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Remembering Violent Pasts in Argentina and Chile: an Exploration of Diverging Memorial Landscapes

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Remembering Violent Pasts in Argentina and Chile:
An Exploration of Diverging Memorial Landscapes



Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Abstract

What can explain Argentina and Chile's post-dictatorial divergence in modes of memorializing violent pasts, considering they underwent similar brutal dictatorships and essentially simultaneous transitions to democracy? While in Argentina, public memorials convey a sense of **retribution** toward the old regime; in Chile, these memorials emphasize **reconciliation** and a desire to move on from past violence. Looking beyond differences in their democratic transitions and the state of their economies pre- and post-dictatorship, this project identifies activism of human rights organizations as the primary variable for understanding different textures in the politics of memorializing in Argentina and Chile. In Argentina, the politics of memorialization were motivated by the desire to bring justice and accountability to the old regime, whereas in Chile the activism of social movements was principally concerned with exposing the crimes of the dictatorship as a means to create a unified narrative of the past.

Introduction

Establishing monuments and memorials in public landscapes out of violent pasts affects nations' historical, political, and social memory. For nations that experienced state-sponsored terrorism, memorials can contain political and social value by conveying messages of overcoming violent pasts and a commitment to political stability and the strengthening of democracy. They can also be important pieces of social memory; to recognize loss and honor victims by becoming physically embedded into the state's landscape. Memorials' relationships between the political and social often present conflict between governments and social movements in their struggle to right wrongs, keep memories alive, and to "never again" repeat the atrocities of their pasts.

Specifically in Argentina, memorials, for the most part, seek to respond to the method of retribution, and in Chile, they embody reconciliation. Despite what the neighboring countries have in common, including the demolition of democracy, violent dictatorships, and democratic transitions, Argentina and Chile developed distinct memorial landscapes. This project explores the deep relationships between the nature of the activism of human rights groups and the governments of Argentina and Chile, analyzing how human rights groups transform the textures of public memorials and reconfigure how retribution and reconciliation are used in public sites of memory.

Argentina is famous for the success of their far-reaching international human rights movement, human rights legislation, and a strong presence of public memorials. In Chile, a persistent human rights movement has not come to fruition, at least not in the same degree as in Argentina. However, there is something deeper to be analyzed about how the texture of

memorialization has been altered by the human rights movement, rather than how successful the movement has been in each country. Although not as apparent, defining texture as the characteristics, perceptions, and essence of memorials allows for the analyzation of the complicated concepts of memorialization, including authorship, response, and public reach in the formation of public monuments and memorials. Attached to Argentina's retribution and Chile's reconciliation comes the demands of human rights groups seeking to create political change, use their agendas, and affect how memorials are defined and exhibited in the public landscape.

Emerging out of the infamous Dirty War during the 1970s and 1980s, Argentina developed the use of retribution; human rights organizations demanded the government to acknowledge the atrocities of the Dirty War and hold those accountable for the detainment, torturing, and killing, of tens of thousands of political left "dissidents." Approximately nine thousand cases were documented in *Nunca Más: Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (1984), but human rights organizations estimate the total number of victims to be thirty thousand, due to the wide-spread disappearances of Argentines who remain unaccounted for.¹

Through the use of trials and truth commissions, and the *nunca más*, or "never again" sentiment, Argentina's human rights movement became a monumental and symbolic force of accountability and retribution, altering conditions for public memorials and reclaiming public sites once controlled by the dictatorship. While Argentina's neighbor, Chile, prefers reconciliation to move forward, Argentina's human rights movement has proven to refute the possibility of "forgetting" and putting memories to "rest." Public sites of memory in Argentina

¹ Silvia Roxana Tandeciarz, *Citizens of Memory: Affect, Representation, and Human Rights in Postdictatorship Argentina* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2017), 151.

² Cath Collins, "Politics of Prosecutions," in *The Politics of Memory in Chile*, ed. Cath Collins, Katherine Hite, Alfredo Joignant (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 63.

are thus due to and texturely affected by, the often contentious relationships between human rights groups and the Argentine government.

Chile, in contrast, implemented modes of reconciliation in the years following Pinochet's dictatorship. From 1973 to 1990, at least 32,000 people were murdered or disappeared for political reasons, with almost 40,000 more imprisoned and tortured.² Chile was thrust into the international spotlight by the memorable London arrest of Pinochet, returning him back to the country where he would live the rest of his days under governmental protections. While Chile's human rights movement was hindered by the long silences immediately following the dictatorship, so-called memory silences were awakened by Pinochet's return, creating a "memory boom" and a more unified narrative between the government and human rights organizations adopting methods of reconciliation in order to move forward from the past violence. Chile adopted an overwhelmingly nostalgic commemorative process comprised of the collective historical memory of the quick destruction of their egalitarian society, creating a stark difference in their pre and post-dictatorial periods.³ This narrative created memorials, monuments, and museums predominately sanctioned by the state and reflective of reconciliation tropes, including a focus on survivors and a unified message of defending human rights and democracy to never again let the past repeat itself.

In this study, I contend that the question of diverging memorial landscapes is best analyzed through the role of human rights organizations, which significantly transformed the relationship between the state, the public, and the meanings and perceptions of memorials in society. Through examples of political action led by human rights organizations, like Argentina's

² Cath Collins, "Politics of Prosecutions," in *The Politics of Memory in Chile*, ed. Cath Collins, Katherine Hite, Alfredo Joignant (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 63.

³ Katherine Hite, "The inter-generational transmission of grief," in *Politics and the Art of Commemoration: Memorials to struggle in Latin America and Spain*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 79.

Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, grassroots organizing led to the preservation of the notorious ESMA facility, the largest clandestine detention, torture, and killing center during the Dirty War. Preservation of the site was largely influenced by the methods of retribution and accountability prevalent during the ESMA trials, but predominantly due to the activism of human rights groups; to keep haunting memories of the past alive by the preservation of its very walls, and demanding a sense of responsibility from the government. In Paine, Chile, a small rural community largely disappeared by the dictatorship, a different aspect of texture is present; the agenda of human rights groups and community members involved in its implementation utilized reconciliation through a focus on surviving family members of the disappeared.

A central component in understanding the role of the human rights movement in Argentina and Chile's memorialization of the past is how human rights activists employed different strategies of "framing" their activism. The argument of "framing" comes from the portion of the social movement literature that suggests "collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization."⁴ In particular, social movements construct "interpretive frames"⁵ that aim to find cultural resonance with the government and the culture at large.⁶ This argument is highlighted in this study by deconstructing the divergent nature of the demands that the human rights movements in Argentina and Chile made of their respective governments as well the messages that these movements conveyed to society at large. In Argentina, social movements'

⁴ Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26, no. 1 (2000): 614, accessed April 28, 2018. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.611.

⁵ Francesca Polletta and M. Kai Ho, "Frames and Their Consequences," ed. Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly, *Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* 190 (2006), accessed April 28, 2018. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270439.003.0010.

⁶ Hank Johnston and John A. Noakes, eds, *Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

demands sought, first and foremost, truth-seeking, justice, reparations, and a direct acknowledgement by the government for past atrocities. In Chile, by contrast, social movement activism about the past was less concerned with retribution against the old regime and placed greater emphasis on memorialization that would facilitate healing the wounds of the past.

In Argentina's Parque de la Memoria, the park's texture is widely influenced by state-sanctioned commemoration coupled with disagreement by human rights organizations who resist state involvement as contributing to "memory amnesia" and closing the door on the past. Installations in the park reflect a more experimental and somewhat incomplete experience; artists involved use methods of "counter-memorials" that address this contestation, stemming from commemoration tropes of the human rights movement. On the other end, the Chilean state had large control over the Museum of Memory and Human Rights, in which Michelle Bachelet aimed to address the importance of democracy and the promotion of human rights under the national narrative of reconciliation. Exhibits in this museum are primarily focused on human rights work and exposing abuses, but its real backbone is the archival evidence provided by human rights organizations.

The study is organized as follows. In the first section, I will explore two alternative explanations to my own for how memory politics in Argentina and Chile evolved into paradigmatic examples of retribution and reconciliation, respectively: the role of the transition and the state of the economy around the time of the transition. I then explore, separately, the ways in which social movement activism is intertwined in the issues surrounding the institutionalization of memory; including grassroots organizing to preserve notorious detention centers, truth commissions and trials, and archiving evidence. In the third section, I delve into how human rights activism reclaims the streets and recovers sites of memory by using methods

of counter-memorialization and community-driven projects. Lastly, in the conclusion, I look at how human rights activism and memorialization is universal; through looking at the history of memory studies and connecting Argentina and Chile's cases of retribution and reconciliation to memorialization in Germany after the Holocaust and apartheid in South Africa.

Memory in Conversation

There are a number of compelling explanations for why memory politics in Argentina and Chile developed different modes of memorialization and varying textures, beginning with diverging democratic transitions. Historical memory is a discernible element of democratic transitions. It requires the truth to be uncovered through memory and simultaneously depends on both the state and the public to nationalize its sentiment. In both democratic transitions, Argentina and Chile deviate on how historical memory is represented and exercised in society and in commemorative practices. In Chile, there was a sense of division between the social-historical memory and the history the Pinochet regime exploited. Transition presidents like Patricio Aylwin and Michelle Bachelet issued state recognition of the atrocities of the past, implemented commissions, and created memorials to further enhance historical memory in the framework of reconciliation. In Argentina, trials were the main mode of implementing retribution and accountability, under the narrative of “memoria, verdad, justicia” (memory, truth, justice.) This transitional element is in contrast to Chile, who did not utilize modes of accountability and justice through extensive trials like in Argentina.

