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# Spatial Transitions and the Political Economy in Latin America's Memorial Museums: The ex-ESMA and the Memorial Da Resistência

Julia Youngs

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**“SPATIAL TRANSITIONS AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY IN LATIN AMERICA’S  
MEMORIAL MUSEUMS: THE EX-ESMA AND THE MEMORIAL DA RESISTENCIA”**

**by**

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**B.A. English Literature, University of New Mexico, 2013.**

THESIS

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**ABSTRACT**

During the dictatorships both the former DEOPs (Departamento de Ordem Política e Social) in São Paulo and the former ESMA (Escuela Mecánica de la Armada) in Buenos Aires functioned as clandestine detention centers. Today, the functions of both of these spaces could be broadly (and contentiously) described as memorials, museums, and spaces of public gathering. In 2009 the former DEOPs was inaugurated as the Memorial da Resistência, and in 2004 the former ESMA was inaugurated as the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos [ex-ESMA]. I say “contentiously” because the historical dialogues that framed the creation, use, and definition of the Memorial and the ex-ESMA continue to be highly divisive issue in both countries, and the concerns regarding physical development parallel the complicated and divergent paths towards transitional justice that Brazil and Argentina have taken. In this work I assert that the spatial transitions seen in Brazil and Argentina have been directly influenced by the powerful processes of political and economic restructuring that occurred in both nations in the late 1990's and early 2000's as reverberations of the economic effects of the dictatorships.

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## GLOSSARY

<b>DOI-CODI</b>	Destacamento de Operações de Informações - Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna // Department of Information Operations - Center for Internal Defense Operations. Brazilian intelligence agency during the military government (1964–1985), with the first and largest unit located in São Paulo.
<b>DOPS</b>	Departamento de Ordem Política e Social // Department of Political and Social Order. Brazilian state security and intelligence organization during the military dictatorship.
<b>DEOPS</b>	Departamento Estadual de Ordem Política e Social // State Department of Political and Social Order. State-level unit of the DOPS.
<b>FDDRP</b>	Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Politicos // Families of the Disappeared and Detained for Political Reasons. Argentina.
<b>H.I.J.O.S:</b>	Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio // Children for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence. Argentine activist organization.
<b>OBAN</b>	Operação Bandeirante. Clandestine Brazilian security task force and repressive agency.
<b>SNI</b>	Serviço Nacional de Informações // National Intelligence Service. Domestic espionage organization in Brazil during the military dictatorship (1964-1985)



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## PREFACE

I spent the summer of 2013 studying abroad in South Africa and during my time there had the opportunity to tour Robben Island, home to the eponymous prison (now museum) where Nelson Mandela and others served their sentences as political prisoners. The tour of the prison was led by a former inmate who delivered his prepared speech in a deeply unsettling and detached monotone. He had clearly been advised by higher-ups to mention whenever possible any personal anecdotes about Mandela and skip over any specific unpleasantnesses of the experience. At the conclusion of our tour, our guide informed the group that we now had time to visit the museum gift shop where one can buy commemorative Robben Island t-shirts, mugs with Mandela's prison number on them, and sets of souvenir shot glasses. People gleefully bought all three. During the ferry ride back to mainland Cape Town I reflected on my tour and found the whole experience paradoxically both repugnant and morally necessary, and this feeling still stands today. Mandela was gravely ill that summer and I thus felt like I owed this visit to the nation and the struggle against Apartheid, but I most certainly did not owe my friends and relatives a "Robben Island Survivor" t-shirt. At the time I was unaware that this would be the first of many visits I have since made to sites where grave atrocities and human rights abuses occurred and are now, for better or worse, public spaces whose missions stretch across the categories of memorialization, education, preservation, and tourism.

My experience of visiting locations like Robben Island and the questions that these experiences generated form the foundational questions behind this thesis. Why have I, and others, chosen voluntarily to visit spaces where grave tragedies have occurred? Why do cities, governments, activists, or organizations choose to preserve these spaces? What stories do these spaces

tell and who's do they exclude? And what are we supposed to learn from the practice of visitation? Idelbar Avelar, in his seminal work on mourning and memory in Latin America, *The Untimely Present*, states that "the imperative to mourn is the postdictatorial [*sic*] imperative par excellence" (1999, p.3). From the mid 1960's to the mid 1980's much of the Southern Cone was held in the grip of oppressive authoritarian military regimes, resulting in grave human rights abuses and eventually social, political, and economic upheaval. The drastic effects of these dictatorships can still be felt today. But while mourning may in theory be the "postdictatorial [*sic*] imperative," the efficacy or actualization of this imperative is far from certain. Indeed, the nature of the political transition, the implementation (or lack) of transitional justice measures, and economic conditions are all forces which have combined to shape post dictatorial memory politics in the Southern Cone, as well as shaping the physical spaces concerning post dictatorial memory. Thus, mourning is only one of many complicated and conflicting answers to the broad questions I initially posited, but my thesis aims to provide insights to all of these questions within the context of two Latin American memorial museums.

## INTRODUCTION

During the dictatorships both the former DEOPs (Departamento de Ordem Política e Social) in São Paulo and the former ESMA (Escuela Mecánica de la Armada) in Buenos Aires functioned as clandestine detention centers. In both Brazil and Argentina these facilities were crucial to maintaining the repressive apparatus of the respective military governments whose pervasive use of fear and the threat of disappearance contributed to restricting interactions in the public sphere and maintaining tight social control. Today, the functions of both of these spaces could be broadly (and contentiously) described as memorials, museums, and spaces of public gathering. In 2009 the former DEOPs was inaugurated as the Memorial da Resistência, and in 2004 the former ESMA was inaugurated as the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos [ex-ESMA]. I say “contentiously” because the historical dialogues that framed the creation, use, and definition of the Memorial and the ex-ESMA continue to be highly divisive issue in both countries, and the concerns regarding physical development parallel the complicated and divergent paths towards transitional justice that Brazil and Argentina have taken.

In this work I assert that the spatial transitions seen in Brazil and Argentina have been directly influenced by the powerful processes of political and economic restructuring that occurred in both nations in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s as reverberations of the economic effects of the dictatorships. From the democratic transition in 1985 to 1994 Brazil was faced with rampant inflation and political instability, and the country turned to neoliberal economic policies to cut the fiscal deficit and stabilize the economy. During this time the City of São Paulo ceded to the creation of the Memorial da Resistência as part of a larger urban renewal initiative designed to attract upper- and middle-class consumers to a blighted part of the city colloquially re-

ferred to as “cracolândia.” As such, the site embraces a paradoxical narrative that suppresses the remembrance of human rights abuses and embraces the notion of resistance to oppression as a force that paved the way for democratic transition and neoliberal economic policies. During the same time period human rights advocates in Buenos Aires pushed for the city to reclaim from the Argentine Navy the property on which the Espacio Memoria lies. This push came during an era of economic crisis caused by the neoliberal policies implemented by the junta that continued for years after. Economic restructuring and political transition resulted in the re-opening of trials in Argentina and as such the space functions as an active site of social, political, and juridical contestation.

Based on the observations and interviews collected, I propose that while both the Memorial da Resistência and the ex-ESMA differ drastically in their narratives and aims, they both function as heterotopic “Thirdspaces” that continue to be used as tools in the larger political economy of memory that was redefined after periods of social and economic crisis. The memorial narrative of the Memorial da Resistência in São Paulo exemplifies what could be described as an attitude of “marketing memory,” wherein the site’s history has been repackaged to fit the exigencies of the neoliberal market that have accompanied São Paulo’s plans for urban renewal and redevelopment. Not only was this attitude shaped by the neoliberal structural adjustment policies of the late 1990’s, but also by the perpetuation of the Lei da Anistia which has helped to create a social and political attitude that holds remembering as oppositional to open market economic progress. In comparison to this is the memorial narrative of the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos, which I believe represents a fluid, unsettled, and contentious opening in the memorial narrative of both the city and the national collective. The economic collapse in Argentina in the

late 1990's and reinvigoration of trials against dictatorship-era crimes has resulted in a renewed debate about the role of memory in society and challenges the homogenizing forces of the neoliberal city.

What this assertion attempts to highlight is the fundamental tension that exists, broadly, between the notion of politics, economics, and community. In his work *Economy's Tension: The Dialectics of Community and Market*, scholar Stephen Gudeman reflects upon this in questioning how the supposedly rational and subjective forces that dominate the contemporary market and political landscape interact with the mutual realm of the community. Gudeman asks, “are diverse ideologies, and political and social arrangements, independent of economy?,” for “the new understanding of modernity seems to presume that it is a political, social, and ideological movement disconnected from material practices that affect people and change their world” (2008, p. 148). As will be examined here, this question is especially important for societies in transition from authoritarian regimes to democracy, where the demand for a new political and economic system is closely, and not un-problematically, linked to the reformation of physical space and the notion of collective memory. Considering my case studies I believe that a central point of tension emerges in the interplay between the push for democratic reform, the concept of transitional justice and accountability, and the drive for economic progress (neoliberal, in this case), and the tension is as much defined by the presence of these three elements as it is by the absence of one. This tripartite relationship defines the political economy of memory which, in the past two decades in Brazil and Argentina, has questioned whether social accountability for past wrongs is ideologically oppositional to democratic governance and neoliberal economic progress.

## Methodology

This research is grounded in a strongly interdisciplinary theoretical background that draws on pedagogy from the fields of urban planning, museum studies, transitional justice, and political economics. These theories helped to form my research questions and research agenda for field study. During the summer of 2015 I spent roughly a month in both São Paulo and Buenos Aires working at the Memorial da Resistência and the Espacio Memoria. Both the Memorial da Resistência and the Espacio Memoria are free and open to the public, and offer frequent cultural events such as workshops, lectures, public meetings, and artistic performances (film, theater, art installation) that are generally free and open to the public.

During my time researching I spent at least 2-3 hours each day collecting site-specific observations, which included visiting museum exhibits, attending guided tours, observing patron interactions with the spaces, and collecting available informational materials at the on-site libraries/archives. Site observations played a critically important component in my research as it helped me to understand how these museums serve as public spaces with a pedagogical function, and how people view and interact with the space. The on-site archives/libraries provided primary-source historical documents unavailable elsewhere, from building plans to copies of city laws and petitions. Perhaps the most important component of my analysis are the personal testimonials collected through unstructured interviews with individuals affiliated with the two memorial museums.

## Interview Participants

For my investigation I defined “affiliated individuals” as individuals who have publicly

aligned themselves with either the Memorial da Resistência or the ex-ESMA, or with the social and political process of its creation, either personally or professionally. This participant body was open to the inclusion of figures such as docents, museum staff, survivors involved in the creation process or still working on-site, city officials involved in the historical creation process or site maintenance, museum scholars, etc. Given the sensitive and traumatic nature of my subject I did not think it appropriate to seek out individuals who were not already contributing publicly to the larger dialogue surrounding the memory of the dictatorship and debate around memorialization. In all cases, but importantly for the case of survivors of the dictatorship's human rights abuses, questions were directed towards the physical space of the memorial and not intentionally targeted at an individual's experience or trauma, although certain participants did disclose that information of their own volition. These interviews were secured through pre-arranged appointments via snowball sampling. All participants consented to the use of their full name, audio recording, and note taking during interviews and for reproduction in this thesis. All interviews were conducted at a location of the subjects choosing and generally lasted around one hour. Of course, given the numerous individuals affected by the dictatorship and years since the democratic transitions, my participant body is limited and there are perhaps an endless number of actors who could have been included, time permitting.

My interview participants included:

<b>Buenos Aires</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation With the Space</b>
María Abril Álvarez	Member, HIJOS (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio)



<b>Buenos Aires</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation With the Space</b>
Osvaldo Barros	Survivor of imprisonment at the ESMA. Detained with his wife from August 1979 - February 1980; witness for the trial of the Jun-tas (1985); witness in the renewed trials (2010-present).
Carlos Lordkipanidse	Survivor of imprisonment at the ESMA. Detained with his wife, Liliana Marcela Pelegrino, and month-old child from November 1978 - to roughly 1981.
Graciela Palacio de Lois	Wife of Ricardo Lois, disappeared in the ESMA (1976); Member, FDDRP (Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Ra-zones Politicos); Jefa de la Oficina de Relaciones con la Comu-nidad, Defensoría del Pueblo (Chief of the Office of Community Relations, City Ombudsman).
Enrique Pastor	Member of HIJOS and child of the disappeared. His father was disappeared at the ESMA and his mother was detained for two months but survived.

<b>São Paulo</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation With the Space</b>
Carla Borges	Coordenadora de Direito à Memória e à Verdade, Secretaria Mu-nicipal de Direitos Humanos e Cidadania, São Paulo (Coordinator for the Right to Memory and Truth, Municipal Secretary for Hu-man Rights and Citizenship, City of São Paulo)
Maria Cristina Oliveira Bruno	Professor of Museology and Director of the Museum of Archaeol-ogy and Ethnology, University of São Paulo (USP). Advisor on the creation of the Memorial da Resistência.
Kátia Regina Felipini Neves	Coordinator for the Memorial da Resistência (2008-present)
Maurice Politi	Detained at the DEOPS/SP from 1970-1974. Director of the Nú-cleo de Preservação da Memória Política (Center for the Preserva-tion for Political Memory).

**Table 1:** Interview Participants and Affiliations

## Chapter Summary

In the first chapter I present a brief timeline of the political, economic, and transitional justice history of Brazil from the beginning of the dictatorship to present (1965-2016), including their history regarding transitional justice. This historical background is necessary as it frames my discussion of the transformation process of the DEOPS/SP to the Memorial da Liberdade and finally to the Memorial da Resistência, as well as my arguments surrounding the effects of the neoliberal crisis on both spaces. Before we can understand how neoliberalism affected the physical landscape of each city, and the political ideologies of its leaders, it is necessary to see how Brazil and Argentina got there.

In the second chapter I examine broadly the relationship between urban space and neoliberalism. Secondly, I look to the relationship between neoliberalism and human rights, and then finally, the relationship between all three. This examination is necessary as it foregrounds my discussion of space and power. This is important to the process of reconciliation and reconstruction for societies in transition, and illuminates how spatial transitions are used in the service of the larger political economy, for better or worse.

In the third chapter I look to how the economic and political conditions created in the late 1990's engendered the transformation of both the Memorial da Resistência and the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos. I aim to examine specifically how the reformation of these spaces reflected the larger political economy of memory making and re-making in Brazil and Argentina. Questioning here how spatial transformations are used to serve the larger political economy provides the necessary foregrounding to the subsequent chapter, which focuses on how the

cooptation of historical and spatial narratives facilitates the experience of unsettled and heterotopic memorial spaces.

In the fourth chapter I explore the consequences that the spatial and narrative changes put forth in the previous section had on my interview subjects and those who visit the two spaces. That is, the question of how the commodification and sanitization of the former DEOPS building affects visitor's experiences of it, and the attitudes of survivors of detention. This is placed alongside the radical openness and unfinished nature of the ex-ESMA, and how this quality has alienated survivors of detention from activists and government officials. This chapter centers around two themes: the problem of naming caused by the museum/memorial divide, and the phenomenons of unfamiliarity, absence, and openness.

Finally, I present my conclusion. In this I hope to have made clear how both the Memorial da Resistência and the Espacio Memoria are both tools within and reflections of the larger political economies in which they were created, and the consequences this has had on the physical spaces of the memorials/museums, and the collective memory of those who experience these spaces.

## CHAPTER 1: The Long Dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina

I would like to begin first with a brief historical background of the economic and political conditions that have shaped Brazil and Argentina's history over roughly the past fifty years. I have chosen to present the historical backgrounds in comparison as I believe it allows for a clearer picture of the similarities and differences in the two nations' pasts, and how this has shaped their divergent attitudes towards transitional justice and collective memory today. To understand how both the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos and the Memorial da Resistência continue to be used as tools within the larger political economies of memory marketing, making, and forgetting, it is necessary to understand the moment of social, political, and economic transition in which they both came to fruition.

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### From the "*ditabranda*" to Democracy in Brazil (1965-Present)

In 1964 General Artur de Costa e Silva overthrew leftist President João Goulart in a military coup. The new military junta believed in the link between economic progress and national security (fighting communism) and saw the military as a moderating force to help lead Brazil into a prosperous future (Dávila, 2013, p.20). Under the regime's first president, General Humberto Castello Branco, the military adopted the broad "Doctrine of National Security" and utilized repressive economic and psychosocial measures to control society. The consolidation of military rule began with five restrictive institutional acts that would eventually allow the new junta to supersede the 1946 constitution, suspend political rights, purge perceived foes from government and public offices, and suspend congress.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the discussion of Brazil's institutional acts see Dávila 31-5.

Castello Branco inherited the almost 100% inflation and economic stagnation that resulted from a balance of payments crisis and large foreign debt after the period of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) from 1950-1961 (Skidmore, 2010, p.159-86). From '62-'67 the Brazilian economy lagged and to prevent defaulting on its foreign debt Castello Branco imposed a series of austerity measures including “curbing wages, devaluing the cruzeiro, and rescheduling much of the foreign debt” (Reid, 2014, p.101). This period of fiscal conservatism opened Brazil to investment from foreign lenders such as the IMF and the World Bank as the government professed commitment to a free market and refrained from statist intervention. The austerity measures had drastic impacts on rural and urban workers as the junta cut subsidies for basic commodities and suspended labor unions. Under the presidency of Costa e Silva Brazil introduced more liberal economic policies to stimulate capital markets through the reduction of import tariffs and incentivizing the exportation of manufactured goods. Between 1968-1974 the economy grew 10.7 per cent but growth remained concentrated within the upper classes and the boom was paralleled by increasing social repression (Reid, 2014, p.108).

Under the Doctrine of National Security Castelo Branco advanced two key organizations: the Serviço Nacional de Informações (SNI, National Information Service), a domestic espionage organization; and the Departamento de Ordem Política e Social (DOPS, State Department of Political and Social Order), a pre-existing organization responsible for internal security and surveillance now tasked with occasional torture and detention.<sup>2</sup> Costa e Silva would consolidate Brazil's security task forces into Operação Bandeirante (OBAN) and in 1970 the regime of Emílio Médici transformed OBAN into the infamous Destacamento de Operações de Infor-

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<sup>2</sup> The DEOPS is the state-level branch of the DOPS, meaning “Departamento Estadual de Ordem Política e Social.”

mações - Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna (DOI-CODI, Department of Information Operations - Center for Internal Defense Operations).<sup>3</sup> As military police the DOI-CODI were responsible for the systematic use of torture and illegal detention. The presence of the DOI-CODI was justified by the vague Lei da Segurança Nacional that “served as an instrument for the repression of any and all opponents to the military regime” and “exposed Brazilian citizens to the arbitrary exercise of power,” (Dassin, 1998, p.67). The years from 1968-1974 would paradoxically come to be known as the “anos de chumbo” or “years of lead” for the increasingly repressive nature of the junta, as well as the “milagre econômico” or “economic miracle” for the country’s economic growth and modernization (Reid, 2014, p.101).

