as problems in the process of translating these notions into praxis.

This thesis asked the following questions:

- What do political bloggers (as members of the urban middle classes) understand by “citizenship” and where do they draw the limits of citizenship?
- How do these meanings relate to and are shaped by the post-transitional context?
- How do they see blogging as citizenship in “real life”?
- What are the exclusionary practices resulting from the “limits of citizenship”?

In answering these questions, I have argued that Peruvian bloggers’ notions of blogging as citizenship emphasised vigilance and deliberation, rather than inclusion and rights. As counter-public narratives, they stressed marginality and were linked to a strong democratic discourse. Vigilant and deliberative citizenship, as my interviewees saw it, could be described as “citizenship against the state” and required distance from “powerful agents” and a specific, “critical” mindset.

However, the post-transitional condition affected the way vigilant and deliberative citizenship were practised: I have argued that practices such as “corrective strategies” and “remembering history/interpreting the present differently” can be understood as historically contextual translations of vigilant and deliberative citizenship that correspond both to bloggers’ memories of recent history and to their perceptions of continuity beyond the transition. Likewise, in the *Panamericana* case, bloggers’ scrutiny of staff decisions as vigilant citizenship reflected their memories and perceptions of continuity insofar as they paid particular attention to the new management’s relationship with “powerful agents” and political history, rather than, for example, their ability to turn a bankrupt company around. In this sense, they did not only draw on these interpretative resources in order to make sense of current events, but also in order to fill notions of deliberative and vigilant citizenship with meaning and act on these meanings.

While they often subscribed to notions of vigilant and deliberative citizenship on a normative level and saw blogging as a way of practising these notions of citizenship, on a practical level many bloggers felt that the “real-existing” blogosphere was unsuitable for either deliberative or vigilant citizenship, for several reasons: because actual bloggers and the blogosphere as a whole “lacked marginality” (a crucial precondition for vigilant and deliberative citizenship “against the State”); because they used power against other, “truly marginal” bloggers, restricting their ability to act as vigilant and deliberative citizens; because there were not enough diverse opinions available in the Peruvian blogosphere; or because they perceived the blogosphere as a highly-polarised and aggressive space, making productive debates impossible.

These critical narratives of citizenship in practice suggested that all was not peaceful in the Peruvian blogosphere. In the final chapter of this thesis I therefore examined the exclusionary practices that accompanied vigilant and deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere. I chose to approach these as exclusion “through”, rather than simply “from” citizenship, in order to emphasise the limitations and restrictions that are inherent to notions of citizenship.

I have argued that for many bloggers, deliberative citizenship had clear limits. These limits were most explicitly defined in bloggers’ written comment policies, but also emerged as a topic in my interviews and could often be observed “in praxis” in interactions between bloggers. I discussed several examples of regulatory practices surrounding the “limits of deliberation” in Chapter VI. On a normative level, I have argued that many bloggers defined “offensive speech” as the “limits of deliberation”, but were eager to stress that political dissent must be protected. The restriction of speech was thus coupled with a strong democratic discourse that valued freedom of speech. However, I have shown that in praxis it was not always easy to draw the line between the political and the offensive, particularly in relation to problems resulting from the post-transitional condition, such as conflicting interpretations of the internal armed conflict, the Fujimori government, and its legacy in contemporary Peru.

I have examined the “limits of deliberation” and the regulation of speech in detail in a case study of the Facebook group No a Keiko. As in the Peruvian blogosphere as a whole, these limits initially referred to offensive speech only and were coupled with a strong democratic discourse which made particular reference to the restriction of free speech under the Fujimori regime. However, I have shown that these limits grew stricter over time and were soon used to govern dissent more broadly. In this context, the figure of the “troll” emerged as a “non-

citizen”, who could be legitimately excluded from participation and subjected to abuse, turning into the object, rather than subject of vigilant citizenship in praxis.

Why Study Citizenship as a Meaningful Praxis?

In Chapter I, I discussed normative theoretical accounts of civic deliberation, as well as the (mainly empirical) literature on vigilant citizenship. Reflecting on the findings of my thesis and comparing them to the theoretical literature on civic deliberation and vigilant citizenship, it is now possible to identify the benefits of studying citizenship empirically as a meaningful praxis. Pulling together the chapters of this thesis, I shall conclude by discussing how an approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis can help us better understand people’s civic activities and narratives.