A. Alternative Explanation 1: Transitions to Democracy

Chile has been a society profoundly divided about the facts and meaning of what transpired in 1973 under the dictatorship, yet widely aware that the crisis of 1973 was foundational for future governments to uphold and maintain democracy. The military had a large reception of support, which remade political, economic, and social life. The military’s denial of

the state terror that included detention camps, executions, disappearances of citizens, and the spread of misinformation about the atrocities they employed, further enhanced divisions in society. In 1989, when Augusto Pinochet was finally democratically removed from the presidency, he ensured his power and freedom would stay intact under his Constitution of 1980. The government was not “rid” of Pinochet during this transition, as he made deliberate moves, such as remaining the leader of the army for eight more years, making the military autonomous outside of presidential and civilian control, and ensuring his protection under the amnesty laws by filling the Supreme Court, Senate, and military with loyalists. Although there were democratic elections in 1989 giving Patricio Aylwin the presidency, he could not try to create a peaceful transition to civilian rule if the system that was left to him was essentially undemocratic. For this reason, Aylwin decided to uncover the truth; by creating the first truth commission in Chile (Rettig commission 1990-1991), reburying Allende, and establishing memorials.⁷

In 1998, the same year Pinochet stepped down from the commander of the army to remain in the position of “senator for life,” he was arrested in London after traveling for back surgery. Pinochet’s infamous return to Chile meant thrusting him back into the international spotlight, and Chile’s democratic transition and the government were faced with reopening the issue of the disappeared. This case revitalized Chilean and international human rights movements, and although he was never punished for his crimes due to being unfit to stand trial, the power he desired to hold onto deteriorated as Chile looked for ways to confront the past.

Regardless of the democratic elections held in 1990 and transition to democracy in Chile, Pinochet and his supporters enjoyed continued power and impunity under “protected

⁷ Amy Sodaro, “The Museum of Memory and Human rights: A Living Museum of Chile’s Memory,” in *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the politics of Past Violence*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 114.

democracy.” Because of this deliberate move to maintain positions of power, where many of Pinochet’s supporters maintained positions in the government and military, the influence of the right and the military did not thoroughly curtail throughout the transition. The Amnesty law of 1978 was a radical attempt to protect the regime by aiming to eradicate the political crimes committed from 1973 to 1978 from historical memory, while also safeguarding those who committed the crimes from prosecution. The denial and misinformation campaigns created by the military regime and its supporters was deep-rooted in Chilean society prior to the official transition. Although evidence of “disappeared” bodies were appearing around the countryside as early as 1978,⁸ which validated the claims and memories of the citizens, the denial and misinformation campaign from the dictatorship provided a different historical memory. Knowing what *really* happened thus became a major part of Chile’s transitional period, as the country’s democratic opposition embraced memory to try to uncover the realities of the past and aimed to make sense out of the conflicts between a historical memory created by the authoritarian government and the “historia oficial.”

The distinct transitional period between 1990-2010 was dominated by social memory, which produced a changing force in politics and public policy. Their agenda was shaped by seeking to make meaning out of the unstable duration of Allende’s Popular Unity government and of the fundamental human rights abuses out of the Pinochet dictatorship. Framing how Pinochet’s return to the country along with how the government would determine the state violence of the dictatorship was essential to national memory. However, this period was also met with “taboos” and “an aversion to the open expression of differences normal in a stable

⁸ Alexander Wilde, “A Season of Memory,” in *The Politics of Memory in Chile*, ed. Cath Collins, Katherine Hite, Alfredo Joignant (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2013), 35.

democracy.”⁹ Divided historical memory was framed in two different ways; the Rettig report aimed to address the human rights abuses inflicted on Chileans by the dictatorship as undeniable violations, and the armed forces, the Supreme Court, and the political right rejected the report entirely. These “taboos” and silences of the dictatorship had to be reopened, and under the government of Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle the ad hoc body, the Mesa de Diálogo (Human Rights Roundtable 1999-2000) was created, opening up a discussion specifically on the disappeared of the dictatorship. The subsequent government of Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006) created another truth commission, the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture, known as the Valech Commission (2003-2004), to examine other human rights abuses. The once “taboo” discussions on the violations of the dictatorship were brought forward, and Chile began transitioning from unspoken memories to an overwhelming period of uncovering the past atrocities. This theme continued through the Bachelet presidency, especially during her 2006-2010 term, when the executive gave support to judicial prosecutions and broadened memorial programs to victims of the dictatorship, including the inauguration in 2010 of the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago.

Chileans were reintroduced to the figure that had rewritten their history and lived on for the first sixteen years of their democratic transition. They were repeatedly reminded of the brutal torture and disappearances of their family and friends and faced dark truths of their past in order to determine that their future had to be different. The judicial truths; cases and individuals brought before the courts via processes of investigation, prosecution, and trial, and through the media and into the national consciousness, altered the Chilean past.¹⁰ Furthermore, hundreds of individual cases and many stages of legal proceedings rewrote Chile’s history and historical

⁹ Wilde, 33.

¹⁰ Ibid., 39.

memory. The defining factor of Chile's 20-year long transition can be seen as the agenda of the transitional presidents and how their policies helped reconstitute and shape national memory. Their agenda was intertwined with denial campaigns from the dictatorship, how to deal with Pinochet's return to the country, how to prosecute human rights offenders, and how to meet the demands of the public. Through various agenda, came different approaches to the meaning of memory. In the mid-1990s, the human rights movement had been kept at arm's length, and the agenda was focused on truth and justice rather than memory and memorials.¹¹ In the early 2000s, on the 30th anniversary of the coup, the past was revived again through extensive media coverage and the human rights movement continuing to seek truth and justice through the courts. The Lagos and Bachelet governments thought about how the past should be reconstructed and made a more coherent policy, including the remarkable growth of *official* memorialization.

Argentina's Transition

In the aftermath of Argentina's Dirty War, the transition government aimed to make institutional changes to try those responsible for the horrific crimes committed by the military government in the 70's and 80's. However, this period was simultaneously met with a decade of "*políticas de olvido*" or 'politics of forgetting' including laws that gave amnesty to military officials that had been sentenced before 1986, which was agreed upon by the state to ensure national security, economic security, and progress. It was not until public confessions of military officials came forward, like that of Adolfo Scilingo in 1995, which sparked the conversation of memory to be reawakened.

After the fall of the military regime due to the failed Falklands war, the transitional government of 1983 did everything they could to construct a national narrative around the idea

¹¹ Ibid., 47.

of the “two demons,” theory; a narrative revolving around the political violence that occurred on both the right and left political party sides. The transitional government’s narrative greatly exaggerated the strength and violence of the insurgent forces of the Montoneros, the People’s Revolutionary Army, and other small leftist groups rooted in Peronism. This narrative suggested that both sides were fighting a war, and the military continued to deny their actions were against the law and wanted to cast a narrative of their victory of the left. The military went on a decade-long campaign of public denial, however, massive traumatic experiences cannot be silenced indefinitely and silence does not erase the violence that occurred.

Argentina’s transition is known for trials and truth commissions that reawakened silences by witnesses and the government, and demanded accountability for the actions of Dirty War perpetrators. Argentina’s trails of ex-perpetrators, initiated by the presidency of Raúl Alfonsín in 1983, marked the restoration of democracy. He installed the National Commission on the Disappeared (CONADEP), with the mission of seeking the truth, investigating crimes, and legally recognizing the abuses of the Videla regime. This commission would take testimony from victims of abduction, torture, and from families and friends of *desaparecidos*, issuing a system with a focus on accountability and justice and not about reconciling the atrocities of the past. CONADEP’s legendary and extensive report known as *Nunca Más* was published in 1984 and sold to the Argentine public, documenting 8,960 *desaparecidos*¹² and providing the public with tangible evidence and confirmation of the violence that occurred.

Alfonsín issued beginning on April 22, 1985, that nine ex-commanders of the regime would be tried in court, and on December 9, 1985, Videla and his prime architect, Admiral Massera, were sentenced to life in prison, the country’s most severe form of punishment. With the severity of these trials weighing on the country and the functions of society, Alfonsín issued

¹² Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 15.

the notorious Due Obedience and Final Point laws, aimed to alleviate the potentially damaging effects of lengthy trials.¹³ These laws proved to be a double-edged sword; the Due Obedience law allowed for lower-ranking officers who claimed they were only ‘following orders’ to not be tried in court. The Final Point law created a cut-off date for all trials pertaining to the Dirty War, therefore dropping many cases that could have helped put away perpetrators. These same laws would ultimately become a hindrance to memorialization efforts for years to come.

What makes the trials of the transitional era so intrinsic to Argentina, is the way denial tactics from the military, who continued to promote their narrative through the transition, uprooted silenced memories in the public after official reports came forward. Argentina used the transitional period to set memory in a legal framework and to set precedent for the future, never allowing the past to repeat itself. While the transition to democracy allowed for memory to resurface and be acknowledged, the human rights movement mobilized to demand truth and justice from the government. They transformed memorials and commemoration projects by defying traditional modes of memorialization and preserving sites used by the old regime in order to keep memories alive.

B. Alternative Explanation 2: the Economy

Reconciling the past in order to move forward can also be explained by Chile’s economic and social measures that arose out of Allende’s presidency. The majority of Chile’s economic growth and stability came from Chile’s copper mines, and in the 1950s and 1960s, they were predominantly owned by the United States. Additionally, tax revenues from the mines expanded

¹³ Ibid., 16.

the industrialization of the public sector, concentrating Chile's population in urban areas.¹⁴ However, by 1970, a quarter of Chilean industry was still controlled by foreign investors, and the country's unemployment, inequality, and poverty rates were rising.¹⁵ Allende and his Popular Unity coalition was able to appeal to the masses of the poor as the country was under pressure from being a country rich in copper, but also failing to incorporate the needs of its people. He insisted the public oppose U.S. political and economic dominance in Latin America and demanded to nationalize copper for the betterment the poor.

While Chile's cities were progressive, the agrarian sector in the late 1960s remained ineffective, with the majority of its inactive farmland controlled by a few elite families.¹⁶ President Frei legalized rural organizing in attempt to bring about land reform, but it only introduced varying political sentiments and alarm for the landowning elite. As Katherine Hite suggests in her work on the politics of memory, "In 1967, the Chilean landowning class first experienced under Frei what to this day would become its most resonant traumatic collective memory: expropriation."¹⁷ For the elite, this expropriation did become a nightmare as rural organizing became legal and the poor, communist, and socialist left gained their political footholds. The deep-rooted problems surrounding the prohibition of rural unionizing in the past and the contention with the political elite came forward during the time of Allende's election. Landholding for the Chilean elite contained extensive political and cultural significance. With the onset of land reform under Frei, agricultural working families had access to peasant cooperatives and joined in politics. But the redistribution of land and power intensified conflict

¹⁴ Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration*, 66.