By 1974 many of the state’s “explicit mechanisms of legal coercion” had diminished as President Ernesto Geisel renounced the repressive institutional acts and subdued state violence in the gradual process of *distensão* (Alves, 1985, p.141). Although political tides seemed to be turning the economic miracle vanished with the 1973 Arab oil crisis. Brazil then returned to a plan of ISI for industrial products and the growth of the export industry. The country maintained growth during this period by accumulating massive foreign debt which would reach US\$ 49.9 billion by 1979 (Diaz-Alejandro, 2016, p.517). The belief was that together ISI and export growth would increase trade surplus to repay the foreign debt. Instead, this resulted in massive inflation and new austerity measures imposed by the IMF which further exacerbated the need for political and economic reform. The last military president, João Batista Figureido, turned the *distensão* into an

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on the consolidation of these organizations see Dassin, Joan. “The Repressive System,” *Torture in Brazil*, p. 65.

*abertura* and the eventual pacted transition to democracy.<sup>4</sup> But before the transition to democracy the junta passed the Lei da Anistia in 1979 which “eliminated the possibility of criminal indictment of those accused of torture and would inhibit investigation into the activities of the repressive apparatus” (Alves, 1985, p.211).<sup>5</sup> The nature of the transition made immediate trials unlikely as the laws promulgated by the outgoing regime favored continuing military influence in society.

In 1985 the junta, propelled by the widespread *Diretas já* (*Direct [elections] now*) social movement that began in 1983, negotiated the election of the first civilian president since 1964, Tancredo Neves (Lehnen, 2013, p.1). Neves died of an abdominal tumor before taking office, leaving his running mate (and longtime supporter of the military dictatorship), José Sarney, to become president of the new republic. The post-transition attitude towards the dictatorship has been described as “amnesty as oblivion and impunity,” and efforts towards accountability were slow and vaguely defined during this era (Abrão & Torelly, 2012, p.153). The clandestine publication of *Brasil: Nunca Mais* (*Brazil: Never Again*) in 1985 marked early efforts at denouncing human rights abuses, but as an autonomous production the report does not serve as an acknowledgement of wrong on the part of the state. At nearly 7,000 pages *Brasil: Nunca Mais* details cases of 444 individual torturers, 42 clandestine torture centers, and a total of 6,016 allegations of torture between 1964 and 1977, but the Lei da Anistia continues to prohibit investigation of these allegations (Heinz & Fruhling, 1999, p. 77). The most significant of Sarney’s accomplishments was the adoption of a new constitution in 1988, which stands today.

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<sup>4</sup> In a “pacted transition” the outgoing regime retains “much more power to determine the policies of the new government” (Sikkink 32).

<sup>5</sup> (Law No. 6,683/1979)

Brazil's next president, Fernando Collor de Mello would eventually resign before the end of his term in the face of impeachment and corruption charges. But before his resignation Collor's government introduced a series of neoliberal economic policies in line with the pervasive "Washington Consensus," in attempt to curb rampant inflation which had reached 2,708 per cent by 1993, and reduce the almost US\$ 50 billion in foreign debt (Aldrichi & Postali, 2010, p. 361). Collor's plan included a rapid decrease in import tariffs to an average of 12 percent and privatization of the steel and petrochemical industries.<sup>6</sup> Under the presidency of Henrique Cardoso neoliberal policies flourished. Cardoso succeeded in stabilizing the currency through the Plano Real which balanced the budget, introduced general indexation, and created a new currency, the *real*, which was pegged to the dollar. Under Cardoso and subsequent president Luíz Inácio "Lula" da Silva, Brazil would continue to implement neoliberal economic policies which helped the country to achieve economic stability and growth, including paying off its entire \$BRL 15.5 million debt to the IMF in 2005.<sup>7</sup>

As a member of the blue-collar Workers Party (Partida das Trabalhadores, or PT) Lula, as well as Cardoso, have criticized the often dehumanizing neoliberal ideology, and yet still maintained these policies and the nation even saw growth under neoliberalism. Lula is perhaps most lauded for his creation of highly successful social welfare and conditional cash transfer programs (CCTs) such as Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) which then became the Bolsa Família (Family Allowance). These programs would seem to stand in contrast to the privatizing logic of neoliberal-

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<sup>6</sup> See Amann & Baer, "Neoliberalism and its Consequences in Brazil" (2002): 947-8 for a more detailed discussion of the Comissão.

<sup>7</sup> See Amann & Baer, "The Macroeconomic Record of the Lula Administration" (2009) 27-43 for further discussion of Lulismo & neoliberalism.



ism as they provide social welfare for extreme low-income families based on conditions like school attendance for children and mandatory vaccinations. But as scholar Alfredo Saad-Filho suggests, while social welfare and CCTs can be successful in helping to alleviate the experience of poverty they do not work to change the systemic causes and are limited by their neoliberal roots. He suggests that they are “are symptomatic of the contradiction between the expansion of social rights in new democracies and the limitations on social provision under neoliberalism because of financial and ideological constraints” but “CCTs accommodate these conflicting imperatives through the provision of conditional assistance to narrowly defined groups” (2015, p.1237). In this sense, within the neoliberal framework social welfare programs can be effective, but at the same time risk perpetuating market driven ideological limitations on welfare spending which threatens to deprive impoverished individuals of rights unless they fit within certain extraneous categories. As Saad-Filho also notes, although inequality and poverty have decreased across the board in the past two decades in Brazil, the nation remains one of the most unequal in the world in terms of gender, race, and class politics. This suggests that there is not a direct correlation between economic equality and the types of equality espoused within traditional human rights policy (gender, race).

This fact becomes immediately clear when looking at the previous two decades in Brazil in terms of reconciling with the past and transitional justice. The nation’s economic growth in the 1990’s was coupled with an ambivalent and often problematic attitude towards transitional justice and the crimes of the dictatorship. The 1995 Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos (Special Commission for Deaths and Disappearances) provided limited recognition of the state’s responsibility for torture and disappearance, and the Comissão da Anistia (Amnesty

Commission) of 2002<sup>8</sup> offers financial reparations to those affected by “acts of exception [...], torture, arbitrary arrests, dismissals, kidnapping, forced hiding and exile, banishment, student purges, and illegal monitoring” (Abrão & Torelly, 2012, p.154). Yet any attempts to challenge the Amnesty Laws or create movements towards truth are met with strong opposition from the military (“Don’t Look Back” 2010). In 2011 the Comissão Nacional de Verdade began an investigation of human rights abuses committed from 1946–1988, and in their report released in 2014 recognizes the death and/or disappearance of only 434 individuals by the military regime, but prosecution is still prohibited as the Supreme Court upheld the 1979 Amnesty Law with a 7-2 vote in 2010 (Abrão & Torelly, 2012, p. 152). As Abrão & Torelly note, Brazil, perhaps more than any other post-authoritarian nation in the Southern Cone, has focused its limited transitional justice measures on providing economic reparations. They state that “the Brazilian reparation model favors the restitution of employment or the return to education as a way to reestablish the status quo” suggesting that ultimately “reparations are strictly connected to the amnesty process” (Abrão & Torelly 2012, p.154-5).

Thus, in looking back on this brief synopsis of Brazil’s political and economic history over the past 51 years it can be seen how the grave economic and legal conditions created by the dictatorship have also discouraged retrospection and complicate issues of collective memory and accountability. Economic equality and progress are only guaranteed for a few in limited doses, and not directly relational to the measures of equality that have come to characterize human rights discourse (freedom from violence, transitional justice, gender equality, etc). Furthermore, the emphasis on financial reparations as the cornerstone of the Brazilian transitional justice

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<sup>8</sup> Lei No. 10,559

process tacitly encourages the adoption of unfettered neoliberal capitalism. Greater economic equality or the possibility of providing larger reparations sums has come to substitute other measures of reconciliation with the nation's dictatorial past.

The word used in the beginning of this chapter, *ditabranda*, is a portmanteau of the Portuguese words “ditadura” (dictatorship) and “branda” meaning mild, and appeared in a 2009 editorial in the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper, one of Brazil's most popular news outlets and long-time supporter of the dictatorship (“Limites a Chávez”). *Folha's* suggestion that the Brazilian dictatorship was “soft” compared to other “hard” dictatorships in Latin America immediately generated controversy and culminated in protests in front of the *Folha* offices in downtown São Paulo (Atencio “A Prime Time,” p. 53). As seen in this section, the Brazilian dictatorship was anything but “soft.” Instead, the junta's rule had severe and lasting social and economic effects, but the mere fact of its publication in a well-regarded news source points up the unsettled role that the narrative of the dictatorship still holds in Brazilian society.

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## The long “*proceso*” to democracy in Argentina (1979-present)

In a climate of weak political leadership and economic downfall, many supported the 1976 coup that overthrew President Isabel (Isabelita) Perón and installed a military junta headed by Jorge Rafael Videla, Emilio Eduardo Massera, and Orlando Ramon Agosti. The junta promised to re-establish political and economic order and eliminate internal political threats through the “Process of National Reorganization,” or the *Proceso*. The *Proceso* quickly moved beyond targeting guerrilla groups and instead turned to the whole of society.<sup>9</sup> By strictly censoring the press and prohibiting union and political action the junta’s “Dirty War” immobilized Argentine society. For the junta, breaking with the political past of Peronism meant an economic break from the nationalistic social reform movements of the past.

Under Juan Perón, Argentina adopted an ISI strategy aimed at income redistribution, capital formation, and nationalization of industries and banks under a corporatist development model, and this strategy would have lasting effects on Argentine society even after Perón’s ousting in 1955 when inflation reached almost 300 per cent (Singerman 2015). The subsequent president, Arturo Frondizi was both elected and overthrown by military coup between 1958 and 1962. Frondizi’s developmentalist plan would curb inflation, grow the railroad and electric industries, and reduce the nation’s dependence on foreign oil, and this stability would continue throughout the 1960’s, though at a much slower rate than the “economic miracle” in Brazil (Mundlak, et al., 1989, p.110-11). In 1966 the Argentine military would again overthrow the democratically elected president and by 1974 Juan Perón would be back in office and working to return Argentina to

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<sup>9</sup> Guerilla groups that emerged in the early 1970’s in the wake of the Cuban Revolution frequently employed violent tactics to promote leftist ideologies. As the junta intended to end the violence that characterized the previous decade groups like the ERP (Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo) and the Montoneros became obvious targets. Dávila, Jerry, “Argentina the Terrorist State,” *Dictatorship in South America*.

populist economic policy and corporatism. Argentina weathered the oil crisis of the 1970's as Frondizi's developmentalism helped the nation to become largely autarkic in oil production but nationalizing oil industries, and it further benefited from rising commodity prices and an export boom. At the same time, Perón's plan of strong statist intervention contributed to exorbitant public spending and the national budget exceeded 10 per cent of GDP by 1975 (Viegel, 2009, p.29). Perón's regime was further weakened by the political violence and guerrilla movements that spread throughout Argentina during this period. Perón died in office in 1974 leaving his third wife and vice-president, Isabel Perón, to lead the nation.

Isabelita upheld her husband's policies of ISI and economic nationalism, but these strategies could not deliver on completely eliminating the country's dependence on imports and high tariffs limited its involvement in international markets. In response, her finance minister Celestino Rodrigo implemented a series of radical measures to stabilize the economy and open it to foreign investment, including "a sharp devaluation of the peso, high interest rates, and a relaxation of capital controls" (Viegel, 2009, p.38). One of the most disastrous effects of this plan was severe wage restraints which caused Isabelita to fall out of favor with trade unions, and annual inflation surpassed 600 per cent in 1976. (Viegel, 2009, p.39). It was under these conditions that the junta seized power in 1976, and their finance minister, José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz, quickly implemented radical plans for economic restructuring, including a liberalization of restrictions for foreign borrowing, lowered import barriers, and a shift from agro-export and industrial sectors to financial. Under the rule of Jorge Rafael Videla industries privatized and not only were unions banned but often specifically targeted for political repression as the junta suspended near all labor rights, and low-income workers fell the victims of the dictatorships income redistribution

policies and job loss. For some, this period would come to be referred to as “la era de plata dulce” because the peso’s consistent overvaluation allowed for foreign currencies to be bought at extremely low rates (Grimson & Kessler, 2005, p.17). But as with Brazil, it was only the upper classes and those in favor with the junta who truly had access to the “plata dulce,” and urban and rural workers suffered from layoffs.

While junta’s rampant accumulation of foreign debt and slowed economic growth paved the way for the economic crisis of the late 1990’s, for the majority of Argentines (and perhaps the world), the dictatorship is most remembered for its grave human rights abuses. As Verbitsky & Bohoslavsky suggest, “contributing to the regular and efficient operation of a regime that commits systematic human rights abuses entails helping that regime attain its main objective” which is “perpetuating crimes in line with the political and economic purposes of the organization” (2016 p.5). The supremacy of the armed forces over democratic constitutional order and the military oligarchy’s fervor to maintain power necessitated the cooptation of an extensive web of national resources and actors, deemed “economic accomplices” by Verbitsky & Bohoslavsky (2016. p.). An estimated 30,000 people were disappeared (*desaparecidos*) during the “Dirty War” and “if the term genocide is applicable to the state terrorism of South American dictatorships, it was here” (Dávila, 2013, p.115). People were disappeared off the street or from their workplaces by the junta’s paramilitary task force, the *grupos de tarea*, and then taken to be tortured and executed in clandestine detention centers. The most infamous of these centers being the ESMA. As I learned during my field research through the guided tours and site visits, just the ESMA alone saw a vast and varied flow of these “economic accomplices.” Babies born to detainees there were sold illegally by the military to other families, cars seized by *grupos de area*

were taken to ESMA's automotive shop to be stripped to parts and sold for profit, and detainees were forced to work in an extensive counterfeiting and money laundering operation for the government. In this sense, the human rights abuses of the dictatorship came as a tool necessary for upholding a larger political and economic system of oligarchic rule and wealth accumulation.

In 1983 the Argentine military regime collapsed entirely as General Reynaldo Bignone, the last head of the junta, was forced to call elections and transition to civilian rule. The disaster of the Malvinas/Falklands war is often seen as the tipping point for the already dire social and economic conditions the junta's rule engendered. During the junta's seven year rule foreign debt grew from \$7.9 billion in 1976 to \$45 billion in 1983 (Marichal, 2008, p.99). As such, few were reluctant to see the repressive regime ousted and trials for the juntas occurred almost immediately after the inauguration of civilian president Raúl Alfonsín. Alfonsín's government had little success in curbing inflation or reducing the national debt, but did make some strides in terms of reconciling with the human rights abuses of the dictatorship. In 1983 Alfonsín created the *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (CONADEP) to investigate human rights violations and the fate of *los desaparecidos*, culminating in the publication of the human rights report, *Nunca Más* (Hayner 2011, p. 45). The creation of CONADEP and the publication of *Nunca Más* lead to the Trial of the Juntas which occurred in 1985. That occurred immediately post-transition is attributable to two facts. First, that the junta was not able to ensure self-amnesty before the ruptured transition.<sup>10</sup> And second, that the junta was

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<sup>10</sup>In *The Justice Cascade* Sikkink defines ruptured transitions as instances in which the "outgoing authoritarian regime could not negotiate the conditions of its exit from power" (33). The military attempted to enact a blanket self-amnesty law that would cover criminal acts between 1973 and 1982, but the constitutionality of this law was immediately challenged by the Alfonsín government in the Argentine Supreme Court. Engstrom, Par and Gabriel Pereira, "From Amnesty to Accountability: The Ebb and Flow in the Search for Justice in Argentina." *Amnesty in the Age of Human Rights Accountability* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012): 99.

publicly discredited by the military defeat in the 1982 Malvinas/Falklands War, looming economic collapse, and public awareness of gross human rights abuses.

Although the armed forces were not able to negotiate the conditions of the democratic transition they retained a significant amount of political influence following the dictatorship, and vocally opposed the government's prosecution agenda. Alfonsín's government responded with the enactment of two amnesty laws. The *Ley de Punto Final*, or the "Full Stop Law," was intended to limit the number of prosecutions and expedite legal proceedings for those accused of crimes during the dictatorship. The *Ley de Obediencia Debida*, or the "Due Obedience Law," foreclosed the possibility of prosecuting lower-ranking officers presumed to be acting under duress (Dávila, 2013). Elected president in 1990 Carlos Menem expanded the Supreme Court and succeeded in subordinating the military to the Presidency through official pardons for convicted junta members.

Menem's attitude of "oblivion and impunity" was coupled with the drastic neoliberal economic measures he implemented in order to save the failing economy. In 1990 the government deficit was 16 per cent of GDP and hyper-inflation reached a debilitating 12,000 per cent (Wijnholds, 2006, p. 104). Through drastic structural reforms Menem pegged the peso to the dollar, liberalized capital and trade flows, and privatized almost every industry in the nation which succeeded in reducing inflation. As Karen Faulk notes in her study of the effects of neoliberalism on Argentina, the privatization process under Menem left "the concessions for operating everything from railroads to water and sewage services" to "the companies or conglomerates that promised the most efficient service at the lowest price," but in many cases this process has been questioned "for its transparency and the ability of government officials to take advantage" for



personal gains (2013, p.84). Moreover, many of these companies failed to fulfill even their minimum obligations, suggesting a perpetuation of the sort of oligarchic rule established under the junta that prioritized private political interests over public welfare. The impunity afforded to perpetrators of grave human rights abuses went hand-in-hand with the impunity afforded to private enterprise.

These broad neoliberal economic policies were continued by the following president, Fernando de la Rúa, and it was during his term that Argentina fell into grave economic crisis and recession from 1998-2002. The economic crisis in Brazil and Russia contributed to a global recession and by 2002 in Argentina “the unemployment rate reached 22% [...] and 42.3% of households and 54.3% of the population found themselves below the poverty line” (Chronopolous, 2011, p.511). Unemployment and default on the country’s foreign debt resulted in widespread riots and violent attacks on bank branches as the government instituted the *corralito*, freezing deposits for 90 days to prevent a complete collapse of the privatized banking system. “Argentina,” declared President Eduardo Duhalde to congress in 2002, “está quebrada, Argentina está fundida” (Ares, 2002, “Duhalde”).