Vigilant and Deliberative Citizenship in Theory and in Praxis

In Chapter I, I discussed existing theoretical approaches to civic deliberation and empirical research on vigilant citizenship, respectively. On the following pages, I shall discuss the notions and practices of deliberative and vigilant citizenship which I found in the Peruvian blogosphere in their relationship to these normative theoretical (in the case of deliberative citizenship) and empirical accounts (in the case of vigilant citizenship). The aim of this comparison is to show that, in the case of deliberative citizenship, my participants’ notions and practices of citizenship were neither *independent of*, nor completely synonymous with, those described in normative theory. Rather, bloggers drew on (popularised) versions of the latter, but used their own experiences and memories as resources in order to make sense of them in the context of their everyday lives. This process involved a series of complex adjustments, reformulations, and compromises, resulting in notions and practices of deliberative citizenship that were as unique as the specific context in which they were constructed. In the case of vigilant citizenship, it serves to show that the top-down approach that has been taken in much of the existing research in the field is inadequate to understand vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere. These notions were neither reflections, nor negotiations of “official” discourses and interpellations, but were often constructed in explicit opposition to the state. Here, approaching citizenship as a meaningful praxis (rather than as a top-down interpellation, as most of the existing research in the field has done) can help us redefine our assumptions about the relationship between notions of citizenship “on the ground” and those promoted by “powerful agents”.

Deliberative Citizenship

How does deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere relate to the theoretical approaches discussed in Chapter I? Certainly, my interviewees’ notions of civic deliberation

reflected some of the ideals of normative theory. For example, the necessity that citizens “go beyond the self-interest typical in preference aggregation and orient themselves to the common good (...), making it possible to work out common ends and (...) without presupposing an already existing social consensus” (Bohman 1998, p.402) was present on a normative level in bloggers’ accounts of the benefits of blogging, as well as in their criticisms of deliberation in what they perceived to be a highly polarised “real-existing” blogosphere. For example, one of them described the blogosphere as a “confluence of ideas” and likened it to the town squares and forums of yore. Although bloggers’ experiences of the “real-existing” blogosphere were closer to confrontational “preference aggregation”, on a normative level their criticisms reflected the validity of co-operative notions of deliberation directed towards the construction of “common ends”.

But bloggers’ notions of deliberative citizenship also differed from those described in normative theory in important ways. One of these differences relates to one of the most fundamental elements of normative theory, namely the notion of equality. I have argued throughout this thesis that both deliberative and vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere maintained a complex relationship with notions of equality, which interacted with narratives of power, marginality, and lack of marginality: in Chapter V, I argued that some of my interviewees felt that citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere was restricted both by “power nodes”, which limited some bloggers’ access to deliberation, and by a “lack of marginality”, which limited other bloggers’ credibility as either deliberative or vigilant citizens. To my interviewees, equality thus had much more nuanced meanings and, compared to theories of deliberative democracy, played quite a different role in the construction of citizenship: it was equality with a big “but” attached – a conditioned equality, which could only work on the grounds of shared marginality in relation to the wider public sphere. Marginality in relation to the wider public sphere thus constituted a central “virtue” and even pre-condition of vigilant and deliberative citizenship, but marginality within the blogosphere and in relation to “power nodes” could limit a blogger’s ability to practise vigilant and deliberative citizenship effectively. In this sense, citizenship as it was perceived by Peruvian bloggers during the second García administration could maybe best be described as citizenship “despite” (Lazar 2008, p.110) or even *against* the State.

Likewise, the “limits of deliberation” in the Peruvian blogosphere were similar to those described in political theory only at first sight. Bloggers’ criticisms of deliberation in the Peruvian blogosphere also tell us something about the “limits of deliberation”: just like

normative theory, bloggers stressed the importance of reasoned discourse. For example, in Chapter V, I quoted one of my interviewees, who complained that

“There are few blogs where there is true debate. (...) Because what you get are opinions: ‘Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! Very good!’ Or: ‘No, no, no, no, no! That’s rubbish!’ But there is no ‘in reality, look, it seems to me that this for these and these and these reasons.’”