¹⁵ Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 35.

¹⁶ Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration*, 66.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 67

in Chile, between not only the right and left, but also within radical left parties and coalitions.¹⁸ Aiming to combat these issues once elected, Allende intended to increase land reform and push the grassroots-level political left to organize. With the implementation of reforms, Allende was giving hope to poor communities that did not participate in politics let alone have a history in progressive policies.

Due to the economic reforms and the aim to create a new economy, and therefore a ‘new Chile,’ an argument can be made that these implementations alter memorialization in Chile. The possibility of land reform and giving the disenfranchised more power in both the economy and in politics, greatly heightened aggregations and polarized political sides. Furthermore, post-dictatorship, Chile experienced economic success. The Concertación government, a coalition of center-left parties created in the 1990’s aimed to keep right-wing opposition parties at bay, is usually credited for this. The nation’s groundwork for modernization was laid by such land reforms proposed by Pinochet’s predecessors under democratic rule, but also allowed for the military regime to bolster an export-driven economy by large-scale agricultural production. In the two decades of democratic transition, the country grew more than five percent every year and rapidly declined in the rate of poverty.¹⁹ Michelle Bachelet enhanced the policies under the Concertación government during her two terms, dedicating \$135 million for education and a number of social policies and economic stimulus packages. The issue of elite land-owning power in Chile is specific to their case of memorialization post-dictatorship; they seek reconciliation to move forward from the violence, and in their memorials and museums, there is a sense of embracing an idealized version of their pre-dictatorship democratic pasts.

¹⁸ Ibid., 68.

¹⁹ Eduardo Aninat, "Chile in the 1990s: Embracing Development Opportunities," International Monetary Fund, March 2000, accessed April 27, 2018. <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2000/03/aninat.htm>.

Argentina, and especially the capital city of Buenos Aires, before the coup was known as the “Paris of South America,” a European and cosmopolitan nation with a vibrant music and social scene, with the highest literacy rates in Latin America well into the 1970s. After world war II, Argentina was ranked the eight wealthiest nation in the world.²⁰ However, Argentina was self-destructive in nature, on all accounts of social, economic, and political life. They were also consumed by military presence, although the military lacked sufficient governing skills and economic smarts. The military was profoundly lacking in these important components of governance, yet Argentina’s history is marked by recurrent cycles of this type tyrannical rule. The military held power that was essentially unbreakable, and going against the military meant a severe political loss for any Argentine president.²¹

Historically, Argentina’s socioeconomic structures are rooted in feudalism of the landowning elite, the Catholic church, and the military. From this rigid structure, society has remained somewhat uncomfortable with the messiness of democracy in comparison to the order presented through military power. Therefore unions, political parties, businesses, and social groups had all established affiliations with the military. The military’s preference to international capitalism also aligned with the interests of the middle and upper classes rather than an economy focused on nationalist organized labor.²²

The 1970s in Argentina was marked by high unemployment, the rapid decline of the peso, and a guerilla war that broke out between the extreme-right and the extreme-left, creating a chaotic violent uprising in Argentina. With guerilla war outbreaks throughout the country between both the extreme-left and right, it meant the destruction of democracy and a country under occupation. Argentina’s volatile and destructive system of demolition was simultaneously

²⁰ Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²² *Ibid.*, 6.

met with Juan Domingo Perón's death in July 1974, making his wife, Isabel, the president. Under her (unskilled and disliked) presidency, the military rose to power where they mobilized for non-military actions. The role of Perón, and his fall, highlights Argentina as a self-destructive state. Elected president in 1946, he was admired by both the political extreme-right and extreme-left, a controversial and contradictory figure who nationalized industries and services, championed organized labor, but was also an admirer of Hitler and Mussolini.

Argentina's war against the British for the Falkland Islands terminated the Dirty War and the violence that erupted after Isabel Perón's thrust from power. Rather than crumbling under the sheer weight of human rights abuses and violence, the regime was weakened by their own economic corruption and mismanagement, ending their fight against political subversion.²³ The country, however, experienced another economic downfall in 2001 after its initial transition to democracy. Due to a number of factors including the harmful impact of the financial environment, careless policymaking, and institutional weaknesses, Argentina fell into the first great depression of the 21st century.²⁴ As an aim to end hyperinflation and from a lack of monetary independence, the Argentine peso was pegged to the U.S. dollar. Causing the country's foreign investments and exports to dry up, pegging the peso to the dollar meant buyers of Argentine-produced commodities could purchase more for the same price in other countries, especially in neighboring Brazil.²⁵ Furthermore, under Carlos Menem's second term, extensive borrowing lead to the accumulation of domestic and foreign debt, and increasing domestic interest rates forced many companies to close; laying off employees, and spiking the prices of

²³ Ibid., 14.

²⁴ Omar G. Encarnación, "The Argentine Thorn in Obama's Side," *Foreign Affairs*, March 17, 2016, accessed April 19, 2018. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/argentina/2016-03-16/argentine-thorn-obamas-side>.

²⁵ Daniel Luna, "Argentina's Crisis Explained," *Time*, December 20, 2001, accessed April 19, 2018. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,189393,00.html>.

basic services. The notorious “pots and pans” mobilization of the Argentine working class society filled the streets, echoing tensions of their socioeconomic isolation.

As the nation defaulted on \$104 billion in bonds (the biggest by any country in history), and de-linked themselves from the U.S. dollar, devaluing the peso by 25 percent,²⁶ the Argentine economy re-started. With a quick economic turn-around, support for then-president Néstor Kirchner and his wife and future successor, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, was bolstered. By 2007, Argentina regained much of their economy. However, tensions remained and relations with the U.S. and foreign investors holding Argentine debt greatly deteriorated.

All of this said, there’s much to suggest that at the very heart of Argentina and Chile’s politic is memorialization and how the issue of the past was played out by local social movement politics. In particular, the human rights movement is the key argument to understanding the divergence in memorialization. They added a deeper layer to the politics of memory and significantly transformed the relationship between the state, the public, and the meanings and perceptions of memorials in society. Their framing of demands for recognition of the past and for seeking truth, justice and memory are important strategies in mobilizing and for motivating collective action. As will be seen, human rights organizations were the driving force in memorial initiatives, commemorative activities, and in gathering and archiving evidence of the past’s violence.

²⁶Encarnación, "The Argentine Thorn in Obama's Side."

Institutionalizing Memorialization: Turning Memories into Memorials

“A social, political, and moral fissure of the magnitude that we Chileans have lived is not closed again by a single act at a determined moment. It is not possible to root out the pain that lives in memory by a whole aggregate of measures, however numerous, well intentioned, and audacious they may be.” – President Ricardo Lagos, “There is no Tomorrow without Yesterday,” August 2003.

Because memory and memorials are so closely intertwined, the process of planning, creating, and erecting a monument or memorial becomes a complicated and impacting process. The memories, having either been repressed or lived through every day, evoke questions about their textures, meanings, and impressions. In post-conflict societies, this process becomes convoluted by varying sentiments of these public sites of memory, and oftentimes become lost between the government sanctioning and referring to their past one way, and the public and their versions of the memories wanting the memorial a different way. The process is full of tensions between these questions dealing with the textures, memories, histories, and economics of the memorials.

Meanings of the past are transformed by these various social actors and political circumstances. By “reclaiming” certain aspects of the past, these actors are able to place the construction of memory within the framework of history. Memories are undoubtedly attached to the past; trauma from the past affects the present. Part of memory is attached to trauma of the past. Due to its subjectivity and with the passage of time, its meanings can change, and with that comes new political, social, and economic tensions surrounding it. This is apparent in the re-representation of memory of the Nazi period and of the atrocities committed during the

Holocaust in memorialization efforts in Germany, Israel, the United States, and elsewhere; they have been altered, transformed, and molded based on the passage of time.²⁷

Therefore, the role of *who* is creating memory is important to the conflicts surrounding public memory. The social dynamics involved in conflicts between important dates, anniversaries, and commemorations have both broad and intimate personal meanings. The date of September 11, 1973, has a generalized social meaning as the beginning of the coup and of state terrorism for Chile, and March 24, 1976, marks the beginning of the coup for Argentina. While these dates are generally accepted by society, other dates commemorate individual meanings like the anniversary of a loved one's disappearance or a birthday of someone who was detained and never to be found again. As well, there are differences among those who experienced trauma directly, and those in the younger generations who did not directly face the experiences but are making meaning out of the memories shared with them. The human rights movement is at the forefront of commemorative activities and projects. Groups like the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo began marching in Argentina in 1977 in public defiance of the government's state terrorism intended to silence all opposition; their legacy continues in public demonstrations on the day of the coup and in other commemorative dates. In Chile, the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (Association of Families Detained-Disappeared), march annually on the day of the coup wearing photos of their disappeared relatives pinned to their clothing.

Coming to a consensus regarding the issues of the past is difficult. Specifically, in Argentina, a consensus is lacking due to the government's long-term denial of the past. Thus, memorialization by human rights groups demands recognition from the government. Memory is

²⁷ Elizabeth Jelin, "History and Social Memory" in *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 53-54.

malleable and changes over time. Similarly, the significance of dates change over time; as different memories cast new meanings on dates, as different visions become institutionalized, and as new generations and new actors discuss them with new meanings.²⁸ This combination of established dates eliciting memories for entire publics to share with intimate, detailed accounts by individuals who experienced the memories more directly, creates a dynamic in society which leaves room for interpretation and contestation. Memories had been silenced, and with new actors in the public sphere, importantly that of the human rights movement, they helped to re-open the discourse of memory, including how memories will become institutionalized and constructed into physical form.