In 2003 Néstor Kirchner took office and in a clear break from neoliberalism, promulgated “Kirchnerism,” an offshoot of Peronism that placed high priorities on human rights, opposed neoliberalism, and strongly favored industrialist developmentalism to protect national industries. Previously in 2001 the Argentine judiciary and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights declared the *Ley de Punto Final* and *Ley de Obedencia Debida* as unconstitutional, yet they tacitly remained in effect as the government was unwilling to cooperate in further prosecutions. Kirchner gave precedent to the human rights agenda by ratifying UN Convention on the Non-Applica-

bility of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, and in 2005 the Supreme Court officially declared the amnesty laws null and void (Engstrom & Pereira, 2012, p. 117). In 2007 the Supreme Court upheld the decision and trials were re-opened and they continue today.

### Conclusion:

In looking back on the past 37 years since the beginning of the military dictatorship to the end of the neoliberal crisis a similarity with Brazil emerges. In both nations the social and economic conditions created by the military dictatorships have had severe consequences in the years following the transitions to democracy. In Brazil, the adoption of neoliberal economic policies in the late 1990's helped to stem rampant inflation and grow the economy, but simultaneously perpetuated collective disregard in regards to official measures of accountability for the crimes committed during the dictatorship. In Argentina, neoliberal economic policies drove the nation to financial collapse in the early 2000's, and the subsequent political administrations turned to new economic models and a greater recognition for human rights works.

## CHAPTER 2: SPACE AND POWER IN THE NEOLIBERAL CITY

In the previous chapter I traced briefly the economic and political history of Brazil and Argentina from the beginning of their respective dictatorships to the present. Although understanding this history is of critical importance, what I would like to focus most specifically on are the moments of crisis that occurred in each country in the late 1990's and early 2000's. When one thinks of neoliberalism and Latin America it seems almost natural to think of Chile. And rightfully so, for after taking power in 1973 Augusto Pinochet would come to champion the economic policies of Milton Friedman and the "Chicago Boys," and the success of these policies would come to be known as the "Chilean Miracle." Certainly it could be said that the successful implementation of neoliberal policies in Chile helped to encourage its spread throughout Latin America in the 1970's, and even though Pinochet was ousted from the presidency in 1990 his influence insured that many of these policies remain in effect in the country today. And this fact is partially why I chose not to focus on Chile in my work. Although the political tides were changing in Chile in the early 1990's, their economic policies remained the same and they were only then beginning to grapple with the question of transitional justice and accountability. What I am more interested in is, as I have shown, how the economic and political legacy of the dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina lead to the moments of economic crisis that came in the 1990's, and then what this meant for transitional justice and the physical reminders of the dictatorships.

As said, in the 1990's to early 2000 Brazil under Collor, Cardoso, and Lula turned to the implementation of neoliberalism to curb the country's rampant inflation and growing national debt. And at the same time the neoliberal legacy of the dictatorship in Argentina lead to crippling debt and a shift away from neoliberalism in the early 2000's under Kirchner. What I would like

to do here is begin by generally exploring the relationship between space and power, and then between neoliberalism and the urban environment. I will then shift to exploring the relationship between neoliberalism and human rights/ transitional justice, and finally neoliberalism, human rights, and the urban environment.

### Neoliberalism: Space & Power

The concepts of space versus place help to illuminate the relationship between space and power. The disciplines of human and Marxist geography have done much to elucidate the character and spatial organization of human life. Consequently, understandings of human geography have shifted from a rational mathematic perspective regarding the construction of space, to an inquiry into how the practice of daily life shapes both space and place. Michele de Certeau obliquely defines *place* as “an instantaneous configuration of positions” which “implies an indication of stability” while *space*, simply, “is practiced place” (1984, p.117). *Place* can be understood as a literal bounded phenomenon (buildings, cities, etc.) while *space* refers to the symbolic quality of places and the emotions, experiences, and ideals they invoke.<sup>11</sup> For example, my home is a *place* while homesickness is an emotion bound and defined by the concept of “home” as *space*.

In his seminal work, *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre goes further in deconstructing the concept of space through his tripartite definition of space between the realms of conceived, perceived, and lived. As a Marxist geographer Lefebvre’s understanding of space is that of a social product under constant transformation, that can serve as the arena for both resis-

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<sup>11</sup> For further clarification on the difference between space/place see “Place/Space in Qualitative Research,” *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*

tance and the reproduction of hegemonic systems of power. It is this notion of the constant malleability of space, and of physical space as a location for political and economic resistance, that is critical to my work. Lefebvre references the work of Antonio Gramsci to acknowledge the role that cultural hegemony plays in this (re)production and domination of space. Lefebvre asks:

Is it conceivable that the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched? Could space be nothing more than the passive locus of social relations, the milieu in which their combination takes on body, or the aggregate of the procedures in their removal? The answer must be no (1991, p.10).

The concept of cultural hegemony is critical to understanding the relationship between space and power, and ultimately the relationship between space and the prioritization of selective memories. Lefebvre's notion of space is often paired with a reading of Walter Benjamin's work on the concepts of allegory and ruins in *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*. As seen in Benjamin's frequently quoted statement that "allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things," the concept of the ruin has been read as an allegory for power and its demise, revealing to the observer the history of what was and what was meant to be (1963, p. 178). Benjamin's concept of the "ruin" can be understood as both a reference to literal physical remainders and ruins, and the spectral remainders of the collapse of past institutions of power. What to do with these ruins is a question at the heart of this work.

What Lefebvre shows is that while we often take the physical spaces we inhabit as natural or neutral they are anything but. In this everyday understanding of space innumerable other social transactions and ideologies are obscured in the service of the reproduction of dominant economic and power relations between classes, and with this comes the reproduction of the pre-

ferred historical narratives of those in power. This process should sound familiar. The hegemonic (re)production of space parallels Marx's theory of the perpetuation of labor exploitation in the reproduction of capital, as well as Horkheimer and Adorno's belief that the mass-produced industry of culture and technology only served to reproduce the growth of monopoly capitalism. The combination of these forces could be understood as integral to the formation of what Bourdieu refers to as "habitus," or the ways in which power is symbolically and culturally created and perpetually re-legitimized through behavior in social space. The political economy of space speaks directly to all of these concepts, for it is based on the physical production of spaces which are inherently the products of the social, cultural, and political contexts in which they are located.

That space is both a product and mechanism of the political economy is critical to understanding how the ideals of neoliberalism has affected the urban environment. For my discussion of neoliberalism and the city I would like to draw on the work of David Harvey, whose vast body of work often centers on the relationship between inequality and the urban environment. As Harvey has noted, neoliberalism is defined by "deregulation, privatization, and [the] withdrawal of the state" in a process that "values market exchange as 'an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action'" and "seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (2005, p.3). As has been shown in my discussion of space and power, each mode of production in the larger political economy produces particular spaces. Harvey has drawn considerably on Lefebvre in his work to note how the expansion of the city has been used to reproduce and resist the social relations of production, which is the motivating force behind the capitalist system.

To place this in historic context, Harvey suggests that the condition of surplus capital that arose in the 1970's led, in many countries, to speculative real estate practices and an over-zealous construction boom, and then 'shock treatments' in times of crisis that included liberalization, privatization, and deregulation (Harvey, 2007). The production of space has thus been used by hegemonic capital as a means of reinvesting capital surplus, and the notion of growth regardless of cost has come to characterize the neoliberal city. In this process not only has the division between urban and suburban periphery widened, but both have come to be used as laboratories for a variety of policy experiments such as increased public-private partnerships, tax abatements, new-urbanist place-making (and marketing), and Urban Enterprise Zones. At its most extreme, the driving goal behind neoliberal urbanism is to entrench in the cityscape the notion of market-driven economic development and elite consumer practices that simultaneously insure social order and segregation. As such, neoliberal monetarism assumes that unfettered capitalism will grow both individuals and cities through integration in the global market, but when coupled with a reduction in social services does little to alleviate pent up demand or social inequality.

Regarding the question of architecture and neoliberal-urbanism, Harvey specifically suggests that neoliberal capitalism has helped to create the condition of the postmodern city, which emphasizes "large-scale, metropolitan-wide, technologically rational and efficient urban *plans*" (1990, p. 66). But in its subjugation to the market forces of neoliberal capitalism, the postmodern city has resulted in the condition of "a conception of the urban fabric as necessarily fragmented, a 'palimpsest' of past forms superimposed upon each other, and a 'collage' of current uses, many of which may be ephemeral" (Harvey 1990, p.66). The neoliberal desire to liberate the individual capitalist from regulation has led, as Harvey notes, not only to the increasing

privatization and fragmentation of the urban environment, but also to increasing social inequality. Along with the reduction in state-subsidized social services, these processes have resulted in the commodification of both the quality of life and urban space. This is clear in cities like São Paulo and Buenos Aires where gated condominiums and “fortified enclaves” are increasingly becoming the norm. In neoliberal urbanism public-private partnerships are common and work to re-formulate the city based on competitive market logics within the global urban hierarchy, often at the sacrifice of public wellbeing. In this fragmented cityscape the right to social services and urban space become available only for those who can afford it.

### Neoliberalism, Human Rights, and the City

The points discussed in the previous section about neoliberalism, space, and power do well to introduce this section which considers the relationship between neoliberalism, human rights, and urban space. Given the previous exploration of the effects of neoliberalism on the fragmentation of urban space and stratification of wealth, it would seem that neoliberal economic policies and human rights stand in direct opposition. Harvey even goes so far to assert that “if there is conflict between the financial institutions and the well-being of the people, hit the well-being of the people” stands as a principle of the neoliberal city (2007, p. 11). But in his essay on this topic Samuel Moyn, author of *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, suggests that the relationship between human rights and neoliberalism is far more complex. As he notes, neoliberalism and the human rights (in its more global, legal sense) both took shape in the 1970’s, and both of these movements had a certain a-political aspect to them. The rise of oppressive military regimes in Latin America and elsewhere gave rise to new universalizing movements in in-



ternational human rights law and the proliferation of human rights NGO's (Amnesty International, for example).

Neoliberalism's devotion to the individual, global logic of the market, and retreat of state intervention also contributed to its broad appeal. Moyn quotes legal scholar Ernst-Ulrich Petersmann to suggest that on the one hand, neoliberalism could be seen as an effective tool for dispersing human rights as the "[E]njoyment of human rights require[s] the use of dispersed information and economic resources that can be supplied most efficiently, and most democratically, through the division of labour among free citizens" and through "the free flow of scarce goods, services, and information across frontiers in response to supply and demand by citizens." (qtd. in Moyn, 2014, p.148). On the other hand, as Moyn notes, there is a fine and often blurry line between the guarantee of individual human rights protections and the guarantee of social equality. As he proposes, "in their legalized forms, human rights do not purport to provide an egalitarian agenda," and because of this it "is perfectly possible to imagine a fully achieved local and global regime of human rights protection that simultaneously features the worst hierarchy of wealth and other primary goods known to history" (Moyn, 2014, p.161). I think that both of Moyn's observations on the relationship between human rights and neoliberalism can and do hold true: the liberation of individual freedoms and capitalism can serve the dissemination of human rights and also create immense socioeconomic inequality. But what I am most interested here is the effect that the interplay between neoliberalism and human rights (and transitional justice) has on the urban environment, for in both Brazil and Argentina reconciliation with the effects of neoliberalism came simultaneously with the need to reconcile with the legacy of the dictatorships.

I would like to suggest that examining the spatial transitions that occur after, or in conjunction with, social and political transitions is a critical but overlooked aspect of the larger field of transitional justice. Transitional justice is a growing body of study within the vast topic of human rights work and can be described as the way societies move “from war to peace or from a repressive/authoritarian regime to democracy while dealing with resulting questions of justice and what to do with social, political, and economic institutions” (Quinn, 2009, p.3). The mechanisms of transitional justice are vast and varied, and may include things such as criminal trials, lustration, restitution reparations, and truth commissions (to name a few). A central question to the work of transitional justice is that of traumatic collective memories of the past. The French theorist Maurice Halbwachs was instrumental in refining the concept, and posits that an individual’s understanding of the past is strongly linked to the larger social context in which he/she resides, and that the social body possesses a shared memory that is separate from the individual. Basu & Modest have described this as the “habitus of heritage” or rather the notion that habitus is a form of heritage embodied within which “acknowledges the primacy of the past in shaping futures and aspirations for the future” (2015, p.10). But when the social body itself is fragmented and the space it occupies decimated, what then do we make of its collective memory?

Human rights scholar Elizabeth Jelin observes that while “memory as a narrative social construction involves studying the narrator and the institutions that grant or deny power to the voice of the narrator,” in the case of post-traumatic societies this often results in “breaks in the ability to narrate and memory voids and gaps” (2003, p.23). When a state does not develop official channels to recognize past violence and provide a means for incorporating this into the collective narrative of the future, the battle over historical “truth” and “memory” plays out in the

realm of the public through ongoing struggles over who can speak for what experience and in whose name. In this argument a parallel emerges with Harvey's notion of the fragmentation of the neoliberal city, but more will be said on this in the subsequent section of this chapter. A primary criticism that could be levied against processes of narration and truth-telling is that they are predicated on the notion of a single objective truth regarding the past and assume that narration is always necessary and desirable. As has been the case in Brazil and Argentina, the notion of narration as a process of truth-telling and catharsis comes into conflict with various social and political actors who all have a stake in the public process of memory making, and the majority of whom would prefer the past swept under the rug. Furthermore, as seen in my historical analysis, the impetus towards transitional justice is not free from the influence of the larger political economy.

In this sense, collective memory (re)making "is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning" (Said, 2000, p.251). The reformation of collective memory in a post-traumatic society is inherently problematic for it cannot ever be all inclusive. Certain narratives are legitimized while others are ignored or outright repressed. The same could be said for the creation of memorial spaces or the re-formation of cities after crisis. For societies in transition it is often city planners who are tasked with the job of reconstructing the historical ruins and suturing the "narrative gaps" in the urban fabric in accordance with the current dominant political narrative. In this process the actualization of memory through the creation commemorative spaces serves as a way of anchoring memory into the realm of the physical and giving order to the future after a period of crisis.

The opposite side of this coin sees the modification of public space as a tool to re-write, silence, or demolish literally figures from the past that do not fit conveniently into the national narrative of the future. In the case of the neoliberal city these narratives and spaces are exploited for commercial gain. In the past five years I have visited a number of locations which I choose to refer to henceforth as “sites of trauma,” and in all cases I found my experience of visitation to be paradoxically enlightening, tragic, repugnant, and morally imperative. And in all of these cases the creation of memorials, monuments, and museums has been deeply intertwined with public battles over memory and urban space. And yet I went, alongside the thousands of other individuals globally who make such journeys, and it is the motivations behind such journeys—mine and others— that have inspired this research. While my driving motivation may be academic, throughout my visitations I have been acutely aware of my participation in what is now being deemed “trauma tourism” or “dark tourism” (Bilbja & Payne 2011; Clark, 2009; Sharpley 2009; Sturken 2007). These terms are only two amongst the multitude that have emerged recently to attempt to describe and consolidate the social practices of visitation to ruinous spaces remembering trauma and loss.

Given the prevalence of contestation I encountered regarding the naming of my sites of research, I believe it is necessary to explore briefly the ways spaces of trauma and tourism are understood and categorized. With regard to memory studies one might first recall Pierra Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* to refer to specific places where the past, and specifically collective or cultural memory, is represented. Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* recognizes sites where the past is both represented and ruptured (eg. museums and memorials), but it is not limited to spaces of trauma or

spaces of tourism.<sup>12</sup> In drawing on the Greek term *thanatos*, meaning the personification of death, Anne Seaton makes reference to “thanatourism” to describe touristic activities at a range of locations. This includes reenacting death (eg. Civil War battles), witnessing death (eg. public executions), or visiting death (eg. memorials, killing sites) (Seaton, 1996, p.240-2). In its breath “dark tourism” has been used to describe visitation to places of genocide or human rights abuses, but also to sites of natural and man-made disasters (eg. Chernobyl, New Orleans after Katrina), or the locations of crimes (eg. Dealey Plaza). I believe that “trauma tourism” is perhaps the most appropriate term to use to refer to the commercialized “sale” of sites similar to the ones in consideration in this paper as the term juxtaposes the notion of tourism (leisure) with trauma (horror), but instead of focusing on shock value it suggests that visitation involves “representation of past trauma, engagement by visitors at a traumatic memory site, and a sense of social responsibility invoked by the place” (Bilbija & Payne, 2011, p.100). This is not to say that all visitation practices are touristic, but this is just one further example of how capitalist commodification, urban space, and human rights all intersect.

Based on this exploration I have chosen to refer broadly to the locations in question as “sites of trauma,” although news media, publications, and my interview subjects all have different ways of naming these spaces. Thus, the negotiation of memory emerges often in tension or in parallel with the negotiation of space and historical narrative. As a tool in a nation’s larger political economy spatial formation privileges hegemonic positions and the perpetuation of the means and relations of production. Following in this line, the memorialization of physical spaces after

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<sup>12</sup> Nora’s concept of the *lieux de mémoire* differs from other spatial classifications, such as Bourdieu’s *habitus*, in that for Nora the *lieux de mémoire* is a space that represents a rupturing with the past and consequent breakdown in the reproduction of social memory regarding that space, while heritage, however fragmented and ruptured, can be incorporated into habitus.

tragedy results in a certain degree of selective exclusion as the design and content of the memorial cannot possibly appease and include everyone.

### Bridging the Gaps: Heterotopias and Thirdspaces

Both neoliberalism and human rights abuses create the sensation of fragmentation and rupture for individuals, nations, and cities. As will be seen in the following chapter, the neoliberal impetus for privatization and development to the highest utility often stands in direct contrast with memory work and memorial creation, which both have comparatively little exchange-value. In this sense, the ruinous spaces left behind by the Brazilian and Argentine dictatorship both create the historic palimpsests of the postmodern city, and problematize the capitalist development process which necessitates closure for the past, lest it can be transformed to serve a market function. I emphasize the concept of social and spatial fragmentation because it reoccurred more frequently than anything else throughout my subject interviews. Regarding both the Memorial da Resistência and the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos this hinged on two points that I would like to draw out further in my following chapters: the first regards the difficulty of naming and prescribing uses for the spaces (between “memorial” and “museum”), and the second is the sensation of the unfamiliar and erasure that people associated with these spaces of ruin and fragmentation.

To close this chapter I would like to propose two other conceptualizations of space which I believe will help to tie together the ideas put regarding memory space, and power: the heterotopia and Thirdspaces. These two concepts are useful in conjunction as they both focus on understanding fragmented and unfamiliar experiences of space. Edward Soja’s notion of Thirdspace

draws directly on Lefebvre's spatial trialectic. Firstspace focuses on "the concrete materiality of spatial forms" (perceived), secondspace is "conceived in ideas about space" (conceived), and Thirdspace is defined "as an-Other way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life [...] in the rebalanced trialectics of spatiality-historicity-sociality" (1996, p.10). For Lefebvre this Thirdspace is the realm of the "lived," but for this work I give preference to Soja's definition for its emphasis on Thirdspace as the space of "otherness" as this dialogues directly with Foucault's concept of the heterotopia, which Soja recognizes as "what might be called the micro-or site geography of Thirdspace" (1996, p.157). Foucault initially suggested the idea of heterotopias in the introduction to his work, *The Order of Things*, and further developed in a lecture entitled "Of Other Spaces: Utopia and Heterotopia."