Another example is the blogger who described a fellow bloggers’ discussion style as

“[Putting] the shoe right in front of you, right? And I know that if he puts a shoe right in front of you, and I put a few shoes [in front of him], that won’t generate any... any benefit. If you put the shoe there right away, I say, ‘hmmm... yeah, but that’s a shoe. But let’s look at the other...’”

I have also argued in Chapter VI that many bloggers were keen to stress – either in their comment policies or in interview – that the “limits of deliberation” referred to abusive speech only and that political dissent should be protected. However, I have shown that in praxis it was neither always easy to draw the line between “the offensive” and “the political”, nor was reasoned discourse always considered acceptable (consider for example the case of the NAK user who asked for explanations about the origins of NAK, or the debates surrounding the acceptability of promoting other candidates on NAK). This became very clear in the case of No a Keiko, where a strong democratic discourse that valued pluralism of ideas and freedom of speech coexisted with increasingly stringent limits of deliberation. In this case (as elsewhere in the blogosphere), the figure of the “troll” served to position unacceptable speech and its authors outside the limits of deliberative citizenship.

This leads us to a third insight deriving from studying citizenship as a meaningful praxis and contrasting it to normative theory. I have argued above that in normative theory, citizenship usually appears as a pre-existing and transparent status, which is taken into the process of deliberation. However, both the experience of No a Keiko, and the narratives of citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere discussed in Chapter V, which constantly negotiated citizenship along the lines of marginality, power, and lack of marginality, suggest that claims to citizenship are anything but fixed. Instead, they are subject to constant negotiation. Seen this way, citizenship is not so much a pre-condition of deliberation, but a conditioned status that is constituted in the process of deliberation and through the construction, negotiation, interpretation, and implementation of “rules”, which define the limits of deliberative citizenship. Furthermore, it is not a status that can be obtained once and for all, but rather a credential that needs to be recognised by others and reproduced in praxis, and that is thus vulnerable.

The conditional character of deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere also points to the problem of *exclusion through citizenship*, a problem that is not usually addressed in normative theory, but can be brought to light in qualitative empirical research. By *exclusion through citizenship*, I mean the exclusions that happen *as a result* of vigilant and deliberative citizenship in praxis, rather than simply exclusion *from* the status of citizenship. Walsh argues in this sense that

“Through casual interaction, people accomplish the civically desirable work of connecting themselves to politics. This in itself is reason enough to pay attention to these everyday processes. But the dark side of this interaction requires attention as well. Despite the ways in which such talk builds network ties or social capital, it incurs civic costs, too. Such interaction clarifies attachments to specific social groups and reinforces the boundaries of “us” and “them,” producing collective understandings that are not necessarily democratic goods.” (2003, p.8)

The polarising effects of social media have been studied by political scientists with the help of computational social network mapping (Etling et al. 2009; Etling et al. 2010; Kelly & Etling 2008). However, while these studies can tell us a lot about the divisions that structure deliberative space, their macro-focus means that they cannot explain how these divisions are brought about, re-created and deepened in praxis. This is an important point, where an approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis is particularly valuable, because of its ability to examine the logic of citizenship in praxis, rather than simply dismissing it as imperfect or contradictory. I would thus suggest that *exclusion through citizenship* is not *contrary* to citizenship, but forms an integral part of it. An approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis can not only point out these aspects of citizenship, but also explain them in their specific context.

In the Peruvian blogosphere, *exclusion through citizenship* happened both as a result of the “limits of deliberation”, which were constitutive of deliberative citizenship, and as an effect of vigilant citizenship turned against fellow bloggers. The Faverón case was an example of vigilant citizenship used to restrict the participation of other bloggers who had overstepped the “limits of deliberation”. But of course the most obvious case of *exclusion through vigilant citizenship* was that of “troll-hunting” on No a Keiko. In this case, practising vigilant citizenship involved the construction of a “constitutive outside” (Butler 1993) of citizenship, or a “non-citizen” who could legitimately be excluded from deliberation and subjected to abuse without affecting the democratic discourse of No a Keiko.