What does it mean when memory becomes materialized? Sites of memory can be actual places where torture and horrendous acts of human violence occur, where their memories cannot be detached from the sites themselves. Personal attachments to those sites are undeniably strong. The question becomes: how do emotionally-loaded sites become marked? When there is a physical marker of a site that had once been a center of torture and detention, markers such as commemorative plaques and memorials themselves are a materialization of the memories attached to them. While these markers can be representative of official actors created or sanctioned by the government, they can also embody non-official actors as places where activist and human rights groups feel they need to be marked as commemorative. Concentration and detention camps become installations of memorialization as the result of human rights groups demanding their official recognition. The Peace Park in Santiago, Chile, has been “recovered for memory,”²⁹ as the physical space marker of the horrors that occurred during the dictatorship in the detention camp of Villa Grimaldi. In Argentina’s ESMA site (Navy School of Mechanics),

²⁸ Ibid., 36.

²⁹ Ibid., 39.

the words “milicos asesinos” ‘military assassins,’ “nunca más” ‘never again,’ and “fábrica tomada” ‘factory taken over’ were sprayed on the walls, not to destroy them, but in an effort to inscribe into the walls the very activism, civil rights, and human rights work within the story of the ESMA.³⁰ While Argentina’s more conservative daily paper, *La Nación*, aimed to frame the graffiti on the ESMA as a senseless act of vandalism, reclaiming the site in such a way is part of a mobilization effort by activist groups to assert an ongoing memory discourse in the country that has yet to reach consensus about its past violence.

This profusion of memories and narratives of the past generates a distinct dynamic in the social circulation of memories. The divergence in Chile’s and Argentina’s memorial-making process becomes evident in the ways in which these different memory actors create and implement memory into the public sphere. Both countries experienced grueling processes in which shared expressions of remembrance are met with confrontations about their meanings and intertwined with social, political, and economic issues. This section will delve into the processes of memory to memorial in Argentina and Chile, exploring how both countries employed different memorial-making processes and methods of institutionalization.

A. Argentina’s Memorial-Making Process

For almost two decades after the Dirty War, Argentina’s democratic process had struggled, creating a “juridical vacuum³¹” which was produced out of the weakness of the democratic state’s institutional response in its transition out of the past dictatorship. With the shortcomings of this process, as well as public exhaustion due to the state’s ability to narrativize trauma, new actors were able to emerge in memory politics, specifically giving way to grassroots

³⁰ Tandeciarz, *Reconfiguring the Past in Post-Dictatorship Argentina*, 164.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

movements. Human rights organizations, neighborhood assemblies, and art collectives that have been driven by this empty void in representation of memory, stimulated the work of memory by transforming the city landscape into a space of artistic and cultural reflection.³² Argentina sets itself apart from other countries that have faced political violence due to this emergence of embedding memory into the physical landscape. Unlike Chile, where we see the government largely sanctioning memorial projects, Argentina has combined government legislation with the work of small-scale local movements and large-scale international human rights movements. Memory sites, like those of Parque de la Memoria, the Navy School of Mechanics (EMSA), and El Olimpo, are *products* of both government legislation and grassroots organizing, embodying cultural responses of the shortcomings of representative democracy and provide the framework of what collective responses look like.

In contemporary Buenos Aires, memories resurface and memorials are shaped by these relationships between government and social movements, which in turn, affect the public's engagement with such structures. Memory sites vary in tone, production, and influence. The tensions present within the government-sanctioned processes and those of grassroots movements are evident in the memory sites themselves, evoking different messages and representing different textures. Part of Argentina's unique display of cultural reproduction through memorials is the variance present within and between the memorials themselves. These tensions can explain how Argentina's mode of memorialization reflects a different form than Chile's altogether.

Memories revolving around what happened during the dictatorship have changed over time. Due to a series of presidential pardons of convicted military officers, the human rights community suffered a significant setback, weakening their activism during the first half of the 1990s, and leaving little room for commemorative activity. In dictatorial Argentina (1976-83),

³² Ibid.

the armed forces announced their role as “saviors of the nation threatened by an enemy, ‘subversion’”³³ Their agenda focused on the duty to fight this enemy, the one attacking the very foundations of the Argentine nation.³⁴ The repression and fear the armed forces employed made alternative narratives by the Argentine masses near impossible; any expressions condemning the military could only be broadcasted outside of the country. The large-scale domestic and international human rights movement constructed and refined their own narrative of state repression, their agenda focusing on the importance of human rights and recognizing the vast human rights violations committed during the military regime. They revolved their campaign around exposing state terrorism and the forceful detainment and disappearance of loved individuals, as well as leaving a sense of hope that the disappeared would re-appear. This led to a reawakening of memories and discourse from those affected by atrocities of the regime.

The polarity between the two narratives gave way to new forms of discourse and institutional practices within the state. The transition government composed a narrative for the public in which they placed blame on *both* sides of the war; two violent forces fighting each other, known as the “two demons theory,” while the democratic and peace-loving citizens were caught in the middle and left defenseless. The state, not immediately recognizing the validity of the human rights violations claims, instead focused on the “silent majority” of Argentines who were absent from these struggles, and in this way, was able to justify the repressive actions of the military. However, with judicial prosecutions like the 1985 trial, the concept of victims of state repression, regardless of what side they were on, became a central figure of the transitional period. Utilizing the term “victim” implied for the transitional period that people, regardless of their political ideologies, were harmed and incapable of resisting. Formally, the juridical

³³ Jelin, 38.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

framework worked by eliminating all references to political ideologies of the victims (regardless of what side they were a “victim” of). In doing so, they determined that indeed, crimes had been committed, but by the omission of political ideological references altogether, political motives, therefore, could not be a determinate of the actions of the perpetrators.³⁵ During the 1985 trial of former military commanders of the dictatorial juntas, the image of the victim was key in determining that such perpetrators were the culprits of widespread violence. The state began to recognize the legitimacy of human rights violation claims and juridically recognized the truth of what happened during the dictatorship.

Eventually, commemorative human rights marches and activities evolved, carrying with them slogans and demands to the government. The mood changed in 1995, advancing “a significant moment of expression of a multiplicity of actors and banners, demanding actions and redress on the part of the government while at the same time linking memories of the dictatorship with ongoing societal demands of various sorts (social justice, police violence, rights of minorities, demands of social policies, and so on).”³⁶ The participation of human rights groups and new participants within them, significantly transformed the commemorative climate. New forms of expression and participation from the youth were powerful, resulting in the emergence of the human rights association of H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia, contra el Olvido y el Silencio [Children in Search of Identity and Justice, against Oblivion and Silence]), whose public demonstrations greatly influenced memory discourse and altered memorial projects to demand action by the government.

A key component of the awakening of memories during this time period came out of powerful admissions to human rights abuses by perpetrators of the Dirty War. On March 2, 1995,

³⁵ Ibid., 54-55.

³⁶ Ibid., 38.

a Retired Navy Captain Adolfo Scilingo announced his participation in the infamous “death flights” of the Dirty War and was the first person from the military to publicly testify about his involvement in two death flights and the throwing of thirty living, but drugged desaparecidos out of navy airplanes into the Atlantic Ocean. From this powerful announcement and the subsequent chain reaction of admissions by perpetrators of the Dirty War, the Argentine public was reopened to the horrors of the past. Known as the “Scilingo effect,” the admissions not only reopened old wounds but created disagreement and dialogue about how to explain and confront the horrors of the past. For many, these admissions meant more concrete answers and details about how, why, and where their loved ones were disappeared and killed, but opening these wounds again also meant reliving a past trauma.

On the twentieth anniversary of the coup in 1996, the human rights movement in Argentina shifted away from their struggles to locate disappeared loved ones, to mobilization around public memory activities, including memorials.³⁷ Due to this shift from silence to action, human rights groups increasingly pursued memorial projects that would represent the actualities of the dictatorship. The government, however, wanted their narrative of the past to be depicted in traditional memorial form. Therefore, the importance of memorials and their meanings in Argentine society became contested issues.

From the initiation of his term, Argentine President Nestor Kirchner (2003-2007) promoted the platform for coming to terms with the past. Memorials were part of both symbolic and digressive acts, so Kirchner aimed to claim his moral high ground by exposing Argentina’s traumatic past and holding its main perpetrators accountable. During Kirchner’s term as president, he announced the memorial of the infamous once-active site of forced disappearance and torture, the Navy School of Mechanics (ESMA) in Buenos Aires; rewrote and redistributed

³⁷ Hite, 102.

the prologue to *Nunca Más*, the legendary truth commission report of the Dirty War; and officially denounced the the “two demons” argument, the military’s rhetorical device to morally equate their violent political subversion with illegal repressive activities carried out by the state. In the original *Nunca Más* text, it reads, “During the 1970s, Argentina was convulsed by terror coming as much from the extreme right as the extreme left.” Kirchner’s rewritten prologue states: “It is important to firmly establish, because constructing the future requires sound foundations, that it is unacceptable to pretend to justify State terrorism as a result of a violent regime among opposing sides as if it were possible to find a justificatory symmetry...”³⁸ This difference was essential to the “nunca más” rhetoric that memorials would subsequently evoke.

Human rights groups advocated for the ESMA to represent exactly what it was: a site of forced torture and disappearance. The federal government was not supportive of the ESMA turning into a center that represented its actualities. The debate over ESMA’s significance came to an interesting transformation when President Kirchner announced that the debate would be in the hands of the human rights community, as renowned Argentine artist Marcelo Brodsky launched a sweeping call for the ESMA space proposals. Brodsky published the works of well-known memory scholars, praised artists depicting state repression, and proposals from human rights organizations titled: *Under Construction. Debating What to Do with the ESMA*.

As wide-sweeping as this call for ESMA proposals was, it also exposed major artistic differences lingering among the human rights and arts community. Artistic proposals were submitted illustrating various art forms: representational paintings, sculptures, photographs, and abstract interpretations such as installations of re-created torture centers. They dealt with different themes: loss, torture, death, and objects of everyday life to represent what had been stolen by intelligence agents. Within the divide in the artistic community, there was also a sense

³⁸ Ibid., 101.

of division among the human rights community. The majority of the community supported part of the ESMA space to be re-created as the torture center that it really was, however, Hebe de Bonafini, leader of the infamous organization Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, had a different vision for ESMA. She insisted it should not be a museum where “people would go one to time to see all the horror and never see it again.”³⁹ Instead, Bonafini advocated for ESMA to be turned into a cultural center to display shows and art exhibitions, as well as classes for the community.