Foucault proposes six characteristics for identifying heterotopias: 1) they are culturally specific but exist universally; 2) their function is redetermined over time; 3) they juxtapose seemingly incompatible spaces within one space; 4) they organize multiple experiences of time (heterochrony); 5) they regulate entrance and exit; 6) and they perform a necessary social function (1967). One of the primary critiques that Soja, and others, acknowledge in Foucault's theory is the quantity and variety of spaces that could fit within the definition of a heterotopia.<sup>13</sup>

According to Foucault, the heterotopia is a space of difference that is central to a culture and shares relations with other sites, but "in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (1967, p.3). In contrast with utopias, "sites with no real place," heterotopias are physical places that can be seen as a "kind of effectively enacted utopia" wherein "all other real sites that can be found within the culture, are si-

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<sup>13</sup> See Dehaene, Michiel, and Lieven De. Caeter. "Heterotopia in a Postcivil Society." pp. 4

multaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault, 1967, p.3). While utopias present a coherent and systematic whole, heterotopias are unsettling and undermine the premise of an ordered understanding of time, language, or behavior. Despite their fluidity I would suggest that what is most important in distinguishing heterotopias is the fact that although they are real places within a culture, they are designated as sites of difference and function in accordance with their own rules wherein ordinary relations within the culture are permitted to be other.

This understanding can be seen in Foucault’s statement that heterotopias are unsettling because:

they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to ‘hold together’ (1966, p.xviii)

Thus, dissecting a space’s ability to fit within the six prescriptive categories is less important than how the space affects the behavior of individuals inside. The heterotopia breaks down the linguistic and spatial binaries by which normal/abnormal is constructed, and in doing so creates dichotomous identities of the heterotopic self-versus the normal self. Whether it be in a prison, museum, or shopping mall, space is heterotopic as it allows and encourages individuals to operate between these multiple—hetero— identities. Joining the concept of Thirdspace with that of heterotopias helps us to understand how my sites of interest both function as unsettled spaces of spatial, narrative, and historic fragmentation, as will be explored in the subsequent chapters.



### CHAPTER 3: THE TROUBLE OF THE RUINS

The previous chapter has outlined how the process of neoliberal urbanism creates a sense of fragmentation and commodification in today's cities, as well as challenges the larger concepts of transitional justice and human rights. As I noted in "Chapter 1: The Long Dictatorships," Brazil and Argentina have taken starkly different paths with regards to transitional justice and reconciliation with the dictatorial past, as well as different paths towards economic development, which all came to a head in the late 1990's. Although I have already discussed the theoretical, economic, and political background that contributed to this crisis, I would like to turn here to the specific effects the changing political economy had on the transformation of the former DEOPS and ESMA facilities. Here, I look specifically to how the reformation of these spaces reflected the larger political economy of memory making and re-making in Brazil and Argentina. Questioning here how spatial transformations are used to serve the larger political economy provides the necessary foregrounding to the subsequent chapter, which focuses on how the cooptation of historical and spatial narratives facilitates the experience of unsettled and heterotopic memorial spaces.

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Brazil:

Introduction:

It is May of 2015 and I am arguing with a cab driver in São Paulo. The disagreement is one I will have practically every time I enter a cab during my month of research in Brazil, and consists of me insisting to the driver that, yes, I do want to go to the "Memorial da Resistência", and no, I am not confusing this with Oscar Niemeyer's "Memorial da América Latina" fifteen

minutes away. But I can't blame the cab drivers. Niemeyer's avant-garde sculpture park is undoubtedly a far more popular tourist attraction than the Memorial: an unmarked museum in what is often considered the roughest part of metropolitan São Paulo, colloquially referred to as "Cracolândia," or "Crackland," situated between the Luz area within Bom Retiro next to the Santa Ifigênia neighborhoods (Ramsey, 2014). After accidentally driving past the Memorial two or



**Image 1:** The Distrito do Bom Retiro, encompassing Luz and Santa Ifigênia and “Cracolândia colloquially” (“Bom Retiro,” 2013)

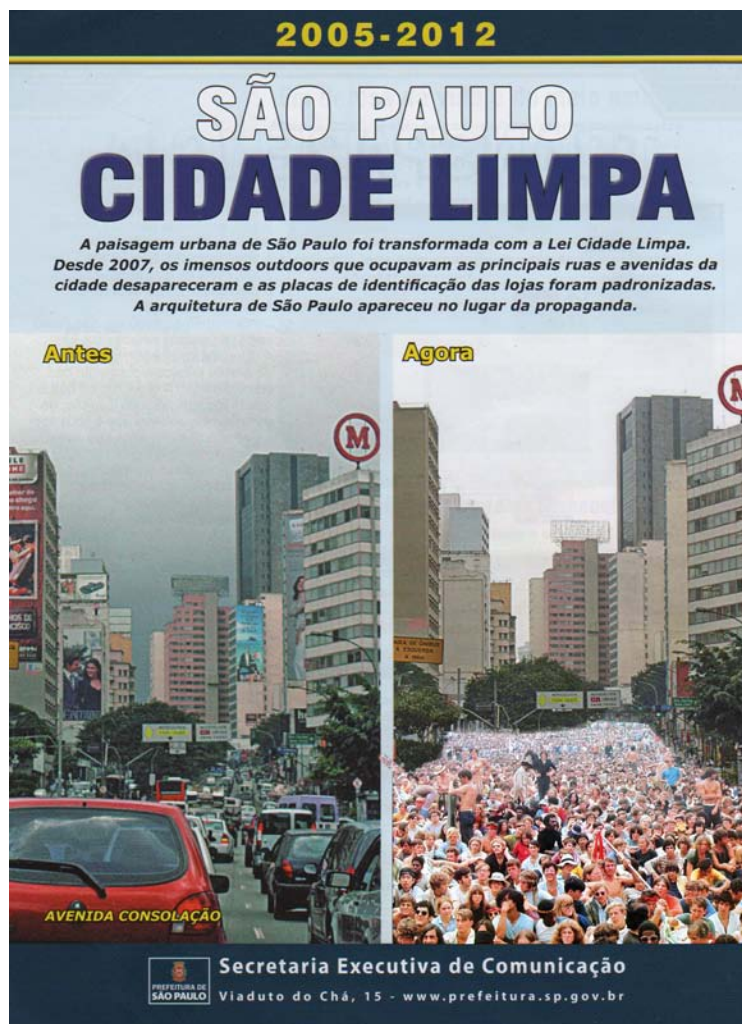
three times I eventually negotiate to be dropped off at the iconic Estação da Luz a few blocks away and walk to the museum.

Of the estimated 242 clandestine centers of torture and political detention to have existed in Brazil during the military dictatorship the Memorial is the first to be opened to the public as a memorial and museum (Weschler, 1990, p.54). Given that, I thought that it might hold the same sort of cultural and social currency as the other sites of trauma I had visited. I assumed that the Memorial would evoke strong reactions from Paulistanos as consequence of Brazil's fluctuating relationship with the most recent dictatorships, transitional justice, and lack of accountability in the same way as somewhere like Auschwitz does. Instead the space seems to exist in near obscurity given its lack of signage and, from what I encountered, unfamiliarity to most.

Before discussing the transformation of the former DEOPS building into the Memorial in the early 2000's it is necessary to situate this process in its historic and urban context. As said, in the late 1990's and early 2000's Brazil shifted towards neoliberal economic policies. At the same time the government under Cardoso began efforts to craft sweeping sets of regulations regarding urban accessibility, environmental stewardship, and public wellbeing. These are the type of vast 'urban *plans*' that Harvey describes as a condition of postmodern city planning. In Brazil, these measures were eventually codified in the national "Estatuto da Cidade" (Lei No 10.257), published in July of 2001. It would seem that the Estatuto, premised on Lefebvre's notion of the 'right to the city,' contradicts the privatization of many sectors of the water and health-care industries happening in Brazil at the same time (Contreiras & Matta, 2015). Yet if anything this reflects the complicated ideology of neoliberal urbanism, which dictates that that the city is accessible and open for those who have the capacity to enter into the market. Accessibility is in-

tended for those in the gated condominiums, and not, for example, the urban poor of the Luz area.

A publication by the UN Human Settlements Program notes that over the years the areas around Luz, Santa Ifigênia, and Bom Retiro area have become known for “the derogatory nickname, ‘cracolândia’ (crack-land) as the government [...] began to highlight the area’s high level of criminality and physical degradation,” and since the 1990’s the neighborhood was identified by the government as “a priority area for a wider political programme of urban requalification and rehabilitation, with the intention of transforming Luz into a ‘cultural neighbourhood’” (“A



**Image 2:** Poster for the “Lei da Cidade Limpa.” (“Fugindo da Virtualidade” 2013).

Tale of Two Cities,” 2010. p.143).

Although the derogatory nickname is unwarranted, the poverty of the area is not exaggerated. The results of the 2015 city census note that 52.7% of the homeless population of the City of São Paulo are located in the “Sé” Subprefeitura, encompassing the neighborhoods in question (FIPE & Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2015). As consequence, the first decade of the 2000’s saw the promulgation of a series of aggressive urban renewal policies aimed at re-



moving Cracolândia and remodeling the historic city center.

This process officially began with the passing of the “Lei da Cidade Limpa” in 2005/6 which sought to regulate “visual pollutants” such as graffiti or its uniquely Brazilian variation, *pixação* (2006). The Lei da Cidade Limpa also promoted the creation of a new urban image for the area: “Nova Luz.” The creation of “Nova Luz” was to come through the implementation of new-urbanist building codes and the reoccupation of historic spaces guided by public-private



**Image 3:** Example of the new-urbanist redesign planned for “Nova Luz” (Projeto Nova Luz 2011).

partnerships (Projeto Nova Luz 2011).

The final version of this plan was solidified in 2011 although earlier implementation measures began in 2005.

Next came three different policy phases

or “Operações” target-

ed specifically to clean up Cracolândia: Operação Limpa (Operation Clean) (2005); Operação Centro Legal (Operation Central Legal) (2009); and Operação Sufoco (Operation Suffocation) (2012).

All of these policies have been heavily criticized for their focus on criminalizing substance abuse and “a falta um debate proficuo pela sociedade civil organizada acerca da de-

pendência química, o consumo e a criminalização” (Soares de Oliveira Sobrinho “A Cracolândia”).<sup>14</sup> Further criticism suggests that in each phase of these “Operações” the dialogue of urban reform in the Luz area has been used to conceal the process of gentrification and social eradication, bridging on human rights violations. One article on the process states that “o discurso de “revitalização” ou “requalificação” da região” has done nothing more than “impingir sofrimento, induzir à errância [...] e repressão policial” (Rui et. al, 2014).<sup>15</sup> Even the names of the operações reflect the pejorative way in which the area and its residents have been viewed, suggesting that renewal will come through cleaning, legalization, and if all else fails suffocation.

Having spent nearly each day of my field research trekking to the Memorial in the heart of Luz, I questioned the efficacy of these policies. The area looks nothing like the neoliberal new-urbanist haven outlined in the design plans which promises mixed-use developments, pedestrian walkways, and urban parks. Although the final phase, Operação Sufoco, officially ended in 2013 the forcible removal of the poor’s encampments continues, but most individuals seem quick to return. The area is admittedly both a viscerally unpleasant and a deeply tragic place to be in. The poverty and substance abuse issues experienced by denizens are noticeable, as well as the government’s neglect, with poorly maintained roads and heaping piles of garbage. Ultimately, Nova Luz seems to not exist. The reasons why the urban renewal policies promulgated by the Brazilian government from 2000-present have not worked is a far larger topic than can be covered here and falls outside the purview of my study. What is of interest though, is how these

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<sup>14</sup> Translation: “a lack a meaningful discussion by civil society about addiction, consumption and criminalization”

<sup>15</sup> Translation: “the discourse of revitalization” or “renewal of the region” has done nothing more than “foster suffering, induce wandering [...] and political repression.”

policies of removal were coupled with the neoliberal dialogue of cultural revitalization that would use the transformation of the DEOPS building as its emblem.

### Cleaning up the City, Cleaning Up the Past

Officially, the Memorial da Resistência is located at Largo General Osório 66 in the Zona Central of São Paulo, but the building itself has a history that reaches back 110 years to the beginning of São Paulo's industrial revolution and heyday as an imperial power. In the late nineteenth century the Estrada de Ferro Sorocabana created a railway line connecting São Paulo to the port town of Santos. This connection facilitated the expansion of coffee production which would make São Paulo into a hub of economic and political activity. São Paulo's central railway station, the Estação Luz, was designed by the English architect Henry Driver and completed in 1901, and it is from the Estação Luz that the area received its name.<sup>16</sup>



The Estação served as the primary point of entry to the city for both goods and migrants. With the now booming agricultural economy, in

**Image 4:** Estação Luz today (Youngs, 2015)

<sup>16</sup> Kühl, "A Estação da Luz" 117.

1906 the Estrada built a warehouse nearby: the Armazém Central at Largo General Osório 66.

Both the Armazém and the Estação were designed in a neoclassical style that helped to influence Bom Retiro's image as modern and European. The growth of Luz, Santa Ifigênia, and Bom Retiro was aided both by the influx of financial capital from the railway and the lofty ideals of then-appointed city architect, Ramos de Azavedo, who designed numerous architectural landmarks in the area, such as the Teatro Municipal and the Palácio das Indústrias.

This growth would continue until 1888 when Brazil abolished slavery, leading to a decline in the nation's agricultural output. For Luz, Bom Retiro, and Santa Ifigênia, this resulted in the mass in-migration of impoverished rural immigrants and a period of sharp economic decline. In 1939 the obsolete Armazém Central passed to the control of the DEOPS. Although Castelo Branco advanced the work of the DEOPS during the dictatorship, the organization was originally founded in 1924 and was “responsável pelos assuntos relacionados à segurança do Estado [...] e tinha jurisdição em todo o território estadual” (dos Santos & Moraes, 2004, p.30).<sup>17</sup> Getúlio Vargas' dictatorship further expanded the provisions of the DEOPS for insuring state security and solidified its role as a repressive police task force. From 1938-1940 the building was remodeled to serve as a police station which housed “os cidadãos considerados suspeitos por práticas de subversão contra a ordem imposto pelo governo” (dos Santos & Moraes, 2004, p.32).<sup>18</sup> During the military dictatorship from '64-'85 the building continued to function as the headquarters of the DEOPS under the direction of the notorious torturer Sérgio Paranhos Fleury.

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<sup>17</sup> Translation: “responsible for matters related state security [ ... ] and had jurisdiction over the entire state territory.”

<sup>18</sup> Translation: “citizens considered suspect of practices of subversion against the order imposed by the government.”





**Image 5:** Former DEOPS/ Memorial da Resistência today. (Youngs 2015)

In 1983 the DEOPS was disbanded and occupancy was eventually transferred to another government branch, the Delegacia do Consumidor, but before vacating DEOPS officers destroyed much of the interior of the space to conceal the crimes that occurred within.<sup>19</sup> The DEOPS building was ultimately abandoned in the late 1980's due to structural issues, and it wasn't until 1998 that the secretary of justice for the city, Belisário dos Santos Jr., donated the building for use as a cultural center (Atencio, 2014, p.102). From 1999-2000 the building was used as the set for the theatrical production, *Lembrar é resistir* (Remembering is Resisting). The play fea-

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<sup>19</sup> The "Delegacia do Consumidor" is the branch of the police dealing with economic crimes.

tured site-specific performances that told of the experiences of detainment and the DEOPS' history. In 1999 the State of São Paulo began an ambitious renovation of the DEOPS building, ending the run of *Lembrar é resistir*.

As mentioned, part of the goal of eradicating “Cracolândia” and creating “Nova Luz” was to “estimular a reocupação de áreas degradadas do espaço urbano” through “na instalação de âncoras culturais e na oferta de ampla programação artística” (Zillig p. 25; “Projeto Nova Luz” 2011).<sup>20</sup> The remodeling of the DEOPS building into the Memorial da Liberdade from 1999-2002 would become the cornerstone of this process. In their interviews both Kátia and Maurice both reflected on this period of urban redevelopment. Kátia Neves, the Coordinator for the Memorial, stated that,

Quando a remodelação deste edifício aconteceu, que começou em 1999 e terminou em 2002 com a inauguração de uma exposição temporária no primeiro andar do edifício e da inauguração do Museu da Liberdade, era um projeto de revitalização do centro da cidade, porque existem alguns museus muito importantes aqui como a Pinacoteca do Estado, Museu de Arte Sacra e também a Sala São Paulo. Assim, a intenção era revitalizar o centro da cidade. Eles pensaram que poderia ser muitas coisas: uma biblioteca, uma escola de drama, uma escola de música... também pensou que poderia ser o Museu do Imaginário do Povo Brasileiro. Houve também um projeto que tratou do Holocausto, mas então, por alguma razão que eu não sei, o projeto não foi implementado. Então, o que sabemos sobre essa história é que o Memorial da Liberdade continuou (2015).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Translation: “the installation of cultural anchors and the offering of wide artistic program to stimulate the reoccupation of degraded areas of urban space”

<sup>21</sup> Translation: “When the remodeling of this building occurred, which started in 1999 and ended with the inauguration of a temporary exhibition in the first floor of the building and the inauguration of the Museu da Liberdade, it was a project for the revitalization of the center of the city because there are some very important museums here, such as the Pinacoteca do Estado, Museu de Arte Sacra and also the Sala São Paulo. They thought it could be many things: a library, a drama school, a music school... they also thought it might be the Museu do Imaginário do Povo Brasileiro. There was also a project that dealt with the Holocaust, but then for some reason I don’t know, the project was not implemented. So what do we know about this story is that the Memorial da Liberdade continued.”