Vigilant Citizenship

Vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere also differed from the versions described in the research discussed above, which tended to concentrate on “official” notions of vigilant

citizenship, sometimes assuming, if only implicitly, that these formed the basis of citizens' approaches to citizenship. In contrast to these accounts, vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere was not simply a straightforward "reflection" or even "negotiation" (Newman 2012) of "official" notions of citizenship, but differed from these in significant ways.

One such difference refers to the relationship of the vigilant citizen with the Government. In Chapter I, I discussed notions of citizenship in Alan García's essays. At that point, I focussed on the role of rights in García's notion of citizenship, arguing that citizens' rights were limited to the right to be productive and to "add value". I also argued that for García, citizenship required a specific mindset, expressed in his claim that "the vast majority thinks differently"¹ (García Pérez 2009) from what he called "anti-system groups". Vigilant citizenship as García saw it should thus not focus on the State or government, but on "anti-system" agents, which he discursively placed outside the Peruvian nation (and hence defined as the outside of citizenship).

Although he did not use the term "vigilant citizenship", García referred to vigilant practices at different points throughout his essay "To the Faith of the Vast Majority" (García Pérez 2009), both in a negative, and in a positive way: on the one hand he denounced "pockets of disbelief and disinformation, which are exploited by demagogues"²; in this case he accuses "anti-system groups" of "using lies":

"So, the teachers' law, which was made so that trained teachers should earn the double of their current salary, is being presented as a tool to sack teachers, although not one has been dismissed. They say that if mayors and parents supervise the quality of schools education will be privatized. Also, through radios, they talk about 'genocide' with thousands of nonexistent victims. In order to stop an investment, they always say that Chile is behind it all, and that they will take the water away in order to make a hydroelectric plant, and so on. They know that there will always be someone who will believe them, especially in the zones which previously voted for the 'anti-system'. (...) They only multiply in blogs, they incite journalists, they appropriate the news with violence, etc. Their tactic is negationism, they repeat: 'Nothing has been done', 'everything is worse', 'it's the government of the rich'"³ (García Pérez 2009)

¹ "La inmensa mayoría piensa diferente a ellos."

² "Aún hay bolsones de incredulidad y desinformación que la demagogia aprovecha."

³ "Usan la mentira. Así, la ley del magisterio hecha para que los maestros capacitados ganen el doble que hoy, la presentan como un medio para despedir a los profesores aunque ninguno haya sido despedido. Dicen que si los alcaldes y los padres de familia supervisan la calidad de las escuelas se privatizará la educación. También, a través de las radios hablan de 'genocidio' con cientos de muertos inexistentes. Para frenar una inversión siempre dicen que hay chilenos detrás, que para hacer una hidroeléctrica se van a llevar el agua al extranjero, etc., etc. saben que siempre habrá alguien que crea, especialmente en las zonas que antes votaron por el 'antisistema'. (...) Sólo se multiplican en los blogs, azuzan a los comunicadores, se adueñan con violencia de la noticia, etc. Su táctica es el negacionismo, repiten: 'nada se ha hecho', 'todo está peor', 'es el gobierno de los ricos'."

Vigilance directed against the government – a critical revision of its policies – was clearly not a part of García’s understanding of “good citizenship”. On the other hand, he called upon citizens to assume an active and vigilant stance in relation to “anti-system groups”:

“What does the vast majority lack? [The will] to act, to prevent the monopoly of mobilization and the loudest voice from being in the hands of the “anti-system”; to use the phone and the Internet more in order to expose in the radio and on blogs their ideas about the underlying issues; to send letters to the media, to demand more definition from their MPs and mayors; to create action groups, and above all not to give in to those who agitate extremism. The time is ripe on every level for the emergence of new leaderships who defend the nation against external penetration and who advance the exercise of active citizenship.”⁴ (García Pérez 2009)

At first glance, García’s claim that “the vast majority thinks differently”, is strikingly similar to the notion of “remembering history/interpreting the present differently”, which I discussed in Chapter IV as a form of vigilant and deliberative citizenship in post-transitional Peru, in that it links good citizenship to a particular – “different” – mind set. But the two conceptions of citizenship differ significantly in the definition of their respective focus. While “thinking differently” in García’s essay meant to abstain from scrutinising and criticising government policy and representations (with the exception of criticising “inefficient” civil servants), in the case of Peruvian bloggers it meant the exact opposite. Building on the central normative function of marginality in Peruvian narratives of vigilant and deliberative citizenship, instances of “remembering the past/ interpreting the present differently” could only be recognised as such (and hence as expressions of vigilant and deliberative citizenship) if they were contrary to “official” narratives.

Vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere also differed both from “official” notions of citizenship and from those described in recent research on vigilant citizenship with respect to the object of vigilance, where those whose citizenship was contested, including migrants, “criminals”, “terrorists”, or members of “anti-system groups”, were targeted. In turn, in the Peruvian blogosphere, vigilant citizenship targeted “powerful” agents (as for example in the discussion of personnel decisions in the Panamericana case), common citizens (as in the corrective strategies and “remembering the past differently”), and “non-citizens” alike (as in No a Keiko’s construction of the “troll”). However, the “non-citizens” on NAK were hardly the

⁴ “¿Qué falta a esta inmensa mayoría? Actuar, evitar que el monopolio de la movilización y el grito esté en manos de los “antisistema”. Usar más el teléfono y el Internet para exponer en las radios y en los blogs sus ideas sobre el tema de fondo. Enviar cartas a los medios de comunicación, exigir a sus parlamentarios y alcaldes más definición, crear grupos de acción y sobre todo no rendirse ante los que agitan el extremismo. El momento es propicio en todos los niveles para el surgimiento de nuevos liderazgos que defiendan a la nación de la penetración externa e impulsen el ejercicio de la ciudadanía activa.”

same as those described by García, but were defined by their (alleged) “closeness” to “powerful agents”, rather than by their “subversive” politics. Being recognised as a “vigilant citizen” on NAK thus required careful management of one’s credentials as a “marginal” citizen in relation to the State and other “powerful agents”. Likewise, as I have argued above in relation to deliberative citizenship, for many bloggers the ability to credibly practice “vigilant citizenship” diminished with increasing closeness to these “powerful agents”, a discursive moment which I termed “lack of marginality”. Notions and practices of vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere were thus much more complex and contradictory than those described in research on “official” notions of vigilant citizenship. As in the case of deliberative citizenship, vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere, too, could best be described as citizenship “despite” (Lazar 2008, p.110) or even *against* the State.

Marked by their own historical context and “the messiness of everyday life” (Taylor & Wilson 2004), “real-life” notions and practices of vigilant and deliberative citizenship are thus insufficiently represented both by the normative theories of citizenship commonly found in political philosophy and political theory, and by the empirical research on vigilant citizenship discussed in Chapter I. Normativity is not irrelevant in an approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis, but it assumes a different role: it is an object of analysis in need of explanation, rather than a characteristic of the resulting theory or of an *a priori* conceptual tool used to “measure” citizenship – it is thus less the researchers’ conception of “good citizenship” that counts, and more the views of the participants. Likewise, “official” discourses are relevant for understanding notions of vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere. However, in the case studied in this thesis, this relevance refers not to a reflection or negotiation of government discourses by citizens, but to their disassociation and opposition.

This is where a qualitative sociological and anthropological approach to citizenship can offer important insights, as it is able to describe and analyse social actors’ notions and practices of citizenship in a way that does justice to their inherent complexity. In this thesis I have explored urban middle-class notions and practices of citizenship in the context of post-transitional Peru from such a qualitative, sociological point of view, using the example of political blogging. One of the major lessons of this enterprise referred to the complexity of notions and practices of citizenship “on the ground”, which were neither completely different from those described in purely theoretical works, nor fully synonymous with them. Rather, I found that normative notions of deliberative and vigilant citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere seemed to be inspired by those described in normative theory, but also differed from them in important ways. The specific historical and social context in which these notions and practices emerge

can offer important clues for their analysis and an approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis can help us make sense of their complexities and apparent contradictions, instead of dismissing them as “imperfect”.

Taking Context into Account

Finally, by focussing on processes of interpretation and “perspectives” (Cramer Walsh 2003), an approach to citizenship as a meaningful praxis requires us to take context into account. I shall conclude by discussing how context mattered in the way notions of vigilant and deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere were constructed and translated into praxis.