This divide echoed further tensions among politicized human rights groups, as Bonafini became close allies with President Kirchner, who funded Bonafini’s faction of Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. The organization was split in two: Bonafini’s more radical group that would not settle, and a more reformist group that would compromise with the government in order to receive legal action towards finding their disappeared loved ones. Without support from Kirchner, the reformist faction of mothers lacked resources and funding for their work in research, commemoration, and outreach. Divides among human rights organizations and other grassroots mobilization are inevitable considering the issues of funding, differences in political ideologies or positions, and varying political and cultural discourse on the meanings of the past.

The tensions surrounding such memorial-making processes, specifically in Argentina, should be understood as an ongoing, interwoven dialogue. In the arts community, artists depend on each other’s creative influences to continuously recreate and reconstruct the meanings of artistic forms in society. Although specific human rights organizations will have a larger role in the site’s creation and implementation over other group’s, their activism ultimately depends on each other’s, even if there are differences among politics and ideologies.

³⁹ Ibid., 102.

B. Trials and Truth Commissions: The ESMA Trial and Memorial

Vikki Bell describes Argentina's longest trial in history, the ESMA trial of 2012-2017, as a 'theatre of justice' where it was presented as "the paradox faced by transitional justice mechanisms that need to assert legal norms as a basis for a sustainable future relation between State and people through forums that require a return to the past experience of State violence."⁴⁰ Trials are often referred to as "arenas" or stages to which the past is rehearsed, enacted, and confronted to then be judged and placed in a legal framework. Memory being demonstrated and judged in this way creates a sort of performance in which different actors are accounting for and affecting memory; different narratives are told and believed, along with those memories that had to be coerced to the surface. The 'performance' also demonstrates the importance of social movements and mobility, how human rights groups can alter the meanings of memory and memorials, and how commemorative practices and cultural displays bring meaning to memorials.⁴¹ Within memorials themselves, they become arenas for human rights groups to debate the historical meaning behind it, help shape meanings of identity, and compete for control over the memorial-making process.

The trial process is a grueling one. For many, memories in the form of testimonials are reopened; wounds pierced again. They represent anger from those seeking answers about their loved ones' disappearances, and about the state recognizing victims' claims to be true. Trials are also about giving material apologies to victims and families in the form of reparations, and to

⁴⁰ Vikki Bell, *The Art of Post-Dictatorship: Ethics and Aesthetics in Transitional Argentina* (Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 59.

⁴¹ Owen J. Dwyer and Derek H. Alderman, "Memorial Landscapes: Analytic Questions and Metaphors," *GeoJournal* 73, no. 3 (2008): 165-78, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41148292>.

give memories of the past a legal backing and framework in the present. The past returns in trials for present purposes and to set-in-stone demands of the present.⁴²

The trial of eighteen members of the Navy for crimes committed at the clandestine detention center *Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada* (ESMA), known as the *megacausa*, was powerful in creating a legal framework for witness' testimonies and for the human rights movement to have their demands met and their voices heard. On the 26th of October, 2011, 16 out of 18 defendants in the trial were found guilty of crimes against humanity during the dictatorship.⁴³ More than 200 witnesses including over 80 survivors of ESMA had their voices heard in this oral stage, remembering the horrific site of torture and executions where some 5,000 people were detained.

During the trial, the accusation was read out loud, the crime recited, the testimony full of graphic detail was read, and corroborations were put together. The trial itself was composed of five separate cases (Testimonios A, B, C, and "Donda" and "Montes y Capdevila"), which include a large number of victims, the disappearance of nuns and members of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, and the trafficking of babies born in the ESMA. Notably, the crimes were limited to those committed in 1977. The ESMA trial was not the only trial advancing in the courts, simultaneously, the "ABO" trial opened, standing for El Atlético, el Banco, and el Olimpo (the Athletic Club, the Bank, and the Olympus camps). In November of 2009, seventeen men were accused of the forced disappearance, torture, and murder of 181 victims in these camps, however, the actual number of victims is not accurately represented as witnesses had been murdered and evidence was destroyed.⁴⁴

⁴² Bell, 59.

⁴³ Ibid., 60.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 306.

The ESMA verdict was broadcasted live domestically across the country and crowds gathered outside the court to watch the live telecasting. The voices, those of various actors like NGOs and of human rights groups, had long contested to seek prosecution for those accountable for crimes against humanity and to overturn the amnesty laws that limited prosecutions. This verdict also set a precedent for future trials. As Bell recounts the trial, the *megacausa* was political in nature meaning that it “was motivated by a need to distinguish the past from the present and the future,” but was not political in the ways in which the defendants tried to argue; it was not an example of victor’s justice or a ‘show trial’ that dismissed past actions because of current political ideologies.⁴⁵ The past was ‘returned’ in a sense through the testimonials of witnesses and survivors, turning the public courtroom into a space of public intimacy, however, Bell suggests the trial returns the past but does not contain it. The intimacy of the trials allows for witness-survivors to “perform” their public outcry. Oral evidence is, therefore, the determining factor to expose names, dates, times, and identities, necessary for the long-sought-after prosecutions of perpetrators.

CELS (Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales), a non-governmental human rights organization founded in 1979 aiming to protect and strengthen human rights and democracy, was a key component of the trials and in ongoing memorialization efforts in Argentina. Their objectives are to report human right violations, to help design human rights policies, and to promote legal and institutional reforms to strengthen democratic institutions. CELS prosecutors, along with human rights activists, attorneys, and some government officials, insisted the crimes be considered a genocide to better reflect the wide-scale atrocities that occurred. Their slogan, adopted by various human rights organizations, “Memoria. Verdad. Justicia.” (Memory. Truth. Justice), reiterates the mission of the human rights community in demanding action about the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 60.

crimes of the Dirty War. The phrase chanted at marches and in front of memorials, and inscribed on the walls of old detention centers now “living sites of memory,” is important in characterizing how memory has been shaped, transformed, and discussed in the Argentine public sphere. Depictions of memory, whether through artistic demonstrations and memorials, through marches and protests, or in the “performative arena” during trials, express that Argentina demands accountability for the events of the past.

The ESMA Memorial (Museum of Memory)

Through the use of witness-survivor testimonies in the ESMA trial and from the demanding of prosecutions by human rights groups and lawyers, Argentina’s ESMA memorial demands similar action. The site’s texture is representative of this, but primarily altered by the human rights motivation to keep memory discourse in the forefront and preserve the site for the way it was used during the dictatorship.

An enormous clandestine arena where an estimated 5,000 citizens were detained, tortured, and mostly disappeared, the ESMA site is an iconic place of memory, loaded with historical trauma. The site’s battles are intertwined in a debate over making it an official historic site and determining its place, purpose, and presentation in society. The ESMA asks the visitor to walk through the real architecture of its traumatic past, collecting diverse sensory impressions from the remains of the architecture through an affective, subjective, as well as bodily, sensory and emotional experience.⁴⁶ What does it mean when the very walls of a notorious site of clandestine detention, torture, and killings remain in place for visitors in the post-Dirty War era to visit? Is the construction of the site to keep the ESMA’s memory alive the best way to remember a violent past in public space? Through tours of the site by Vikki Bell and Katherine

⁴⁶ Ibid., 73.

Hite, as well as an analysis of how the site came to be, this section looks into how human rights advocacy preserved the haunting memories and shaped the texture of the site.

Throughout the dictatorship, the ESMA was operating as a military training academy and as the notorious site of detention, torture, and extermination. The complex expands over 42 acres among one of Buenos Aires' residential neighborhoods, and alongside Avenida del Libertador, one of the busiest freeways in the entire city. Most of the crimes in the ESMA occurred in the *Casino*, the officers' headquarters, where detainees were forced into labor and subjected to a number of horrific acts, and after, often sent to the notorious death flights, where they were thrown off planes into the Río de la Plata. When the dictatorship fell, the site remained in the hands of the Navy for 15 years, until 1998, when former president Carlos Menem moved the Navy and began his project to destroy the ESMA site and instead erect a much smaller memorial. In the name of "national reconciliation," Menem aimed to reconstruct the park following his preferred narrative of transitional justice and moving forward by forgetting.⁴⁷ He also pardoned more than four hundred military officers amidst their prosecutions, and the following year, pardoned some of the regime's leaders who had already been convicted. Although Menem's initiative was ultimately shut down by the Argentine courts, it was not until 2004 that president Nestor Kirchner issued a press conference on the issue of the ESMA site construction. Apologizing to the Argentinian people for the crimes committed during the dictatorship, Kirchner declared the ESMA would maintain a site of memory, to preserve the real truth of the dictatorship and to never forget, silence, or repeat the atrocities of the past.

Argentine society was not ready to accept the process of reconciliation, the narrative Menem promoted for the site's reconstruction. The ESMA had been in the forefront of the

⁴⁷Vikki Bell and Mario di Paolantonio, "The Haunted *Nomos*: Activist-Artists and the (Im)possible Politics of Memory in Transitional Argentina," *Cultural Politics* 1, (2009) 5(2): 156, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174309X428199>.

public's lives; through Adolfo Scilingo's recent admissions of crimes he committed in 1995, and the *Nunca Más* report of CONADEP, the ESMA was ingrained into the public's memory.

Menem's proposal completely obliterated the connection of human rights work to the preservation of commemorative sites and the overall mood of the public. Urgently, human rights groups came together after Menem's decree, advocating that a future is not free from ghosts of past trauma, instead, they must remain to demand responsibility for the present and the future.⁴⁸

In a lawsuit launched by human rights groups, the ESMA was preserved for what it was. By refusing Menem's "reconciliation," human rights organizations refused to adhere to silencing and forgetting the events of the dictatorial regime.



Figure 1: Photos of missing persons in front of the ESMA⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid., 157.

⁴⁹ Federico Rivas Molina, "El Centro De Torturas Icono De La Dictadura Argentina Será La Sede Del Ministerio De Justicia," *EL PAÍS*, July 26, 2017, accessed April 30, 2018. https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/07/25/argentina/1501006092_210592.html.