On the renovation process Maurice told a similar story, although his telling differs from Kátia in focusing immediately on the commercial value the space. He states,

Eles reformaram o prédio... Por que? Porque aqui, a Katia deve ter te falado, tem uma sala de concerto muito grande aqui nesse prédio ao lado, a Sala São Paulo [...] Precisava se de espaço para fazer o estacionamento porque as pessoas que vem para o concerto, as pessoas vêm de carro. Então eles tiveram que destruir uma parte do que era o espaço carcerário pra construir garagem e estacionamento. (2015).<sup>22</sup>

Both Katia and Maurice's statements work to reveal the ways in which the reformation of the former DEOPS building into the Memorial da Liberdade from 1999-2002 was quickly subsumed within the larger agenda of aggressive urban renewal policies happening concurrently. The space was reclaimed first as a 'cultural anchor' to help stimulate cultural and economic activity in what was (and still is) considered to be essentially a blighted area of the city, and only secondarily considered as a memorial. And even then, the legitimacy or reverence of the Memorial da Liberdade was called into question by individuals like Maurice:

O que tinha sobrado? Tinha sobrado as quatro celas, e o governador da época do estado de São Paulo deu o nome de Memorial da Liberdade [...] Limparam as celas, puseram umas fotos, limparam, tiraram todas as inscrições e não tinha nenhuma sinalização. As pessoas vinham aqui para visitar as obras de arte do primeiro, segundo e terceiro andar e perguntavam "O que é aqui?" "Ah, aqui é o Memorial da Liberdade" mas não tinha nenhuma explicação, não tinha nada. Tinha 30 ou 40 pessoas por mês que visitavam. (Maurice 2015).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Translation: They reformed the building ... Why? Because here, Katia should have told you, there is a very big concert hall in this building next door, the Sala São Paulo [...] They needed space for a parking lot because the people who come to the concert come by car. So they had to destroy a part of what was the prison space to build garage and parking.

<sup>23</sup> Translation: "What was left? There were four cells left, and then the governor of the state of São Paulo gave it the name 'Memorial da Liberdade' [...] they cleaned the cells, put up some pictures, cleaned, they took out all writings [presumably graffiti written by inmates in the cells] and there was no signage. People came here to visit the works of art on the first, second and third floor and asked, "What's here?" " Ah , here is the Memorial of Freedom" but it had no explanation, it had nothing. There were 30 or 40 people a month visiting"

Shockingly, a government sponsored publication released after the inauguration of the Memorial da Liberdade celebrated the very erasure that Maurice lamented, stating that “o prédio do antigo DOPS [...] consegue finalmente sua própria anistia” and “livrou-se do stigma da tortura e da violação dos direitos humanos” (Loures, 2002, p.8).<sup>24</sup> Two important points stand out in these statements: the notion of amnesty and the notion of cleaning. The physical space of the Memorial was “cleaned” in the same way that Cracolândia would soon be “cleaned” up through forcible removals and urbanization, and for the Memorial this was executed to such an extreme extent as to make the past unrecognizable to those who lived it. For the city, this would mean a whole new “Nova Luz.” Furthermore, the name itself—the memorial to “liberty”—seems glaringly incongruous and blatantly ignores the fact that a prison exists precisely to deprive people of their liberty. Instead, the name is perhaps more reflective of the political economy of the time: a period of economic liberalization in which forgetfulness or explicit erasure was used unabashedly as a strategy for urban and economic revitalization.

The notion of amnesty as a way of avoiding direct confrontation with the past grounded the ambivalent attitudes towards transitional justice that existed in Brazil in the early 2000’s. Appropriately, the building received ‘sua própria anistia’ at the same time that the Comissão da Anistia was created. As Susana Draper notes, “remembering the necessity to forget operates discursively as a market strategy; a free market cannot be opened up by looking back,” and in this process historical sites “become a prime commodity only if the past can be transformed to fit into the new exigencies of the market and its rules for purchasing power accompanying the city’s process of transformation and rejuvenation” (2012, p.132-33). In this context the ‘stigma of tor-

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<sup>24</sup> Translation: “The building of the old DOPS [...] Finally gets it’s own amnesty” and “frees itself of the stigma of torture and human rights violations.”

ture and human rights violations’ was supplanted by the logic of neoliberalism as part of urban renewal projects that aimed to attract middle-class consumers to an otherwise undesirable part of São Paulo.

The landscape of the city and the Memorial would soon begin to change in 2003 under the Presidency of Lula da Silva as the country intensified neoliberal economic development policies. In our interview Kátia explained that the Memorial da Liberdade was originally managed by the State Archives of São Paulo who also managed the extensive DEOPS archives, but in 2004 management was transferred to the Associação Pinacoteca Arte e Cultura (Kátia 2015). In function, the Associação is managed as a private non-profit that is guided by policy promulgated by the Secretary of Culture and partially supported by government funding (“Sobre a Associação,”). Thus, it is a private organization that happens to manage the State Art Gallery (Pinacoteca) with guidance from the government. The shift in ownership that occurred in 2004 from a state-entity to a public-private partnership is important both as a reflection of the neoliberal political ideals of the time, but also for the way in which it affected the content and direction of the space. Kátia noted that:

no final de 2006-2007 eu acho que os primeiros golpes da justiça de transição estavam começando a surgir no Brasil. Ele estava começando a ser discutida: a questão histórica, a importância da memória e como essa memória pode ser trabalhado. Então, nesse meio tempo, o fórum de ex-presos e presos políticos de São Paulo em contato com o governo do Estado de São Paulo pedindo este espaço para ser mais explorado em termos educacionais e culturais. O governo do Estado aceitou este desafio e com esta transferência da gestão do Memorial da Liberdade com a Pinacoteca do Estado (2015)<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Translation: “at the end of 2006-2007 I think the first transitional justice blows were beginning to emerge in Brazil. It was beginning to be discussed: the historical question, the importance of memory and how this memory can be worked. So, in the meantime the forum of ex-prisoners and political prisoners of São Paulo in contact with the state government of São Paulo asked for this space to be further explored in educational and cultural terms. The state government accepted this challenge and with this transferred the management of the Memorial da Liberdade to the Pinacoteca do Estado.”

The movement in transitional justice that Kátia is referring to is likely the long awaited publication of the final report by the “Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos” in 2007, which finally acknowledged government responsibility for 356 deaths during the dictatorship and offered limited reparations to their families (Dávila 2013). As she further suggested, this recognition prompted groups of survivors, like Maurice, to agitate for a reconsideration of the space, and on January 24, 2009 the Memorial da Resistência was officially inaugurated. But as Kátia described, while the memorial aspect was facilitated by the government it really came as consequence of the work of former detainees and political prisoners and the private Pinacoteca foundation. It would seem then that although the government might finally be acknowledging its role in the human rights abuses of the past, the actualization of memory was a commodity left to the demands and desires of civil society.

As a member of the *fórum de ex-presos* Maurice did acknowledge his own part in helping to advocate for the remodeling of the memorial, but he also recognized the more complicated role that this transformation played in the larger urban and political economy of the time:

Obviamente esse prédio em particular fica em um lugar da cidade um pouco desfavorável [...] e o governo e outros quis fazer desse entorno urbano um espaço que fosse de museus e cultura, e eles tentei, mais não foi muito feliz porque ainda as pessoas vão ao museu e vão para casa não ficam aqui. Eles tiveram sucesso mas não em tudo que eles queriam. Então, mudar o museu (2015).<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to compare Maurice’s statement with Kátia’s. While she suggested the transformation of the Memorial was brought about more as a reflection of a larger shift in the nation’s transitional justice policies, Maurice suggests that part of this change was rooted in

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<sup>26</sup> Translation: “obviously this particular building is in a rather unfavorable part of the city [...] and the government and others wanted to make this urban environment into a space of museums and culture, and they tried, but they not very happy because people come to the museum and then go home and don’t stay here. They succeeded but not as completely as they wanted. So they changed the museum.”

reevaluating failed attempts at cultural revitalization. This interpretation suggests that the museum, in its previous incarnation as the Memorial da Liberdade, failed to attract to the area the desired base of cultural consumers; a statement which reflects well the upswing in urban renewal policies that were beginning at the same time. Thus, it remains unclear whether the creation of the Memorial da Resistance was motivated by shifting tides in transitional justice or to fit market demands. This ambiguity is reflected in a speech written for the inauguration of the Memorial by the Secretary of Culture for the State of São Paulo, João Sayad.

Sayad suggests that the government:

“abraçamos a causa dos cidadãos militantes que queriam transformar o antigo Memorial da Liberdade em um espaço que falasse [...] das lutas da resistência e, sobretudo, das fragilidades das democracias,”<sup>27</sup>

While at the same time extolling the commercial value of the space, as even though it has been

“aberto há tão pouco tempo, já está entre as instituições museológicas mais visitadas da cidade” and “as exposições demais atividades educativas e culturais têm atraído públicos diversificados” (15).<sup>28</sup>

Sayad’s statement (and the rest of his speech) suggests a reluctance on the part of the government to accept the cause of its ‘militant citizens’ and transform the Memorial da Liberdade, but ultimately celebrates the commercial draw of the new Memorial da Resistência. Did Sayad and others in the government believe that they had finally produced the cultural monument that would anchor Nova Luz and allow it to shed the “stigmas” of the past?

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<sup>27</sup> Translation: “We embrace the cause of the militant citizens who wanted to transform the old Memorial da Liberdade into a space that speaks [...] of the struggle of resistance and, above all, the fragility of democracy,”

<sup>28</sup> Translation: “open for such a short time, it is already among the most visited museums in the city” and “the other educational and cultural activities have attracted diverse audiences.”

That question is not one that I can answer but the fact that it needs to be asked at all suggests that the historical narrative of the former DEOPS building has always been of secondary importance to the memorial making process. That this space is a site of trauma is a fact that has been selectively ignored and activated for the sake of cultural development and urban renewal. Based on the statements presented here it becomes clear that making amends with the past is consistently of lesser importance than creating economically viable cultural anchors to help revitalize and clean up the Luz neighborhood. David Harvey reflects on this process in his work, suggesting that the formation of niche market spaces and consumer habits (i.e. cultural centers) is a consequence of the neoliberal city, and only serves to commodify and privatize the quality of urban life (Harvey 1990). “Cracolândia” was to literally be cleaned away through the multitude of urban renewal projects aimed at restoring the area to its heyday as the cultural epicenter of the city. Certainly, a parking lot for the Opera would have served the material exigencies of the urban market far more efficiently than a memorial which possesses comparatively little use-value.

The fact that the DEOPS building existed alongside monuments like the Opera House and the Pinacoteca do Estado seems perhaps to be a fortuitous coincidence and inconvenient truth for the government who were pushed by the activism of survivors like Maurice to find a way to incorporate the past into the commercial and cultural plans for the future. That the Memorial da Liberdade was created and then further transformed into the Memorial da Resistência was a decision that had relatively little to do with the acknowledgement of institutional accountability for past wrongs, and all to do with the coopting of a historic narrative and historic space insofar as they fit the demands of the current political economy. Quality of life and urban redevelopment was to be insured for middle-class cultural consumers, but only after the undesirable presence of



both Cracolândia and the dictatorship were cleaned away. By focusing on a top-down development agenda the Brazilian government lost the opportunity for a collective reworking of the past or recognition of accountability. Instead, the building was and continues to be, used as a tool in the larger political economy of memory making and historic commodification in the neoliberal city.

## Argentina

### Introduction:

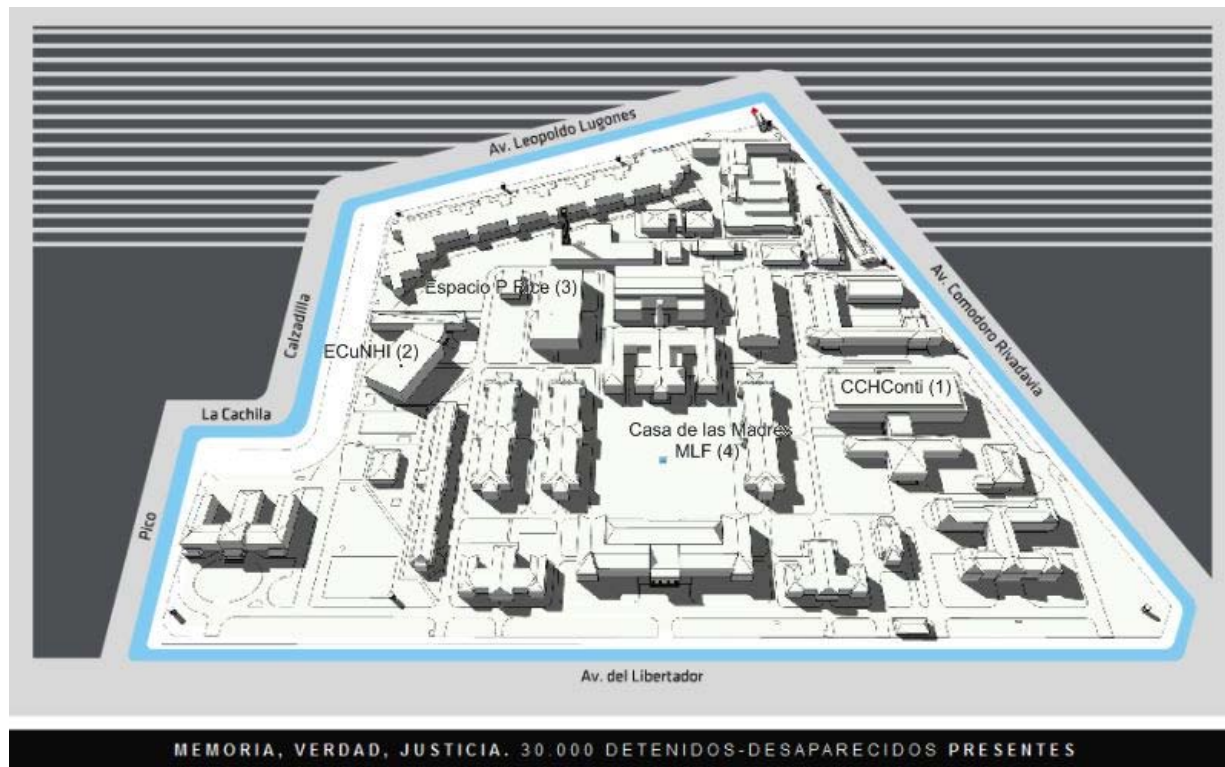
In 2005 the New York Times published an article titled “A Struggle with Memories of Torture Down the Street,” detailing the visit of American human rights activists to the former Escuela Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) in Buenos Aires. In the article Michael Posner of the non-profit Human Rights First is quoted as saying that “the striking thing about a place like this [ESMA] is how ordinary it all looks [...] if you didn’t know what went on here, you would think it was just another building” (Rohter, 2004, p.44).



**Image 6:** Entrance of the ESMA (Youngs 2015)

Flanked by  
white doric  
columns on  
a thirty-six  
acre estate  
in the up-  
scale Nuñez  
barrio of  
Buenos  
Aires, the  
former

ESMA is hardly ordinary. Instead, the monumentalism of the complex overtly asserts the power and monumentalism historically associated with the military, and to call the site ‘ordinary’ re-



**Image 7:** Campus of the ESMA (“La Historia, 2011”)

veals the larger dilemma surrounding ESMA’s history. Its presence and historic legacy of terror is paradoxically both banal and completely unsettling to the urban landscape around it. Unlike the Memorial da Resistência, cabdrivers know the ESMA. In fact, I did not meet anyone during my month in Buenos Aires that did not know the ESMA when I mentioned it. Both the physical space of the site and its tragic history have left an indelible mark on the cityscape and minds of its inhabitants, creating fierce debates over its preservation versus its destruction.

Like the former DEOPS building, the ex-ESMA has a history dating back to the early 20th century. In 1904 the Municipality of Buenos Aires granted the thirty-six acres on which ESMA is located to the Argentine Navy to create what was then known as la Escuela Oficiales de Mar, with the condition that “si por cualquier causa se diera otro destino,” ESMA “pasaría inmediatamente a poder de la Municipalidad con todas las construcciones que se hubieran efectua-

do sin derecho a indemnización alguna” (Brodsky, 2005, p.47).<sup>29</sup> The Escuela Oficiales de Mar later became the Escuela Superior de la Armada and was inaugurated in 1928. With roughly 10,000 students each year it was one of the nation’s largest military academies and included not only “La Escuela de Mecánica, but also “la Escuela de Guerra Naval y el Casino Oficiales” (“Historia” 2011).

With the beginning of the dictatorship in 1976 ESMA was utilized simultaneously as a military academy and clandestine detention center, and often considered the most brutal of the 340 centers in Argentina where “approximately five thousand people were savagely tortured and murdered while only two hundred were eventually liberated” (Friedrich, 2011, p.172). In addition, over “200 children were born in ESMA’s clandestine maternity wards and illegally adopted” (Hernández, 2013, p.71). What makes ESMA so unsettling is not just the extent and depravity of the abuses committed there, but the simultaneity of use. Although ESMA is a sprawling campus, common areas such as the stairs and hallways were shared by both victim and victimizer. This fact questions both the limits of individual accountability and the ability to ‘not know’ about the atrocities committed there which many have often cited as a defense against accusations of complicity.

As the armed forces retained a significant amount of political influence following the dictatorship ESMA continued to function as a naval school during the Alfonsín administration (1983-1989), and under Menem’s administration (1989-1999) the pardoning of accused human rights abusers was coupled with a reduction of the military’s size and an attempt to demolish

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<sup>29</sup> Translation: “if it is used for any other reason” ESMA “will immediately be passed to the control of the Municipality, including all buildings that have been constructed, and without compensation.”

ESMA in 1998. While human rights groups pushed for a museum to be created at the site, other plans were suggested to tear down ESMA and replace it with condominiums and apartments, given the high property values in the area (Friedrich, 2011, p.173). Finally, amidst growing pressure from survivors and human rights groups, in 2000 the City of Buenos Aires initiated a lawsuit against the Argentine Navy to recover the land on which ESMA is situated. In the lawsuit the city stated that the Navy had violated the terms of its 1904 contract by using the ESMA for purposes other than education.