In Chapter IV, I have argued that collective memories of the Fujimori regime and perceptions of cultural and structural continuity beyond the transition had an impact both on notions of vigilant and deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere and on the way in which these were translated into practice. For example, I described the practice of “remembering the past/interpreting the present differently” and the use of “corrective strategies” as two forms of deliberative and vigilant citizenship which reflected the mnemonic and discursive struggles in post-transitional Peru, as well as bloggers’ perceptions of structural and cultural continuity beyond the transition.

Context also mattered in relation to the “content” of vigilant citizenship in practice: in the San Marcos case, bloggers scrutinised contemporary media representations in the light of their memories of historical media coverage, establishing a link between the two. They also drew on these memories in order to make sense of the political meanings of contemporary media coverage. In my analysis of the Panamericana case, I showed that bloggers approached personnel decisions from a particular “post-transitional” perspective, which reflected both their memories of historical media regimes and their perceptions of continuity beyond the transition. They scrutinised the new management in the light of these memories, focussing on their democratic credentials, rather than, for example, their administrative experience or their ability to turn a bankrupt company around. Memories of historical media regimes thus served as both interpretative resources in contemporary events, and a reference for practices of citizenship.

Likewise, in this conclusion, I have contrasted vigilant and deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere to normative theoretical models of deliberation and notions of vigilant citizenship which had been described by other researchers focussing on “official” discourses. Again, the explicit bracketing of context in most normative theories of deliberation, as well as

the focus on “top-down” notions of vigilance in much of the empirical research on vigilant citizenship meant that these models differed significantly from the notions of deliberative and vigilant citizenship I came across during my fieldwork. In the Peruvian blogosphere, notions of citizenship were highly contextual, as they were infused with bloggers’ collective memories and experiences, both of the wider public sphere, and of the “real-existing” blogosphere.

Finally, context also impacted on the exclusions created through vigilant and deliberative citizenship in the Peruvian blogosphere. In the final chapter of this thesis, I argued that the “limits of deliberation”, which formed a widely accepted basis of exclusion among Peruvian bloggers, were apolitical only at first sight. While many bloggers were keen to stress that the “limits of deliberation” banned offensive speech only, while political dissent should be protected, in practice it was not always easy to draw the line between the political and the offensive. This was particularly true when it came to problems relating to the post-transitional condition, a perception that was confirmed by some of my interviewees, who argued that dissenting opinions in this field were particularly likely to meet with aggressive reactions (see Chapter VI). The political character of the “limits of deliberation” was most obvious in the case of No a Keiko, where the production of a “non-citizen” (the “troll”) and aggressive enforcement of the “limits of deliberation” coexisted with an equally important democratic discourse.

It would be a mistake simply to dismiss citizenship in practice as “imperfect”. Instead, focussing on the meanings and experiences that underpin the meaningful praxis of citizenship in their specific context can help us make sense of its apparent contradictions. Liuba Kogan, the Peruvian scholar of the upper classes quoted in the introduction, proposed that

“Fear of the other (and not hatred) shapes many of the relationships between the new elites ‘and the others’. Therefore, social spaces that have been appropriated as exclusive territories – the beaches of Asia [a seaside resort to the south of Lima], the bars and restaurants, etc. – should not surprise us. We must not forget that territories are conquered: just like gangs obtain their spaces by flying flags and painting murals, the new elites hedge their space of civility, security, and leisure.” (2009, p.13)

The stories Peruvian bloggers told me, the narratives I found in their writings, and the practices I observed in their communities suggest that fear played an important role in the way vigilant and deliberative citizenship “worked” in the blogosphere of post-transitional Peru. In the context of the second García administration, characterised, as many bloggers saw it, by cultural and structural continuity from the Fujimori regime, many bloggers hoped that the cultivation of a “civilised” and alternative discursive space could help overcome the negative legacy of Fujimorism. However, in trying to create this space, they sometimes resorted to

exclusionary practices – particularly when the interpretation of the recent past and its role in the present was at stake. As a result, citizenship was not simply an *a priori* exclusive category, but one whose meanings and whose praxis constantly created exclusions in a way that made sense in its specific context.

Studying citizenship as a meaningful praxis allows us to understand its apparent contradictions and appreciate the complexities of “The Real Thing”.

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