The human rights groups that preserved the ESMA work under the larger umbrella of the Ministry for Justice and Human Rights of the Nation of Argentina; twenty-eight campaigning groups whose office is housed in the ESMA. Their banner, “Espacio para la Memoria, y para la Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos” (Space of Memory, and for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights) hangs over the main building. Through their activism focused on a set of demands for the preservation of the site, the ESMA remains texturally different than sites embodying reconciliation. It is a “space for memory,” but it is still haunted, disturbed, and uncomfortable. Without the ‘ghosts’ of the site’s past, its *essence* would be lost, and with it, memories would fade.

When coupled with the testimonies of the trial and the actual visit of the site by the court itself, the ESMA represents a form of institutionalization beyond the state’s ownership. The site is placed back into the hands of the public: it suspends time by allowing the public to walk through the architecture and rubble of what is permanently left behind. Moving through the site, the visitor is able to witness how each space within the building functioned. Bell accounts, “In the ‘*Capucha*’ the detainees were sequestered, in the ‘Pañol [*Storeroom*]’ some were made to work... We were shown the officers’ dormitories...the bathrooms, and in the basement, where the torture chamber was.”⁵⁰ The eeriness of this site is residual, but as the visitor walks through the abandoned building, the rubble, and along the designated pathway, the sensory experience also has a place in the present; the sound of traffic outside, children playing at a nearby school, the sounds of nature and birds from la Plata river, and planes flying overhead. As Bell describes the experience, visitors are reminded that these sounds were the ones detainees would have

⁵⁰ Bell, 74.

heard; intense symbolism of droning airplanes which once threw bodies out of the sky and into the depths of la Plata river.⁵¹

When Hite visited the memorial, she immediately grasped its tone: it has an antagonistic edge, ‘us versus them,’ ‘good guy versus bad guy,’ and a black and white experience unfolds.⁵² The tour guide indicated a sense of control, creating a type of performance between Hite and the tour group in the site’s arena. In Hite’s experience, the site was extremely uncomfortable, but that was its purpose.⁵³ The tour provides a deeply different performative experience than the one presented in the courtroom, the viewer is brought back into the past through tangible representations in the form of architecture rather than oral testimony. Sporadic plaques are placed throughout the site, with survivors’ accounts of what they experienced. Only a few accounts are shared on these plaques or plinths, as contestation over the site becoming a “museum of horror” was widely debated. The site redirects visitors from visiting a horror museum to a more reflective, performative experience, however still haunting. Hite’s observance of a sense of control by the tour guide and the ‘black and white’ tension the guide provided, exemplifies the rigidity of a site remaining, for the most part, the way it was when it was used during the dictatorship, and the ways in which visitors are able to ‘perform’ a part of the past by remembering the atrocities and reflecting upon the trauma.

In keeping with the demands of human rights organizations to tell the real narrative of the site’s past, the space is full of bare buildings, their desertion kept this way signifies they have a story to tell. Human rights workers act as tour guides; they reiterate their story of activism to preserve the site and recount the real *truth* of the events that occurred there. There is no

⁵¹ Ibid., 75.

⁵² Katherine Hite, "Empathic Unsettling and the Outsider within Argentine Spaces of Memory," *Memory Studies* 8, no. 1 (2014): 38-48, doi:10.1177/1750698014552407.

⁵³ Ibid., 44.

reconciling the site's past, no denial of the crimes committed there. Its ghosts maintained by the contextualization the rights groups have given it; empty space not only provides an embodied experience for the visitor, asking them to imagine what happened there, but it also provides the best way to represent what was lost through the violence that occurred there; the emptiness is not *lacking* artifacts, it is rather *loaded* with a profound response to the heinous violence that transpired in those very walls.

The National Memory Archive, known as "Memory Abierta," is located in a complex at the ESMA site. Its roots stem from a group of human rights organizations that began to meet in 1999 to contribute to memory initiatives regarding state terrorism and to promote and strengthen human rights. Their work has turned into the most extensive oral archive of testimonies in Argentina and is leading the methodology for the registration and documentation of historical sites. Since 2013, they have shared the ESMA site with various other human rights organizations and continue to "work towards memory, fighting against oblivion and silence, and promoting the exchange with other realities about the Argentine experience in Memory, Truth and Justice."⁵⁴ Acting as a key component of information for the trails, the complex hosts a load of informational materials from 1974-83 and also acts as an investigative and research facility. The facility also hosts organizations like the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF), and the Institute of Public Policies on Human Rights (IPPDH). It also has a cultural center named after a disappeared famous Argentinian writer, Haroldo Conti; and exhibition, performance, and seminar area, to take back the spaces of horror and re-infuse them with humane and intellectual resources and purposes. Bonafini's group

⁵⁴ "Nuestra Historia," Memoria Abierta, accessed April 29, 2018. <http://www.memoriaabierta.org.ar/wp/nuestra-historia/>.

of the Mothers are responsible for the cultural center, in keeping with the concept of a collective space rather than a horror museum.

Part of the investigations in the National Memory Archive go beyond just the dates of the dictatorship, but to human rights violations over any period of time, including the public's responses.⁵⁵ This center institutionalizes an embodied creative experience for interpreting or reinterpreting the past, through the center's host of creative activities. In contrast to the ESMA's overall rigid, haunting texture, the National Memory Archive and the Centro Cultural Haroldo Conti, is a more open, broad memory space. It transforms the site of exclusion and covertness to a diverse dialogue on memory, truth, and justice, without forgetting or denying the actualities that ensued. It also returns the space back to the public, giving communities a place to *perform* memory.

The fact that the ESMA site was 'saved' highlights human rights activism of preservation over demolition, accountability over reconciliation, as well as a complex perspective on the relationships between memory, forgetting, retribution, and justice. When visiting the ESMA site, one is asked to embark on a performative journey, one that fully transports any preconceived ideas, memories, or emotions towards the site or the events of the dictatorship as a whole, to an embodied sensory experience through the remnants of the real site. On the other side, the ESMA should also be seen as not just the triumph of memory over forgetting, but that the two concepts are inherently intertwined, one not a moral victory over the other.⁵⁶ The ESMA is part of the larger debate of how to inhabit 'haunted' sites or ones that have not been fully demolished or reconstructed, about how sites like the ESMA "do justice" to the past, and how memory can stay

⁵⁵ Ibid., 332.

⁵⁶ Vikki Bell and Mario Di Paolantonio, "The Haunted Nomos," 158.

alive for the future.⁵⁷ The body of human rights groups, activists, and artists part of preserving the site for what it was, are maintaining the texture of the site, one in which the ghosts of the past are in their space, but also so that their memories reappear in the future.

C. Truth Commissions for Reconciliation and Chile's Memorial-Making Process

Chile had a seemingly endless tradition of “amnesia” during their transitional period, and the human rights legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship was never fully addressed. Now, that is beginning to change; former clandestine detention centers have been identified, human rights organizations, activists, victims’ families, and many other social actors are coming forward, reclaiming space and the identities of victims through marked sites, plaques, installations, and commemorative dates. Some notable measures Chile has taken on these issues include the state-sponsored Human Rights Program of the Interior Ministry established in 2003 and the National Defense Council which helped accuse Pinochet himself. Furthermore, the Valech Report of 2004 accounts for thousands of cases of torture and political imprisonment, making Chile the only country in Latin America to have undertaken a second official truth-telling effort after the Rettig Report of 1991.⁵⁸ Chilean presidents Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006) and Michelle Bachelet (2006-2010) are also important actors in advancing commemoration and human rights remembrance, by visibly aligning themselves with memorialization initiatives, such as Lagos’ rehabilitation of the figure of Allende, and Bachelet’s project like the National Museum of Memory and Human Rights.

Widely different than Argentina’s explosive case of monuments, memorials, and a “memory boom,” Chile diverges as state leadership over the human rights legacy is mostly

⁵⁷ Ibid., 159.

⁵⁸ Cath Collins, “The Moral Economy of Memory,” in *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America*, ed. Ksenija Bilbija and Leigh A. Payne, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 236.

lacking, and creating policy has remained hesitant. As Cath Collins describes in “The Moral Economy of Memory,” commemorative practices of past human rights violations and the human rights movement, is still considered controversial democratic practices, and there is a long way to go before these can be seen as “uncontroversial, rather than ideological and/or political partisanship.”⁵⁹

The National Truth and Reconciliation Commission, known widely as the *Rettig Commission* (named after its chairman, Raúl Rettig), was important in the steps of memorialization. In May of 1990, the Commission began work, but the legacy of human rights commissions after dictatorships in Latin America was not large; and Argentina’s efforts, being one of Chile’s only examples, had been undermined by the Due Obedience and Final Stop laws that hindered their policy-making. Literally, in its name, the Commission reflects Chile’s memorialization sentiment: seeking justice through the acts of reconciliation. A second commission, the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture was formed by President Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006) to further investigate torture and imprisonment as well as the murders of thousands of political left “dissidents.” Known as the Valech Report, the second commission’s report heard testimony from over thirty-five thousand people. Continuing into Michelle Bachelet’s term, the commission found an additional ten thousand cases of torture. Out of both of these reports, memorials and museums were recommended projects to reckon with the past’s violence and come to terms with history. Embracing this recommendation of memorialization, Chile remembers the victims of the violent regime in an attempt to learn lessons of the past. The human rights movement, however, silenced by years of polarized politics, pushed for memorials backed by the state to archive evidence of the past’s atrocities.

An important detail in Chile’s memorial-making process is the relationship between

⁵⁹ Ibid., 237.

human rights organizations and the state's backing of commemorative memorials, which is a more unified relationship than in Argentina's case. In 2003, under Lagos, Chile's National Archives began incorporating their records into the nation's history, responding to a push from the human rights movement. In regards to a policy under Lagos, the Human Rights Program of the Interior Ministry gave official support for memorials recognizing victims of state violence. The growth of memorials in Chile encouraged Michelle Bachelet to implement a more "ambitious, coherent, and decentralized policy,"⁶⁰ and in 2010, she inaugurated the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago as a place of reflection on the nation's history and its violation of human rights, and also as a center to defend human rights.