All the while the school at ESMA continued to function until 2003 when the City of Buenos Aires passed Ley 961, stating that “el Instituto ‘Espacio para la Memoria’ tendrá su sede definitiva en el predio que ocupó la ESMA” with “el objeto de promover la profundización del sistema democrático, la consolidación de los derechos humanos y la prevalencia de los valores de la vida, la libertad y la dignidad humana.”<sup>30</sup> In 2004 the National Congress officially relocated the educational component of the school to the Puerto Belgrano Naval Base in Bahía Blanca, and created the new “Espacio para la Memoria y para la Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos” at ESMA. On March 24 of that same year —the 28th anniversary of the coup d’etat— President Néstor Kirchner inaugurated the space in a highly publicized event that included speeches from survivors, musical performances, and Kirchner theatrically removing the portraits of condemned generals Reynaldo Benito Bignone and Jorge Rafael Videla from the school’s foyer (“La recuperación”). The direction of ESMA was left to the joint responsibility of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, the Federal Government, and 13 human rights organizations

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<sup>30</sup> Translation: “the institute ‘Espacio Memoria’ will have its permanent headquarters on the site occupied by the ESMA” with “the objective of promoting the deepening of the democratic system, consolidation of human rights and the prevalence of the values of life, liberty and human dignity”

which include: Archivo Nacional de la Memoria; Canal Encuentro; Casa de la Militancia-Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio- H.I.J.O.S.; Casa por la identidad; Centro Cultural de la Memoria Haroldo Conti; Centro Internacional de Educación en Derechos Humanos de la UNESCO; Espacio Cultural Nuestros Hijos (EcuNHi) - Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo; Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas; Iniciativa Latinoamericana para la identificación de Personas Desaparecidas I.L.I.D.; Instituto de Políticas Públicas de Derechos Humanos del MERCOSUR; Madres de Plaza de Mayo Línea Fundadora; Memoria Abierta; Museo Malvinas e Islas del Atlántico Sur.<sup>31</sup>

#### ESMA: From the Ordinary to the Unsettled

In the previous section I examined briefly the historic trajectory of the ex-ESMA to the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos. I would like to push further here to situate this transformation within its larger socio-political context, by examining first how, under Menem and neoliberal expansion, recognition of ESMA's past gave way to practical need and economic pragmatism in the service of public good, and how only after the political shift away from neoliberalism with Kirchner was it reconsidered as a commemorative space. After Menem's pardoning of those convicted in the Trial of the Juntas the rhetoric of human rights groups shifted away from a demand for truth and fair trials, and towards blatant calls for punishment. A pamphlet published by the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo titled "Para Nosotros Anulación Es Sinónimo De La Verdad

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<sup>31</sup> National Memory Archive, "Canal Encuentro" TV Station, HIJOS (Children for Identity and Justice against Forgetting and Silence) House for Identity, Cultural Center Haroldo Conti, UNESCO International Center for Education and Human Rights, Association of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo "Cultural Space for Our Children", Families of the Disappeared and Detained for Political Reasons, Latin American Initiative for the Identification of Disappeared Persons, MERCOSUR Institute for Public Policy and Human Rights, Founding Chapter of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, "Memoria Abierta" Historic Archives, Malvinas Museum.  
<http://www.espaciomemoria.ar/integrantes.php>

Y Justicia” asserts that “los desapariciones, torturas, asesinatos, encarcelamiento y exilio de miles de militantes populares fueron necesario para implantar un modelo económico del hambre para millones y riquezas para unos pocos”<sup>32</sup> (qtd. Sprayregen 117). In this case, Menem’s neoliberal economic policies are seen as a continuation of the human rights abuses of the dictatorship, and the lack of impunity allows this to persist into the present.

Although intentions set out for the ESMA under Menem was not nearly as clear-cut as the Brazilian government’s use of the ex-DEOPS facility to fuel the process urban renewal, it is no less problematic. As the focus in the 1990’s was primarily on trials, spaces like the ESMA were considered secondarily, or outright ignored as the Navy remained in control of the space. As Marguerite Feitlowitz notes in her work, not only was the Navy still occupying and profiting from running the academy at ESMA, in the true spirit of neoliberal entrepreneurship they were also using the space to make money on the side. She notes that in 1993 a story broke in the Argentine newspaper *Página 12* detailing how six private elementary and middle schools in the Palermo and Nuñez were entering into agreements to pay the Navy to use the grounds of the ESMA for gym classes as the schools were outgrowing their facilities, not to mention the fact that the Banco Nación was also paying for its employees to use the soccer field (Feitlowitz, 1998, p.201-2). She notes that further controversy erupted in 1995 when it was revealed that the city’s Ministerio de Educación y Deportes (Ministry of Education & Sports) had contracted with the ESMA to use their swimming pool for the citywide high school swim meet, and outrage at this arrangement intensified when it was revealed that the Universidad de Buenos Aires had, for years, an outstanding contract with the ESMA for the use of the swimming pool for their students.

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<sup>32</sup> Translation: “the disappearances, torture, murder, imprisonment and exile of thousands of popular militants was necessary to implement an economic model of hunger for millions and wealth for a few.”

While I would like to think it is safe to say that most of us would find the thought of going for a swim or a soccer game at a former detention and torture center to be utterly unimaginable, clearly it was not for many at the time. If anything, I view the act as consistent with the neoliberal ideology of developing urban space to its maximum utility and the subjugation of memory, although (as will be seen later) groups like HIJOS have suggested that the joyful reclamation of the space for public utility is in itself another alternative to reconciling with the past. The questionable practices of the Navy and resistance from human rights groups came to a head in 1998 as Menem was pushed to publish the official Decreto 8/98. The decree is devoted to the restructuring of the Argentine armed forces, and mandates first the transfer of the school at the ESMA to a naval base located at Puerto Belgrano in the city of Bahía Blanca. Secondly, it proposes for the destruction of the ESMA and in its place, “un espacio verde de uso público y el lugar de emplazamiento de un símbolo de la unión nacional.”<sup>33</sup> But the decree is vague on defining what parts or how much of the space is to be used for the creation of this public green space, and what would happen to the rest. It would seem that Menem’s decree is a dramatic shift away from his neoliberal policies, but it was clearly never implemented. It would take until 2004 for the Navy to move to Puerto Belgrano, and Menem’s administration saw enormous pushback from teachers at the ESMA who said that the move would cost them their jobs.<sup>34</sup>

In my interview with Graciela Lois, she suggested that the real reason behind wanting to destroy the ESMA was speculative real estate development:

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<sup>33</sup> Translation: “a green space for public use and a place for the installation of a symbol of national unity” <http://infoleg.mecon.gov.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/45000-49999/48329/norma.htm>

<sup>34</sup> See “Docentes de la ESMA buscan apoyo en Diputados,” *La Nación* (1998). <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/87554-docentes-de-la-esma-buscan-apoyo-en-diputados>



El problema es que estos terrenos son terrenos carísimos, en el lugar más caro de toda la ciudad. Ese es el problema, era un problema inmobiliario en su momento, más que de memoria. ¿Por que querían destruirlo? Porque primero los tiraban abajo, son 17 hectáreas carísimas, carísimas, y bueno, un poquito dedicarían a un parque, el resto harían, no sé, torres supongo, porque es eso, no es otra cosa (2015).

Although the transformation ESMA was not being considered as specifically as the former DE-OPS facility, it was still considered first for its commercial and investment value and only secondarily as a piece within the nation's collective memory. In this sense, we can see how the ESMA became "ordinary" as the Navy and Argentine Government viewed the space as another way of generating capital and urban development. The problem was not, as Graciela noted, the memory of the dictatorship, but of how to build upscale apartments without this memory getting in the way. For again, within the market of neoliberal capitalism memory holds very little exchange-value.

As noted above, the political and economic climate in Argentina changed in 2003 with the election of Nestor Kirchner and the shift away from neoliberalism. The same year saw the official recognition of ESMA as a space for human rights, and in this same law Kirchner recognized the state's responsibility for the violence of the dictatorship. On the neoliberal crisis Themis Chronopolous suggests that this lead to the breakdown of physical barriers that existed throughout the city, such as barricades surrounding government buildings or enhanced building fortifications for international banks, as well as added amendments to the 1998 *Código de Convivencia Urbana* (Code of Urban Coexistence), which many saw as a step towards greater human rights protections for it recognized the rights of previously 'criminalized' populations such as prostitutes or 'unrecognized' groups such as transvestites. It would seem then that in this moment of crisis, as São Paulo was pushing people out of the cityscape, Buenos Aires was welcoming

them in.

Although activists no longer had to worry that the ESMA would be leveled for high-rise condominiums, that did not mean the debate regarding the space was over. Although more will be said about this in the following chapter, it is worth noting how the groups in charge of the facilities were divided between two points of view. The first wanted to preserve the space in situ, believing that ESMA "no deberá tener otro destino ni función que el de ser testimonio material del genocidio," and that the space should be reconstructed exactly as it was during the dictatorship, "para aparezca como un sitio de recuerdo y luto escenificado por la reconstrucción física, puntual, 'mimética'" (Pastoriza 93).<sup>35</sup> The other perspective argued that ESMA should function as an educational and cultural facility where "la representación del terror allí ejercido se debe 'mostrar' a través de relatos, voces, maquetas, paneles, y testimonios" (Pastoriza 94). The latter proposal would eventually come to define how ESMA is used today, and in 2010 the "Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos" officially opened.<sup>36</sup>

Admittedly, there is very little to see at the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos. The majority of the buildings are not open to the public either because they were not included in the original plan for redevelopment, or because they are physically unsafe. The Casino Oficiales is also only open on certain days of the week as it is considered evidence in the ongoing "Mega-*causa* ESMA." In addition, as the facility is managed by so many different entities (city, federal government, human rights organizations), the quality of infrastructure varies greatly. While the

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<sup>35</sup> Translation: "will not have another purpose or function other than being the material witness to genocide" and that the space should be reconstructed exactly as it was during the dictatorship, "to appear as a site of remembrance and mourning staged by the physical, timely, and mimetic reconstruction."

<sup>36</sup> Translation: "the representation of terror exercised there must be 'shown' through stories, voices, scale models, panels, and testimonies."

Museum to the Malvinas and Centro Cultural Haroldo Conti are completely modernized, spaces such as the Memoria Abierta archives lack both heating and electricity. I could have free wifi and a glass of Malbec at the Centro Cultural cafe, but was simply given a flashlight for investigating the archives at Memoria Abierta and hoped that loose ceiling tiles wouldn't come careening down in the process.

On the renovation of the ESMA Susana Draper notes that the space's "decay" and "absence of monumentality" is "demonstrated by a lack of a specific, definitive script for guided visits" which highlights the space's "complex and open character" while at the same time creates "a series of holes in the urban fabric" (2012, p.170). Unlike the Memorial da Resistência, the transformation of ESMA was not part of a larger market strategy or tourism ploy, and its incompleteness resists the commodification of both the space and the past. These 'urban holes' disrupt the process of recycling and aesthetic renovation which are key tools for the marketing of place and memory in the neoliberal city. In this case, the fragmentation of neoliberal privatization has resulted in an opening in both the cityscape and national discussion of memory.

### Conclusion

To conclude this thought I would like to end with a statement made by Tom, the elderly father of my Airbnb host in Buenos Aires while we were all at a restaurant one evening. When I told Tom that I was researching the ex-ESMA he stated,

Los crímenes eran espantosos, es cierto. Espantosos. Pero algunos de los militares salvaron el país porque era una guerra y si no la hubieron ganado seríamos como China o Rusia o Cuba: comunistas. [...] Y la ESMA es un desastre como todo el gobierno. Las desapariciones fueron un error que continúa. Cuántas personas fueron desaparecidas? Mil? Cinco mil? Las noticias dicen que entre diez y treinta mil personas, pero treinta mil?

No way [sic] es un montón de personas. Diez? Maybe [sic]. Pero lo mismo ocurrió en Chile con Pinochet, pero en Chile no desaparecieron: desaparecieron y mataron y después envían una nota a la familia diciendo “mira, tu hijo está ahí en la calle” y lo entierran y eso. Pero una persona que desaparece nunca desaparece. Hay las pinches madres y las familias que todavía están buscando — nunca desaparece. Los desaparecidos fueron un error (2015).<sup>37</sup>

More than any of the interviews and site observations I conducted during my two months abroad, this statement has stayed with me as it is so deeply layered and immensely revealing. In this statement Tom reveals himself to be one of the many individuals who believed at the time that social repression was necessary to prevent the spread of communism. Although I had yet to personally hear this belief articulated it was surprising but not unfathomable. What was most shocking was neither the erroneous statement that in Chile people were not disappeared— they were, over 2,200 according to the Rettig Report— nor the dubious claim that after forcibly disappearing and executing individuals the Chilean government was so courteous as to leave a calling card for their loved ones. What was most unsettling was to encounter someone who actually seemed to believe that blatant execution was a better option than clandestine disappearance, because, to put it simply, disappearance precludes individuals from “getting over” the past. The notion that the disappearances still continue today is one that I, and likely the families of the disappeared, would agree with. I don't think it's a stretch to say that for the families of the disappeared

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<sup>37</sup> Translation: The crimes were horrific, true. Frightening. But some of the military saved the country because it was a war and if they had not won would be like China or Russia or Cuba: Communist. [ ... ] And the ESMA is a disaster like the entire government. The disappearances were a mistake that continues. How many people were disappeared? One thousand? Five thousand? The news says that between ten and thirty thousand people, but thirty thousand? No way [sic] it's a mountain of people. Ten? Maybe [sic]. But the same thing happened in Chile with Pinochet, but Chile they did not disappear people. They disappeared them and killed them and then sent a note to their family saying, "Look, your son is out there on the street" and they bury them and that's it. But a person who disappears never disappears. There are the fucking mothers and families who are still looking — it never goes away. The disappearances were a mistake.

and the survivors of detention there is no point of “getting over” it, and the past forever remains an open wound.

This notion of the lingering openness of the past in the collective memory of those who lived it also harks back to Draper’s notion of the “urban holes” of the city, as well as the fragmentation caused by postmodern urbanism and the theme of fragmentation and openings that I introduced in Chapter 2. If my own analysis in the past two chapters has shown anything, I hope that it is precisely how the exigencies of the neoliberal market directly discourage memory practices that detract from the unfettered growth of the free market and exercise of individual freedoms. It should not be surprising then that Tom would reference Chile as the neoliberal restructuring of the economy was the dictatorships crowning achievement. Certainly this type of sweeping reform is made all the easier when the whole of society is subject to repressive authoritarian rule for the sake of preventing the spread of communism.

I regret not asking Tom what he would think about a place like Brazil. Would the turn to neoliberalism and the perpetuation of the Lei da Anisita be a more ideal alternative then the unsettled and irreparable openings that continue to haunt the physical and mental landscape of Argentina? That is not a question I want to consider answering here lest I run the risk of perpetuating hierarchies of trauma, but it is a question that leads well into my following chapter. In this final section I look specifically to my field research interviews to see more specifically the effects of neoliberalism on the city and the nation’s collective memory. As suggested, although Brazil and Argentina have had dramatically different experiences of neoliberal economic policies and transitional justice, they are linked by a sense of unsettling and fragmentation. For my subjects this has led to the difficulty of naming and categorizing both the ex-ESMA and the Memor-

ial da Resistência, as well as a feeling of erasure and unfamiliarity regarding collective spatial and cultural memories.

## CHAPTER 4: THE ABSENT AND THE UNDEFINABLE

In the previous chapters I have shown how the creation processes of both the Memorial da Resistência and the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos functioned within the larger political, economic, and urban transitions happening in Brazil and Argentina in the late 1990's and early 2000's. The shifts experienced in each nation were dichotomous. As Brazil embraced the market driven logic of neoliberalism to facilitate a process of aggressive urban renewal and historic erasure, in Argentina neoliberalism was inching the nation closer to the brink of economic collapse, and in the process re-opened the wounds of the past in both the urban landscape and national collective memory. Showing how both spaces were used in the service of the larger political economy necessarily foregrounds the observations made in this final chapter. In this section I explore how the complicated creation processes of the Memorial and the Espacio Memoria have resulted in the condition of heterotopic Thirdspaces for those who experience it. And in these spaces the notion of memory is unsettled and reworked to fit the exigencies of the larger political economy. I propose that the concept of heterotopic thirdspaces will help to make clear two distinct phenomena that reoccurred throughout my subject interviews, as mentioned previously: the problem of naming and defining use, and the experience of absence and the unrecognizable.

### Memorials/Museums

Before jumping into the question of naming and use I believe it is necessary to speak briefly and broadly on the dichotomy between the memorial and the museum. If, for societies in transition, there exists the inability to narrate name the “memory voids and gaps,” how then do

we proceed in understanding the vast genre of memorial spaces that attempt to do just that—name the ruins? And what benefit does the categorization of these spaces hold? Most simply, how we name the ruins confers their purpose and prescribes our behavior when we encounter them.

As elucidated previously museums, memorials, and monuments are all sites included within the visitation practices of trauma tourism, but all distinctly different in their form and function. For understanding the concept of memorials versus monuments I defer to James Young's definition which states that "memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends," while "monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings" (1993, p.3). As such, monuments "refer to a subset of memorials" as "a memorial may be a day, a conference, or a space, but it need not be a monument, but a monument "is always a kind of memorial" (Young 1993, p.3-4). On the creation of memorials in the past century, scholar Paul Williams suggests that the grave abuses committed during World War II profoundly changed not only the memorial landscape, but the entire way in which human rights, justice, and accountability were understood. Memorial spaces were no longer devoted solely to the nationalistic commemoration of the valiancy of those lost in battle, but now possessed a pedagogical and reparative function. Furthermore, states that have been held accountable for genocide often turn to memorials as a means of self-indictment in the absence of bodies. In this vein, I think that inherent to all post-WWII memorials is the pedagogical and moral imperative of "never again."

In his work on heterotopias Foucault gives significant space to the museum as a heterotopia where "time never stops building up and topping its own summit" with the goal of "accumulating everything [...] of constituting a place of all times that is outside of time" (7). What



makes the museum unique is that it is a space of subjectivity and difference that seeks to act on the individual entering via the space's moral and pedagogical objectives. As Robert Sullivan, Director of the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian, has noted:

Museums are ritual places in which societies make visible what they value. Through the selection and preservation of artifacts, specimens, and documents, museums begin to define for their societies what is consequential, valuable, and suitable as evidence of the past. [...] While museums often claim to be value-neutral, nonmoral [*sic*], and nonpolitical in intent, in their actual practice and behavior, they are moralizing institutions, reflecting as well as shaping their communities moral ecology (2004, p.257).

In some sense the memorial museum is no different than a classical art gallery as both spaces seek not only to display objects but objects in a state of difference, and it is precisely this fact that makes them heterotopic.

From this, museums in general can be understood as less concerned with the objects on display, but the objects in relation to concepts, words, and narrative in order to guide the viewer to question the limits of representation. Historical objects are re-ordered to present a curated narrative of history which is presented as stable and authoritative within the patrician and patriarchal space of the museum. As a tool in the larger political economy of power, the museum has historically been seen as the storehouse of national patrimony and thus national identity which perpetuates specific hegemonic ideas regarding cultural capital. The memorial museum differs from a classical gallery namely through the imperative of "never again," and complicated by their frequent location at sites of trauma. Fundamental to the memorial museum is the belief that "through the display of evidence (personal effects of the victims, photographs, or documents) of the tactics of trauma we can learn from the past and become perpetually vigilant preventing its

return” (Hamber, 2012, p.271). The goal of the memorial museum is to inspire the visitor to a behavior of reverence, vigilance, and solidarity through exposure to “legitimate” artifacts or evidence of trauma. And whether these sites are preserved, what objects are presented, and how the historical narrative is curated speaks volumes about a post-transitional government’s approach to issues of collective memory.

### What’s in a Name?

Throughout almost all of my interviews a question that consistently arose was how to name and categorize the Memorial da Resistência and the Espaço Memoria y Derechos Humanos, and specifically the tension between calling it “museum” versus a “memorial.” For the majority of my subjects in Brazil— Maurice, Kátia, and Maria—there was a general sense of agreement that the Memorial da Resistência was both a memorial and a museum, and their opinions shaped its creation as all three of these individuals were involved from the beginning in the transformation of the Memorial da Liberdade into the Memorial da Resistência. While Kátia was not yet the director of the museum at this time, she was brought on to coordinate the involvement of the survivors of detention. As a professor of museology at the USP and director of the university’s archaeology museum, Maria Cristina led the team in designing the content of the museum and its educational programming. And Maurice, given his vocal role as advocate for the transformation of the Memorial da Liberdade, was asked to consult alongside other former detainees.

While there was consensus among my participants that the space was both a museum and memorial, what is of greater interest in their interviews is how they actually delineate important differences in these two roles which creates a heterotopic experience of the space, and of history,

for those who visit it. In the previous section I noted a division that existed regarding the motivations for transforming the Memorial da Liberdade into the Memorial da Resistência. This was illustrated by Kátia's interpretation which cited the mobilization on the part of the survivors of imprisonment, and Maurice's interpretation which cited more pragmatic motives grounded in the city's dissatisfaction with urban renewal efforts. This tension is important and I will expound upon it further shortly, but first I want to note how Maurice, Kátia, and Maria Cristina talked about memory and transitional justice.

During the time of the Memorial's transformation the Comissão Especial de Mortes e Desaparecidos Políticos was finishing their report a decade in the making and beginning to issue reparations to victims of the dictatorship and their families. I asked Maurice whether he thought that the transformation of the Memorial could be seen as a form of reparations, and he agreed, stating that it was “uma espécie de uma compensação” and “a gente queria o espaço pois para nós era muito importante reconquistar um espaço que era nosso, onde a memória nossa tinha que estar viva,” which was “parte do processo de reparação coletiva” (2015).<sup>38</sup> Maria Cristina also suggested that the recuperation of the space functioned as a mechanism within the nation's larger transitional justice project: “a ideia de criar um Museu funciona como parte do processo mais grande de criar uma memória coletiva, trabalhar com uma memória coletiva do povo” (2015).<sup>39</sup> Finally, Kátia suggested that through discussion the creative team behind the transformation decided to ground the new museum in the concept of “resistance,” to recognize the struggles of in-

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<sup>38</sup> Translation: “a type of compensation” and “we wanted the space because for us it was very important to reconquer a space that was ours, where our memory had to be alive.”

<sup>39</sup> Translation: “The idea of creating a museum functions as part of the larger process of creating collective memory, working with the memory of the people.”

dividuals like Maurice, and “com a resistência você pode pensar, discutir e refletir sobre os princípios democráticos como essencial para os direitos humanos para realmente funcionar” (2015).<sup>40</sup> These statements work to affirm that transitional justice did play a role in the creation of the Memorial da Resistência, and in this process spatial transitions were to be used as a form of reconciling with the past and dialoguing with the nation’s collective memory.

But I now return to the tensions present in this process. As Maurice noted, the building was originally modified or “cleaned up” for the creation of the Memorial da Liberdade under the direction of the Pinacoteca. Then, in 2006 began the movement to further transform and rename the space. On this process Maurice gave a very pragmatic analysis, yet one that also internally conflicts with his previous statement that the modification of the space was motivated by the desires of himself and other survivors:

o diretor da Pinacoteca que hoje é o Secretário da Cultura, Marcelo Araújo, ele também tinha a ideia de tornar o espaço carcerário em um museu. Por que? Porque ele é advogado e museólogo, e ele fez uma gestão na direção da Pinacoteca muito boa. Então o Marcelo Araújo, recebe o prédio. E por que ele recebe o prédio? Porque ele tinha muitas obras de arte lá na Pinacoteca e não tinha mais espaço lá e precisava de outro prédio, então o governo dá esse prédio pra ele. (2015).<sup>41</sup>

In the renovations the first floor was left for the Memorial, while the second through fourth floors were to house spill-over from the state art collection. This configuration remains today and is part of what complicates the experience of the space, and parallels my previous assertion that the creation of a memorial to the dictatorship that acknowledges the history of the

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<sup>40</sup> Translation: “With resistance you can think, discuss, and reflect about democratic principles as essential to the real functioning of human rights.”

<sup>41</sup> Translation: “the director of the Pinacoteca who is now the Secretary of Culture, Marcelo Araújo, had the idea of making the prison space into a museum. Why? Because he is a lawyer and museologist, and he did a good job of managing the Pinacoteca. So Marcelo Araújo received the building. And why did he get the building? Because he had many works of art there in the Pinacoteca and had no more space there and needed another building, and so the government gave him this building.”

DEOPS building has always been of secondary concern. It is helpful to place Maurice's statement in the greater timeline. It would seem that first and foremost the Pinacoteca needed more space to house its vast collection of artwork. The previous section showed how the creation of "cultural anchors" was central to the process of urban revitalization for the Luz area, and thus expanding the Pinacoteca's collection to the DEOPS building fits within this larger framework. Finally, recognizing the history of the building as a site of trauma seems to be of importance to the nation's larger transitional justice process only insofar as it could be actualized in the larger political and cultural market.

Kátia noted several times that the Memorial is a "espaço de representação," or a space of representation, but the version of the past that is represented here is selective at best, and has certainly done well to "liberate itself from the stigma of torture and human rights abuses." In our interviews Maurice, Kátia, and Maria Cristina all stated that the creative team decided not to focus on literal representations of torture or human rights abuses, and thus shifted their focus to resistance. But in this process the focus on resistance has oddly allowed for the general omission of many specific details regarding the building's history, and focuses more generally on collective resistance to the dictatorship by the Brazilian people. An introductory sign suggests that above all the space is dedicated to "as inspirações para a valorização da solidariedade" and "dos princípios democráticos."<sup>42</sup> The focus on "resistance" as a general theme works to generalize the memorial and shift focus away from human rights abuses. And given the context in which the space was created, this is perhaps not surprising, as the neoliberal philosophy necessarily conceives of memory and the market in opposition, and instead celebrates democracy as a precursor

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<sup>42</sup> Translation: "The inspiration for the valorization of solidarity" and "democratic principles"

to unimpeded capitalism. After seeing the space one is left with the sense that the human rights abuses of the past are condemned only insofar as they stymied the process of democratization and the opening of the capitalist market.

For the visitor the emphasis placed on creating a modern space rich with cultural capital creates a disorienting and ruptured experience not only of the space, but of its history and the memory of the dictatorship. Prior to arriving for my site visits it had been my understanding that the whole building was the “Memorial da Resistência,” and while this is how the space is generally referred to, that is misleading. As said, the Memorial is officially located only on the first floor, and consists of the 4 remodeled prison cells, a computer lab, and an interesting room with scale models of the building and historic timeline that focuses on the concept of political “resistance” in Brazil and the US from the beginning of the 19th century to 2009. There is ultimately little to see in the cells, which have all been repainted with faux graffiti from prisoners that was



**Image 8:** Cell 1 of the Memorial da Resistência (Youngs 2015)

re-inscribed onto the walls after the remodeling was complete.

The first cell is intended to show how the prisoners “lived” and has two mats on the floor, a toilet, a sink, and a mirror.

While at the muse-



**Image 9:** Cell 2 of the Memorial da Resistência (Youngs 2015)

um I overheard many visitors remark in the first cell that the space ultimately “didn’t seem that bad.” Thus, the physical modification of the space creates a heterotopic experience of history that

minimizes historic trauma

to the extent that the mantra of “never again” is nullified as the past as it is presented isn’t “that bad.” The other cells are equally peculiar: while I was there one had a strange art installation of white masks lining the walls; another contains a video installation of historic footage; and the final has seating on the periphery of the room with headphones where you can listen to survivor’s testimonies regarding the dictatorship, and in the middle of the room a single red rose in a plastic water bottle sits in a spotlight on a wooden crate.

The rest of the first floor is a



**Image 10:** Cell 3 of the Memorial da Resistência (Youngs 2015)

large cafe that makes sure patrons are aware of its lunch specials and free wifi. Located directly



**Image 11:** The upstairs galleries of the Memorial da Resistência (Youngs 2015).

across from the Memorial, I found the presence of the cafe to be distracting and deeply uncomfortable and could not bring myself to eat there. To my surprise this is where Maurice asked to conduct our

interview. As soon as you take the elevator to the upper floors you are immediately struck with the sensation of being in a completely different space. This is the heterotopic thirdspace where historic and physical narratives have collapsed into each other to create a place that is ideologically intangible and physically disorienting. The second and third floors are, as intended, completely modern art galleries. While I was there the galleries were showcasing an exhibit on the famed Brazilian painter Tarsila do Amaral, and another on “Gravura e Modernidade: dos anos 1920 aos anos 1960.”<sup>43</sup> Not only are the upper floors devoid of any mention of the dictatorship, they seem distinctly different in their moral and pedagogical aims.

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<sup>43</sup> Translation: “Engraving and Modernity: from 1920 to 1960”



Thus, for me, the extensive sanitization and cosmetic retouching of the former prison cells, alongside the presence of the Pinacoteca's art collection, makes the Memorial feel like a constructed exhibition space rather than the preserved presentation of a historic site of trauma. This created a feeling of disorientation and rupture when circulating in the space, and during my site observations numerous other individuals I observed vocally expressed confusion when they arrived on the upper floors to discover that the Memorial had effectively ended and they were now simply in an extension of the Pinacoteca. Maria Cristina noted in our interview that she had heard complaints of this experience, and the conflicts it created for the management, as “ninguém questiona a Pinacoteca por não falar sobre a memória do prédio e muitas pessoas questionam o Memorial em função da memória do prédio” but “eu nunca ouvi ninguém questionar porque a Pinacoteca, nas suas instalações ali no prédio, não fala da memória do prédio” (2015).<sup>44</sup> This statement further supports the sense of narrative and spatial rupture created by the space, suggesting that patrons essentially view the spaces as two different museums with two different responsibilities to the past.

Not only would I agree with Maria Cristina's statement, but also propose that this is a prime example of how the Memorial creates a heterotopic thirdspace in which the narratives of trauma and history have been reformulated to fit the exigencies of the neoliberal political economy. As seen in the previous chapter, this space was intentionally cleaned and remodeled in order for the past to be more palatable to middle class consumers, creating the “effectively enacted utopia” of history, to draw on Foucault. For visitors this creates a sense of commodification of

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<sup>44</sup> Translation: “no one questions the Pinacoteca for not talking about the memory of the building but many people question the Memorial due to the memory of the building” but “I've never heard anyone questioning the Pinacoteca, and their installations there in the building don't talk about the memory of the building.”

the past. The Memorial is taken as a historic artifact only to the extent that the modernist paintings on the floors above it are extolled as cultural artifacts for public consumption. In this configuration the physical ruins of the dictatorship sit literally under the weight of the nation's cultural patrimony, and history has been re-worked to fit around this artistic legacy, not the other way around. Although the Memorial may not have succeeded in revitalizing the Luz area and eradicating "Cracolândia," it has succeeded in the reformation of the past that memorializes and entombs a specific version of history. And in this process the divide between museum and memorial becomes inconsequential as both are subsumed within the larger experience of the fragmented circulation through history and space.

I will now shift my analysis of the museum versus memorial debate to the ex-ESMA/Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos in Buenos Aires. Unlike the Memorial, my interviews regarding the ESMA show little consensus over the proper terminology to use for the space, and present a sharp division between the opinions of the survivors of detention (Osvaldo and Carlos) and those of activists and government officials (Graciela and Abril). The opinions of Graciela and Abril are presented first primarily because Graciela was one of the contributors to the official "Propuesta para la reutilización del predio de Av. del Libertador 8151/8461 donde funcionara la Escuela Mecánica de la Armada y otros institutos militares" (Pierini 2004).<sup>45</sup> This choice is not to say that I personally give primacy to Graciela and Abril's opinions over that of the survivors, but as Graciela's has been institutionally codified as "official" it provides a useful starting point for analysis. This perspective shows how the physical and collective memory of the dictatorship is "officially" recognized, and how the "official" understanding of the ex-ESMA and the dicta-

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<sup>45</sup> Translation: "Proposal for the reuse of the building at Ave. del Liberator 8151/8461 where the Naval Mechanics School and other military institutions functioned."

torship conflicts with the sentiments of those who directly experienced its human rights abuses.

As the space is made up of so many different organisms the official description of the goals for the ex-ESMA are broad. The “Propuesta” that Graciela helped produce for the government in 2004 states that the goal of the transformation is to create a space “para la memoria, para los derechos humanos y para los valores democráticos” as well as creating a “un espacio de encuentro para la juventud, un nexo entre la ciudad y el río, un equipamiento metropolitano”<sup>46</sup> (Pierini 9). This description is interesting as it suggests that the Espacio Memoria is to serve not just a memorial function, but a function that will bridge the divide between the urban environment and nature. It is to serve a pedagogical function, to be considered as a public utility, and, oddly, to conjoin the urban and natural landscapes. This desire reflects the larger trends towards political and economic openings happening in Buenos Aires at this time, and in the process further “others” the geographic space of the ex-ESMA. It is meant to be not only a space for memory but an undefinable thirdspace of almost radical openness and constant activation.

While this openness may sound good on paper, the experience in practice is much different. Whether this “space for memory” can function separately from a museum or a memorial is precisely the questions that continue to drive controversy surrounding the space. Regarding the question of the museum versus the memorial, Graciela stated that the space “está como muy a la altura de sitios, o de museos, yo no le digo museo pero bueno, es como un sitio mas Europeo [...] Y esto es lo que queremos” (2015).<sup>47</sup> Although Graciela avoids categorizing the space as muse-

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<sup>46</sup> Translation: “for memory, for human rights, and for democratic values” as well as creating “a space of encounter for the youth, a nexus between the city and the river, and a metropolitan equipment”

<sup>47</sup> Translation: “it’s up to the status of sites, or museums, I wouldn’t say museums but okay, like European sites [...] and this is what we want.”

um she cites its similarity to ‘European spaces,’ which could either be a reference to the proliferation of memorial/museums spaces there, or the European legacy of the museum. Graciela also cited the refrain of “never again” as one of the grounding principles of the space: “‘Nunca más’ no es solamente para los desaparecidos, el ‘Nunca más’ también son para los casos de gatillo fácil, el ‘Nunca más’ también es para la trata de personas, el ‘Nunca más’ y este espacio son para todos” (2015).<sup>48</sup> The pedagogical and moral imperative of “never again” has been a key principle in the creation of the memorial museum and the universality of human rights. By situating the intent of the Espacio Memoria within the larger framework of human rights, Graciela gives nod to the temporal shift happening at the same time with the breakdown of neoliberalism in Argentina. Not only was this breakdown changing the urban landscape of Buenos Aires, but in the process permitted for the shift away from an economic and political ideology that sought to bring closure to the past, and instead reinvigorated a dialogue of the collective right to memory and to the city.

Similarly, Abril stated that “un sitio de memoria no es lo mismo que un museo” because “la concepción que tenemos de museo es una memoria estática, es una memoria del pasado, es algo que uno va, mira y recuerda, y para nosotros la memoria implica mas que esto, es una práctica activa en el presente”<sup>49</sup> (2015). In this Abril dismisses the immobilizing legacy of the museum-as-warehouse for cultural commodities, as well as the neoliberal penchant for finitude (or at least recycling) for the sake of economic progress. In her view, not only should the physical

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<sup>48</sup> Translation: “‘Never again’ is not only for the disappeared, ‘never again’ is also for the victims of shootings, ‘never again’ is for human trafficking, ‘never again’ and this space are for everyone.”

<sup>49</sup> Translation: “A site of memory is not the same as a museum” because “the conception of the museum that we have is of static memory, it’s a remembering of the past, it’s something that you go to, look at, and remember, and for us remembering implies more than this, it’s an active practice in the present.”

“holes in the urban fabric” be left open, they are to be constantly explored lest they suture themselves. For Abril and Graciela (and by extension the City), the space of the ex-ESMA is to be an active thirdspace that resists hegemonic impositions of meaning. This desire to leave the space open to public use and interpretation has certainly not gone without controversy. HIJOS, the group which Abril is a part of, is perhaps the clearest force in actively engaging with the ESMA as a site of resistance, and they themselves challenge the notions of what constitutes official or proper methods for remembering. HIJOS was embroiled in controversy a few years ago after they chose to host a neighborhood-wide barbecue on the grounds of the ESMA. To Abril and HIJOS, the recuperation of the space also meant that “se recuperan también con alegría y es que nosotros acá estamos comprometidos, estamos militando y estamos haciendo muchas de las cosas que nuestros compañeros le hubiese encantado hacer” (2015).<sup>50</sup> But to individuals like Carlos this decision seemed reminiscent of the type of erasure encouraged by the soccer games and swimming meets held there, and to which he scathingly condemned “es nuestro Auschwitz. No tendría un asado en Auschwitz” (2015).<sup>51</sup> Thus the tension begins to emerge: resisting any prescriptive hegemonic narrative for the ex-ESMA also leaves the space subject to interpretation, however inappropriate some might find it.

The debate over the ESMA barbecue serves as a good point to introduce the opinions of the survivors of detention I interviewed, Osvaldo and Carlos. I would like to be careful in separating these two sections so as not to suggest hierarchies of value or propriety. Objectively, there is no one correct answer for how either the Memorial da Resistência or the Espaço Memoria

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<sup>50</sup> Translation: “we also recovered it with joy and that’s what those of us here are committed to, we’re fighting and doing many of the things that our colleagues would loved to have done.”

<sup>51</sup> Translation: “it’s our Auschwitz. You wouldn’t have a barbecue at Auschwitz.”

should be used, regardless of the economic and political conditions they came about in. As is the inevitable trouble with memory and place making, no one solution will please everyone, and something will always be excluded. I do believe though that the voices of the survivors of detention and human rights abuses should be given primacy, and this unfortunately seem to have not been the case with the ex-ESMA.

Both Osvaldo and Carlos fiercely maintained that the space should never have been modified, and that by doing so the government blatantly ignored the desires of survivors. Osvaldo stated that,

todo el predio fue parte del centro clandestino de detención, no sólo el lugar propiamente dicho donde nosotros estuvimos secuestrados, que fue "el Casino de Oficiales." Entonces, nosotros sosteníamos que en ese predio no había que hacer nada y que tenía que ser sólo un sitio de memoria [...] y debía conservarse todo el predio como estaba (2015).<sup>52</sup>

Osvaldo's observation regarding the totality of the ESMA's campus is interesting when placed in comparison with the architectural and design decisions made at the Memorial da Resistência.