The relationship between democratic presidents and human rights activism transforms the textures of Chile's memorials in both creating a unified narrative of the past and in responding to the individualized experiences memory evokes. In many of the memorials in Chile today, individual names of the victims whose lives were cut short by the dictatorship line the memorials. The memorials and identified names ingrained into them are from "an outcome produced by both tireless advocacy from civil society and enlightened political leadership that understood the moral demands of historical memory."⁶¹ This relationship proves to be intrinsic to Chile's memory politics.

The Rettig Report

There is a clear connection between the rise of international human rights and the rise of memory; memory of past violence and human rights abuses is necessary for coming to terms with and righting the wrongs of the past, as well as preventing future violence. Through Chile's

⁶⁰ Wilde, *The Politics of Memory in Chile*, 48.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

restoration of democracy, human rights organizations shifted focus from opposing the dictatorship to coming to terms with the past and thus commemorating the violence.⁶²

The Rettig Report of 1991 found that more than 2,000 died during the dictatorship. Furthermore, the Commission found that the 2,111 individual cases of death or disappearance qualified as human rights violations and that state agents, or people that the state hired, were responsible for 95 percent of the cases. Lastly, 164 individuals died as a result of events like street protests and armed conflicts.⁶³ Although the Commission was significant in exposing the atrocities of the past, human rights organizations felt the Report did not “put the past to rest,” as it did not name the perpetrators or their methods of torture.⁶⁴ Chile focuses on ‘putting the past to rest’ in order to move forward while in Argentina, to put the past to rest means an act of silence, denial, and deteriorating the memories and identities of victims.

Silence and the preservation of impunity for past crimes were preferred during Chile’s highly managed democratic transition to democracy in 1990. Because truth was so limited in the onset of Chile’s transition due to the polarization of political sides and the influence of Pinochet and his supporters, what was active of a human rights movement was essentially disseminated. Cath Collins states in regards to this silence, “This marked an early divergence from Argentina, where a similar influx was pivotal in building a substantial human rights institutionality within the first transitional administration.”⁶⁵ However, as described earlier, Pinochet’s arrest marked an important period of national, judicial, political, and diplomatic activity that brought back the dictatorial human rights crimes to the national agenda.

⁶² Amy Sodaro, “Museum of Memory and Human Rights,” in *Experiencing Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*, (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018): 116.

⁶³ Steve J. Stern, “Toward Memory Impasse?,” in *Reckoning with Pinochet*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 84.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁶⁵ Collins, *The Politics of Memory in Chile*, 64.

Although official truth in the form of an official truth commission was readily welcomed after the awakening of memory following Pinochet's arrest, the Rettig Report proved limited in breadth by focusing solely on the deaths and disappearances. It lacked impact because other events like the finding of mass grave sites, the published accounts of the "Caravan of Death" massacres, and a televised encounter with Pinochet remarking that bodies in the clandestine graves had been a simple "economy,"⁶⁶ gathered more international attention. Ultimately, the armed forces and the courts dismissed the report, following the decree of forgetting past violence.

Although copies of the report were distributed to victims' families and was printed for libraries and schools across the nation, the Rettig Report did not have the same type of affective truth recovery as did the human rights movement who had already published many of the truths stated in the report. As Steve Stern addresses in his book *Reckoning with Pinochet*, "Chileans wanted mutual understanding and reconciliation, not deepening conflict and recrimination."⁶⁷ With a nation still divided over meanings of the past, the rhetoric used in the report, such as stating that the Armed Forces entirely took control of the country,⁶⁸ was not the message of unity the Chilean public was looking for. It was not until Aylwin assumed representation of the Chilean state and publicly apologized for the mass violations of human rights and specifically to the victims' families, that the public accepted the institutionalization of memory through reconciliation. In stark contrast to Argentina's explosive eruption of memory; through the courts, various human rights groups, and continued contesting sentiments on the forms of memorialization, Chile seeks to memorialize their past through unified reconciliation, to move through trauma, and repair the past.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet*, 87.

D. The Museum of Memory and Human Rights

Human rights organizations mobilized against Pinochet's decree of forgetting in order to preserve the memory of the disappeared and seek the real truth under Pinochet's rule. The missing piece of the puzzle in Chile's memorial-making process was a center that could house the collection of human rights and victims' organizations; thus prompting the creation of a national memorial and documentation center, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights (MMHR). The museum has roots to the Rettig Commission's recommendation for a memorial, but the site's creation is intertwined with the demands of human rights organizations, their UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) designated "Memory of the World" archives, and the commitment by the Lagos and Bachelet presidencies.

Cath Collins describes the relationship between the state and human rights organizations' involvement in Chile's memorials, "Memorialization here is to be understood not as an essentially private transaction, requiring solely the delivery of reparations to victims and relatives, but rather as part of a long-postponed public act of acknowledgement and repudiation. In this sense, official involvement in memorialization can be regarded as more properly a truth and/or justice measure."⁶⁹ The human rights groups responsible for commemorative activities and memorials had to rely on the state for legitimization and resources, and this relationship was key to the MMHR's creation. The Memory of the World archives is intrinsic to the MMHR's texture: a site of remembrance, reflection, reconciliation, and teaching the ideals of human rights and democracy. Its texture is also due to this battle between the demands of human rights groups and Bachelet's control over the project.

The MMHR was involved in contentious dialogue surrounding what the memorial should be about, what groups should be part of its design, and economic, financial, and location

⁶⁹ Collins, *The Politics of Memory in Chile*, 245.

issues. On top of these issues, was Bachelet's insistence on the creation of the museum to happen quickly, by the end of her four-year term. The institutionalization of memory through the forms of monuments and memorials are symbolic efforts by the state to create a national unity of the past, which is exactly what Michelle Bachelet aimed to do with the MMHR in Santiago. Although state-sanctioned by Bachelet, archival evidence by human rights organizations, especially the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD), is the real backbone of the museum.

The Museum of Memory and Human Rights acts as a universal space of remembrance, aiming to bridge diverging memories and ideologies of the polarized political sides. Positioned on the outskirts of downtown Santiago, the museum sits on a neutral plot of land where no particular violent event occurred. This deliberate choice to construct the museum in a neutral location demonstrates the state's vision to take its tumultuous past and transform it into a universal, unifying message of human rights and democracy as the standard for the present and future. The MMHR preaching a universal message of reconciliation seeks to check all the boxes of traditional memorial tropes: photographs of the disappeared, an extensive database of historical information, and borrows architecture from memorials around the world, like the 9/11 Museum in New York City and the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Furthermore, the exhibition space the museum houses use film, photographs, newspaper articles, official documents and testimony, which is traditional to other memorial museums.⁷⁰

But the MMHR also goes beyond the normative: through its expansive community-driven projects and research facilities that were advocated for by the human rights community. The director of the museum, Ricardo Brodsky, describes the museum as representative of a

⁷⁰ Ibid., 132.

collective effort by diverse civil society and human rights groups and the state.⁷¹ Within this collaboration, there was conflict over the museum focusing solely on the human rights abuses from the morning of September 11, 1973, to the plebiscite of 1988. Although the museum may be restrictive in its aim to harness a particular vision of history, its message manifests in other areas due to the archival evidence provided by human rights organizations, like promoting human rights education, historical interpretation, and the preservation of memory.

Brodsky writes about the MMHR, “The monumentality of the architecture and the power of the permanent exhibition are the expression of the museum’s lasting purpose: to remember the truth and to speak in a voice that crosses generations, using the language and the technical and artistic media necessary to create an experience that is not locked away in the victims themselves, but which rather makes sense to visitors who did not live through this period.”⁷² The striking rectangular building was created by its architects, Estudio America, to convey the message of transparency. The message of transparency is one of space and lightness; texturally, the building is enveloped in greenish-blue hues like colors of the ocean, and hovers over the Plaza de la Memoria like a bridge, creating symmetric shadows on the concrete plaza below and reflecting its colors onto a parallel pond. The dramatic building in contrast with space, color, and light, reflect the idea of reconciliation and coming to terms with the past.

The permanent exhibition uses multimedia to account for September 11, 1973, the initiation of the coup. Photographs of Chileans rushing to the streets, artifacts from the destroyed presidential palace, newspaper clippings of various propaganda from the junta, horrifying sounds in the background, and real video footage from the military attack that ousted Allende are all

⁷¹ Zachary McKiernan, "The Museum of Memory and Human Rights: Making Consensus Matter?," National Council on Public History, May 23, 2012, accessed April 28, 2018. <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/the-museum-of-memory-and-human-rights-making-consensus-matter/>.

⁷² Collins, *The Politics of Memory in Chile*, 123.

exhibited in this room.⁷³ Focusing on the power and triviality of time rather than a chronology of the nation's history as seen in Holocaust memorials, the MMHR asks the viewer to reflect on one specific day in their history, making the narrative accessible and understandable to visitors who may not know a full history of the nation. By displaying this multimedia information, the museum aims to display what it looked and felt like, but it does not take a political stance itself. The MMHR makes defending human rights an international theme for all viewers and creates the unifying message of condemning the human rights abuses under Pinochet, but neglects to explicitly state these artifacts as evidence of what happened, or even mention at all the role the United States played in promoting the dictatorship.⁷⁴ Omitting this important piece of historical information molds the museum to conform to the idea of reconciling their own past by placing the blame and responsibility entirely on the state and its people.

In the museum's "Area of Repression and Torture" exhibition, the atmosphere is extremely emotional and experiential. Names of the disappeared and tortured by the regime are printed in small letters on black walls lining the hallways, and in an adjoining room, gruesome details of repression and violence by the junta are printed in detail, a map marking the locations of the regime's clandestine centers in red lights is displayed, and a video of survivors' torture experiences are played on a loop above an installation replica of the *parilla*, or "grill," that was used to electrocute victims.⁷⁵ The museum even displays drawings by children of life under the dictatorship, a collection by the Foundation for the Protection of Children Damaged by the State of Emergency, the exhibit reporting the loss of 150 young lives and more than one thousand tortured and imprisoned during the dictatorship.⁷⁶ The exhibition space is dominated by the

⁷³ Ibid., 124.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 125.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 127.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

survivors, those who can go on to tell their stories and accounts of the violence they endured to preach the ideas of maintaining democracy and to never let these atrocities happen again.