Like the ex-ESMA, one could easily argue that the totality of the former DEOPS building should be entombed as a site of trauma, and not just the prison cells, in the same way that all of the ESMA ought to be preserved, and not just the Casino de Oficiales. Yet this clearly did not happen at the Memorial, and is only partially the case at the ex-ESMA. While the entirety of the space remains intact, it is still subject to the plans of the various organizations in control. As juridical evidence, the Casino de Oficiales is preserved, yet as I have noted other buildings exist at the extremes of near decay or complete renovation, which creates a heterotopic experience of space and history. In the Thirdspace of the ESMA you are at once within the city and removed, within

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<sup>52</sup> Translation: "The entirety of the site was part of a clandestine detention center, not just the place where we were detained, which was the 'Casino de Oficiales.' So we believed that this site did not need to be anything and should only be a site of memory [...] the entirety of the site should be conserved as it was."

the architectural ruins of the past, and in the commodified ideals of the present. In this case, the lack of modification can, at times, be as disorienting as complete renovation.

While Carlos also advocated for the preservation of the space in-situ, he spoke a bit further in his interview on the differences between a museum and a memorial, and what he and other survivors had envisioned for the site of memory. Carlos stated that the original idea for the transformation of the ex-ESMA was:

un espacio para la memoria [...] no es lo mismo que un museo...un museo es un museo, pero un espacio para la memoria es una cosa muy diferente. Un museo tienen, también, una parte que abarca la memoria, pero también abarca una parte turístico, también abarca el valor de los objetos sobre el valor de las ideas. [...] En este caso, la idea, el concepto del museo es congelar la historia en este punto. En objetos y cosas. Un espacio de la memoria es un lugar que mueve las sensaciones, los pensamientos, pero produce en el visitante un afecto completamente diferente, que es de recibir conocimiento no a partir de los objetos, también a partir de lo relato (2015).<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps the only point on which my participants came close to reaching consensus is that the ex-ESMA should not be turned into a museum. While Graciela was more ambivalent regarding this point, both Abril and Carlos were critical of the museological imperative to preserve objects and spaces in a single definitive moment without room for reconsideration in the present. But Carlos and Osvaldo do differ in their desire to preserve the space as a historic artifact and place of reverence. He also resists the neoliberal impetus to commodify the past for sale on the market, or the development of tourist niches. His opinion reflects back to the pedagogical and moral imper-

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<sup>53</sup> Translation: “a space for memory [...] is not the same as a museum...a museum is a museum, but a space of memory is something very different. A museum has, also, a part that covers memory, but it also has a touristic part, and also places the value of objects over the value of ideas [...] In this case, the idea, the concept of a museum is to freeze history in this moment. In objects and things. A space of memory is a place that moves the senses, the thoughts, but also produces in the visitor a completely different affect, which is to receive knowledge not through objects, but through the story.”

ative for visiting and preserving sites of trauma as legitimate artifacts of history that can speak for themselves without the imposition of hegemonic narratives.

But Osvaldo further challenged the space's ability to speak for itself, because "la persona que entra en el predio general de la ESMA nadie le dice lo que ahí pasó" and furthermore

cuando se realiza un recital, cuando se pasa una película, cuando hay una charla debate, nadie le dice "señores estamos acá en este lugar donde fue un Centro Clandestino de Detención, de terror y de exterminio", es decir, hay carnaval, hay murgas y no, nadie les dice a los visitantes que es lo que ahí ha ocurrido (Osvaldo 2015).<sup>54</sup>

Thus, in the process of resisting the neoliberal commodification and recycling of the past, the Kirchner administration's desire for openness is also precariously predicated on the assumption of the ESMA's symbolic weight and mutual intelligibility in the collective memory of the city. While the open and fragmented space may do well for historic preservation, it is also seen to lack understanding and explanation. The lack of explanation was seen as both insensitive to the survivors of detention as well as presumes a collective sense of understanding regarding the narratives of the past.

Not surprisingly, another individual who had strong views on the museum aspect of the space was Tom. After his unsettling comparison of the Argentine and Chilean dictatorships, he stated that for the ESMA: se desperdician millones y millones de dólares para que? [...] y qué está en este "museo"? No hay artefactos. No hay nada pero mierda. Hay conciertos y películas y arte que no tiene nada que ver con la historia" (2015).<sup>55</sup> Admittedly, I found Tom's observation

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<sup>54</sup> Translation: "...because "no one tells the person who enters the general space of the ESMA what happened there" and furthermore "when you perform a recital, when you show a film, when there is a lecture discussion, no one says 'gentlemen we are here in this space where there was a Clandestine Detention Center of terror and extermination,' it's to say that there's carnivals, there's bands, and no one tells visitors what happened there."

<sup>55</sup> Translation: "they wasted millions and millions of dollars for what? [...] and what's there in this 'museum'? There aren't artifacts. There's nothing but crap. There are concerts and films and art that have nothing to do with the history."



surprising, as based on his thoughts on the disappearances and the “internal war” that was being fought, I assumed he would be one to advocate for the destruction of the ESMA or doubt the claims of human rights abuses occurring there. Instead, he presents a view that does well to encapsulate the heterotopic nature of the space that relegates it to an undefinable Thirdspace in both physicality and history. First, he doubts the validity of the “museum” for it lacks artifacts, but does not elaborate on what exactly should or would be considered a legitimate artifact, and from this one can infer that the site itself does not hold up as an artifact to him. At the same time, he lambasts the renovation and reclamation efforts of places like the Centro Cultural Harolodo Conti which hold weekly concerts and film screenings (as I receive their emails I will agree that the majority of the time the weekly programming has no thematic relevance to the dictatorship). For Tom, the ex-ESMA paradoxically holds historic value yet through its programming cannot in itself be seen as a legitimate artifact of trauma or history.

I choose to end on this point to demonstrate how situating space on the divide between museum and memorial, or trying to encapsulate both, does not necessarily provide more clarity, and instead may lead to perpetual fragmentation and ambiguity. That the Memorial da Resistência has definitively declared itself to be a memorial and museum does not mean that the narrative of the past is made any clearer. In fact, the events that are memorialized are selective and narrow, and the ‘artifacts’ of the museum have been so thoroughly reconstructed and modified as to blur the line entirely between preservation and reconstruction. The openness of the ex-ESMA is a dramatically different alternative that is not without consequence. For the survivors of detention the memorial aspect has been desecrated by the government’s desire to have this be a fluid public space, which permits things like HIJOS’ barbecue to happen. And all individuals resist the final-

izing nature of the museum. These observations provide a useful foray into the next section regarding the experience of unfamiliarity and absence.

### Absence and Unfamiliarity

One quality of the heterotopic Thirdspace is that it unsettles spatiotemporal boundaries and creates spaces of difference and otherness. The themes of unfamiliarity, otherness, and absence reoccurred throughout my interviews, and as seen in the previous section the Memorial and the Espacio are, in many ways, best understood by what they are not or what they lack. For the survivor of detention in both countries—Maurice, Osvaldo, and Carlos—there was a sense of immense unfamiliarity upon encountering the modified Memorial da Liberdade and the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos for the first time since their imprisonments there. As noted previously, although Maurice was directly involved in the creative process for the redesign of the Memorial da Liberdade into the Memorial da Resistência, when he first encountered the Memorial da Liberdade he remarked that “não tinha nenhuma explicação, não tinha nada,” it has no explanation, nothing. It was unclear whether the nothingness he described referred to a literal lack of content or a metaphorical absence caused by the government’s cleaning and modification of the space. Regardless, in this encounter a spatial and memory void appears. The city government saw an opening and liberation through explicitly negating the physical and historical narrative of the space, and in this process “othered” the history that Maurice himself lived through. Commodification and sanitization had rendered the physical space of Maurice’s past unrecognizable. His encounter with the unfamiliar is part of what makes the Memorial a heterotopic Thirdspace, as it is a physical location where disparate understandings of history have col-

lapsed into one, and it is no longer a space of representation or interpretation, but of imposed meaning.

Interestingly, Maria Cristina also recognized the heterotic otherness of the Memorial and suggested that this condition has been almost mythically fated throughout the building's history, because it was,

um prédio que foi feito no período de grande riqueza do estado de São Paulo para uma finalidade foi abandonado em função da queda econômica, depois que assumiu esse outro papel que por sua vez também foi abandonado. Então é um prédio que acho que tem uma história de abandono cíclica. Por aí já vejo uma marca desse prédio, desse edifício (2015).<sup>56</sup>

The building is, according to Maria Cristina, “marked” throughout its history by the condition of abandonment and failures of use, which portends a bleak future for the Memorial. And this also suggests that the space, like any, has always been subject to the exigencies of the market and does not hold any intrinsic value. Without reading too much into this prognostication, I would give credence to her observation that the history of the DEOPS building has indelibly marked it as a space of otherness, and hopefully perhaps now the Memorial will close this cycle of open abandonment.

Osvaldo and Carlos noted the same sense of encountering the unrecognizable for themselves and others. Osvaldo stated that “Esos sobrevivientes ya no pueden reconocer el lugar donde estuvieron porque está tan cambiado, transformado cada uno de los lugares donde estuvi-

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<sup>56</sup> Translation: “a building that was built in the richest period of the state of São Paulo for a specific purpose was abandoned due to the economic downturn, after that it took on another role which in turn was also abandoned. So it's a building that I think has a history of cyclical abandonment. So I see a mark on this building, this space.”

mos secuestrados, que ya no es posible darse cuenta de los lugares” (2015).<sup>57</sup> Carlos told the story of his friend and vocal advocate for survivors of the ESMA, Victor Basterra, who

entro do días después de la inauguración del edificio y su palabra fueron ‘este lugar no lo reconozco.’ Y mas dijo, le preguntó a una persona por donde se entra aquí porque no tenía noción [...] ahora eso tá modificado. Entonces, este compañero, Victor, le preguntó a la gente que estaba allí, por donde se entra aquí? Una persona que estuvo dentro por cuatro años detenido y no reconoce (2015).<sup>58</sup>

He further stated that these modifications “este nos provocan una situación de mucha tristeza, y mucha congoja...es un avasallamiento a nuestro historia porque a nadie lo consultaron acerca de esto” (Carlos 2015).<sup>59</sup> Thus, for Carlos, Osvaldo, and Victor even the few modifications that were made to the ex-ESMA were enough to render their collective history unrecognizable. These statements reveal that beyond simply being physically modified, for these survivors the Espacio Memoria is seen as a place of absence and exclusion, where their historic and spatial memory is simply ignored. It would seem that for all its cosmetic retouching the Memorial did well to bring survivors in to the design process, while Carlos and Osvaldo felt utterly excluded.

In our interview Graciela suggested a different account, stating that those working for the government on the project “tuvimos que hacer un equilibrio muy grande con la gente que estuvo desaparecida ahí adentro, porque la gente que estuvo desaparecida, los sobrevivientes, no están

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<sup>57</sup> Translation: “those survivors can no longer recognize the place where they were [detained] because it is so changed, they transformed each of the places where we were detained and it’s no longer possible to recognize those places.”

<sup>58</sup> Translation: “entered two days after the official inauguration of the building and his statement was ‘I don’t recognize this place.’ And more, he asked a person there where to enter because he didn’t have any clue [...] it was so changed. So, this friend, Victor, asked the people there where to enter. A person who was inside detained for four years and couldn’t recognize it.”

<sup>59</sup> Translation: “this caused a situation of great sadness and grief for us... it’s an enslavement of our history because no one consulted us about this.”

de acordo” (2015).<sup>60</sup> This suggests that not only were the survivors more involved in the design process, but that they are somehow in agreement or have literally reached “balance” or “equilibrium” with regards to the space’s use. That she would use “equilibrium” instead of “agreement” is an interesting choice, as it suggests reaching homeostasis between two opposing forces, as opposed to the action of dialogue and compromise. And furthermore, any conjecture on the part of the survivors would seem to disrupt the “balance” that the government and society are supposed to have reached.

Graciela is not the only official to negate the otherness that the survivors of detention experienced at these sites of trauma. While Maria Cristina suggested that the Memorial had a permanent “mark” over it that has historically rendered it a place of oblivion and abandonment, Kátia saw the space very differently. Kátia stated that

você pode ver que esta parte da cidade que é conhecida como Cracolândia é um lugar onde as pessoas não vêm naturalmente. Assim, os números provam que o Memorial é, de facto, inserido no contexto da cidade, e é reconhecido e independentemente do que esta região é, as pessoas ainda vêm aqui (2015).<sup>61</sup>

Based solely on my own observations I would challenge Kátia’s assertion that the Memorial is smoothly and naturally integrated in the Luz area. It is a place of otherness on the inside and the outside. I challenge the success of the city’s urban reform efforts, and indeed Kátia agrees here, but because of that I find it a stretch to say that it is physically inserted into the context of the city. The building stands out in the impoverished area and the interior is a disorienting collision

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<sup>60</sup> Translation: “we had to reach a great equilibrium with the individuals who were disappeared inside, because the people who were disappeared, the survivors, were not in agreement.”

<sup>61</sup> Translation: “you can see that this part of the city known as Cracolândia is a place where people don’t naturally come. Despite this, the numbers prove that the Memorial is, in fact, inserted in the context of the city, and is recognized independently of this region, and that people come here.”

of history, trauma, recreation, and high art. Instead, what the Memorial is successfully inserted into is the city's larger cultural market in which history and space are both a commodity.

### Conclusion:

In this section I hope it has become clear how the complicated creation processes of both the Memorial and the Espacio Memoria have contributed to creating physical spaces of otherness, unfamiliarity, and absence that resist any easy categorization. The prescriptive nature of the Memorial allows it to function as both a memorial and museum, but in the process has contributed to the sanitization of both physical and cultural history in the service of urban renewal and the commodification of memory. As an undefined "site of memory" the Espacio Memoria resists the finitude of the museum, but in its broadness has alienated survivors of detention and allowed the space to function almost without an explicit pedagogical agenda for visitors. They are both spaces where different narratives of space, time, and memory all collide and yet, in their contradictions, exist simultaneously.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Each week out of the four that I worked at the Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos, the entire campus was evacuated for bomb threats. Fortunately, there are not many people working onsite daily—few enough that the large Starbucks Coffee down the street from the space could accommodate our frustrated descent upon them. Many of the employees I spoke with said that the bomb threats were motivated by the ESMA's consideration as evidence in the ongoing trials, while others wrote them off as inconvenient but ultimately harmless pranks. I personally agree with the former belief and took the threats seriously, although I have refrained from mentioning them yet in my narrative as I could not find the appropriate place that did not risk simply adding shock value. Yet at the same time the repeated attempts at distraction point up how the space continues to serve as a site of resistance and conflict. While sitting at the Starbucks I often thought about the strip of stores located directly across from the ESMA, including a boutique health-foods store, a nail salon, and an exorbitantly overpriced Reebok Cross-fit gym.

Admittedly, I often thought of going to the Reebok gym while the space was under evacuation, and then dissuaded myself as I found it too inappropriate, somehow feeling that to do so would be perpetuating the legacy of complacency that has so long plagued the history of the space. Would going for a jog on the treadmill across the street be any different than the high schoolers who played soccer on the ESMA's grounds? Objectively, yes. But I refrained as I was still, in my mind, grappling with the question of where spaces of memory begin and end for cities and societies that have experienced such sweeping tragedy. And yet I continued to sit at the Starbucks. Why I mention this anecdote here is because each time I and the employees of the ESMA were evacuated and took shelter in Starbucks, I was reminded of how quickly and fright-

eningly the legacy of terror can become embedded into the landscape of the ordinary. A question I have attempted to grapple with throughout this work is that of how and why sites of trauma are preserved, and what does this preservation mean for the future.

I chose the Memorial da Resistência and the ex-ESMA as my research sites precisely because their histories are complicated and remain deeply unsettled. As noted, there exist a multitude of museums throughout Latin America and elsewhere devoted to the commemoration of past atrocities, as well as a growing number of memorial museums located in sites of trauma. In all of these cases history remains fragmented and incomplete and voices unheard. But what I hope to have shown here is that despite the divergent paths that Brazil and Argentina have taken towards economic policy and transitional justice, and the differing aesthetic styles and economic development strategies of the Memorial and the Espacio Memoria, these spaces share important similarities that speak to the perhaps insurmountable challenge of ever completely reconciling with the past.

I began this work by outlining the historic and economic trajectories of Brazil and Argentina over the past 50 or so years, in order to discuss how both turned to memory/memorial projects in the late 1990's/ early 2000's in a period of neoliberal economic crisis. For Brazil, this meant an adoption of neoliberal policies that have resulted in the growing privatization and fragmentation of the city. For the Memorial, this meant its adoption as a pet project of the government to fuel larger urban renewal efforts and cultural revitalization. In Argentina, the near economic collapse under Menem meant a period of radical opening for the city and a resistance of privatization and foreign economic influence. In this process, Kirchner took up the torch of



human rights and the ESMA was reclaimed from the Navy as a symbol of national unity, urban integration, and ongoing dialogue with the past.

While the similar economic conditions resulted in two very different political and memorial climates, as I hope to have shown, neither space is perfect in its use or form, yet have served the political economies in which they were created. Within both the sanitized and commodified space of the Memorial and the open and unfinished campus of the ex-ESMA, time, space, and history collapse into one space. This phenomenon creates a heterotopic Thirdspace, for the version of history presented cannot be definitively pinned down. This fact was illustrated in my subject's debates over how to name and categorize each space, and the sensation of unfamiliarity, absence, and oblivion that each space engendered for the survivors of detention. They are spaces that are aberrations in their urban environments and also completely banal. They are spaces that cabdrivers cannot recognize, yet others want blown-up. They are unsettling to the point that it made my stomach churn to drink coffee with Maurice at the cafe in the Memorial, but did not drinking coffee at the Starbucks across from the ESMA.

This statement is not necessarily about whether I am morally flawed for being able to reconcile one act and not the other, but rather questions the limitations of power and influence that these sites of memory and trauma can have. What I hope to have presented here is not simply an aesthetic critique of the process of historic preservation or renovation, but rather an exploration of the difficulty of using space as a vehicle for historic reconciliation and narration. Furthermore I hope to have also recognized the ongoing dialectical and ideological conflicts that exist within the political economy of memory making. Meaning, the ways in which economics, political agendas, and transitional justice measures push and pull together in shaping the collective

memory of a post-authoritarian society. The spaces I took into consideration are can be seen as one physical manifestation of this process, and they both continue to exist as sites of resistance and conflict. For others working in sites of trauma, memorials, and museums in general, I hope this work has helped to illuminate how all must be considered delicately as reflections of the larger political economy in which they are created, and in this process who and what version of history is given primacy.

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