The third floor is dedicated to the “Demand for Truth and Justice,” focusing on the opposition of the regime up to its fall in 1988 and not about its transitional period. Here, social institutions, the Church, and different human rights organizations are given significant space: walls lined with photos, documents, videos, artifacts, and other informative pieces, to show their fight to the regime.⁷⁷ The resistance theme in this area of the museum is highlighted especially by large photographs of victims. This space, the “Area of Absence and Remembrance,” is a memorial entirely to the victims. In a multimedia interactive exhibition, the visitor can use the database to search for individuals from the Rettig Report. Naming and displaying the names of the victims is an important memorial trope for the overall mood of the museum, identifying victims and survivors illuminate Chile’s forms of memorialization being reconciliation, reparation, and remembrance. Raw experiential depictions of real stories of violence represented by the victims in the memorials thus ask the viewer to empathize not only with the victims and survivors of hideous oppression but also to empathize with the *morality* of seeking reconciliation, to actively take part in overcoming the past to prevent violence in the future.

Bachelet relied on human rights organizations for the creation of an official archive in the MMHR. Official records, a database, and truth reports were provided from various human rights organizations’ collections. In her urgency to complete and inaugurate the project during her term, she announced a separate body of eight NGOs that had been working on a similar type of archive,⁷⁸ would give their documents to the MMHR archive project. The Center for Documentation hosts the Memory of the World archives. Still a work in progress, the center was

⁷⁷ Ibid., 128.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 256.

created by human rights organizations under the larger international umbrella of the International Advisory Committee and the Memory of the World Programme. Their impetus came from a growing awareness of the necessity to preserve, access, and document heritage that had been severely underreported due to social upheaval and a lack of resources.⁷⁹

This archival center brings together the architectural and commemorative textures of the museum; the museum's focus on human rights abuses and victims of the regime coupled with the enormity of the building centralizes the experience for the viewer. Here, visitors have access not just to the judicial records of the Rettig and Valech reports, but to evidence gathered by human rights groups, like AFDD, the Vicaría de la Solidaridad (Vicariate for Solidarity), and the Comité Pro Paz (Committee for Peace), that had been gathering materials since Pinochet's rule. Other activism by the AFDD and the Agrupación de Familiares Ejecutados-Políticos (AFEP) maintains the museum's texture through commemorative activities and temporary exhibits hosted within and outside of the museum. One such event, the International Day of the Detained and Disappeared (August 30), resulted from the commemorative collaboration between the museum and these aforementioned groups. The AFDD emphasize that "the fundamental thing is how we arrive at truth and justice. This is the task for which neither the government nor the armed forces have taken responsibility."⁸⁰ Activism surrounding archiving evidence and hosting cultural activities through the MMHR's initiatives allow for the museum to preach the universality of commemoration among a divided nation and brings together community-driven projects that focus on the power of human rights organizations that seek truth and preserve evidence.

⁷⁹ McKiernan, "Making Consensus Matter?"

⁸⁰ Cher Krause Knight, *A Companion to Public Art*, ed. Harriet F. Senie (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2016) 53.



Figure 2: Community celebration of the museum's second anniversary in 2012⁸¹

Archives as an activist tool help construct a narrative of the past that gives adequate emphasis on the pain and suffering of human rights abuse victims in Chile. In the debate over historical memory, archives are living documents in the ongoing pursuit of justice. Memory sites' textures rely on archived materials to continue remembrance, to move forward, and to embrace democratic governance.

While official insistence on state involvement in commemorative projects develops the state's own specific responsibilities in memorialization, the question remains whether a national narrative and state-sponsored memorialization create a 'partial memory,' thus molding the memorial itself as texturally contrived. The country placed less emphasis on the 'right' and 'left' and more on defending human rights and reconciling the past in order to move forward. The

⁸¹ Zachary McKiernan, "The Museum of Memory and Human Rights: Making Consensus Matter?"

institutionalized narrative displayed in the MMHR avoids a political stance not just in its exhibitions and collections, but in its serene architecture, strategic neutral location, and in its urgency to create a universal message. The museum's focus on defending human rights and exposing the human rights violations that occurred through archival evidence, allows the museum to defend the moral message of reconciliation, but also to create texture: striking in composition, emotionally charged, and a space of empathy, reflection, and remembrance.

Location: Urban Space and Memorials from the Grassroots

The social or collective interpretation of the past is partially established through the construction of physical sites of memory. A memorial's relationship with the urban landscape is vital to developing a memory space that transcends time and urbanization. Typically being situated in public spaces, memorials are comprised of a whole range of material and cultural elements associated with collective memory; including street signs, historical markers and plaques, statues, preserved sites, and parks. During their respective dictatorships, Argentine and Chilean streets were transformed; erasure their primary goal. The public landscape was remodeled to fit the aim of the dictatorship; in Buenos Aires, the regime masked their actions through a 'beautification' process aimed to erase social and political life. In Chile, Pinochet and his supporters were still present in society, leaving little room for commemorative activities.

A. (Re)Claiming Space in Argentina

The human rights movement has been and continues to be a powerful force and actor in the political enterprise of memory. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, for example, organized themselves and created high visibility and public mobilization, forming the backbone of the human rights movement in Argentina. Their role during the dictatorship was to offer support and a sense of comfort between other group members and victims, while constantly searching for their disappeared loved ones. After the transition, changing the "official" story of what happened during the dictatorship became their main agenda; focusing on eliminating fallacies of past accounts and to reveal legitimate stories that had been for too long, silenced. They were victims;

they had lost children and wanted to be recognized by the state as such, for the state to take full responsibility. They also pursued material reparations, promoted and participated in commemorations, memorials, monuments, and museums to have their voices heard and institutionalized.

Immediately after the armed forces took over the Argentine state, democratic activities were put to a halt; they banned free assembly and labor unions, controlled professional guilds, and student councils were made suspect.⁸² The exercise of free speech, including the exchange of ideas, was prohibited in public spaces, anything that had to do with “indoctrination, proselytizing, and agitation,”⁸³ was seen as part of the opposition. Turning public, free spaces into their antitheses happened immediately after the coup; communal space in Argentina was terminated and interrupted, especially in urban areas. Feitlowitz accounts a section from *La Prensa* Argentine newspaper which documented this takeover in the public landscape immediately following the military takeover. “The process of ‘beautification’ came immediately; walls were even ‘cleansed’ of their ‘filth.’”⁸⁴ This process signifies erasure of memory; erasure of any form of prior political life, including posters, murals, and graffiti that once lined the city’s landscape. Cities like Córdoba were to be “bright” and “beautiful.” Buenos Aires became the prime example of this “cleansing” process, where it was to showcase an “authoritarian not totalitarian” landscape.⁸⁵ This transformation is important in highlighting how the militarism process used modes of “purification” of the cities to mask and distract from the transition from democratic to authoritarian regime.

⁸² Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 176.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

The creation of this ominously pristine cityscape speaks to the ways in which the military used tactics to hide what was really happening during the Dirty War. Even poor neighborhoods and shanty towns were destroyed; the police and army personnel eradicated the slums in Buenos Aires by horrible means of night-time raids to round up inhabitants, load them into trucks, and release them beyond the city's limits.⁸⁶ For many Argentines living in the capital, there was a sense of normalcy combined with an eerie quality of military presence in the streets. At home, families were wondering where their children were and if they were alive or dead.

Disappearances were not hidden forever. Bodies were discovered by civilians in the outskirts of town, near deserted highways, in hidden streets, and washed up along the Atlantic Ocean and La Plata River. Most of the bodies were too ravaged to be identified. Feitlowitz accounts for a group of bystanders who witnessed a man being “wrestled violently from a green Ford Falcon, tied to the Obelisk in the Plaza de la República, and machine-gunned by the men (wearing civilian dress) who had transported him there.”⁸⁷ The importance of this specific site which sits directly in the middle of Buenos Aires is that it is a monument to democratic regime, it can be compared to the significance of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. However the Obelisk was a statue of democracy that was dramatically eradicated by the acts of state violence.

Yet the change in the public landscape also allowed for a human rights movement, largely driven by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, to mobilize and establish their cause, reclaiming these public spaces and demanding justice from the government in the forms of infamous protests and marches. Their utilization of public space and presence in international media was a problem for the military junta. Mobilizing out of the Plaza de Mayo was a deliberate

⁸⁶ Ibid., 180.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 183.

move to reclaim a public space that had been taken by the military. The space the Mothers reclaimed, the Plaza de Mayo, was constructed in 1580 for public executions, remaining a site of public punishment until 1813, when the Inquisition was banned from the country and torture outlawed. The Plaza de Mayo became, from that date, a symbol of protest, power, and a communal space for marches, strikes, and celebrations.⁸⁸

Feitlowitz describes the ‘two worlds’ in Argentina during the dictatorship: the world of the architects of the dictatorship, and the world of the civilians living without knowing the real atrocities happening and the victims that had silently been taken away. This bifurcation turned free public space into areas that are constantly observed, the capital city ‘transformed’ to erase its histories and ‘purify’ it; a cover for the horrendous acts of violence silently committed. Perpetrators lived among their victims, concentration camps were staffed by civilians hired to torture detained individuals, and public spaces like hospitals were transformed into concentration camps.⁸⁹ The amount of violence committed in these public spaces transformed the meaning of “public space.”

(Re)claiming public space in Argentina began with Argentina's first public space dedicated to the desaparecidos at the National University's School of Architecture and Urban Planning located in the city of La Plata. The school was highly politicized, as it was associated with progressive social change. Forty percent of the student body was killed by the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance, known as Triple A. Feitlowitz quotes a woman who escaped the school during the dictatorship and fled to Venezuela upon her return she recounts: “Remembrance must happen deep inside each one of us in a very personal process, but it must also happen in our physical environment. You cannot talk about ‘social’ on one side and ‘space’ on the other. It’s

⁸⁸ Ibid., 191.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 195.

dialectic, in which the two must have equal weight.”⁹⁰ She, along with another survivor, announced a competition for project proposals to create a space of commemoration at the school. Reclaiming this space meant directly involving the La Plata community as well as students who had fled the violence, totaling in 500 participants in the project. The winning project proposal used photos of the desaparecidos as an identification tool that placed their identities back into the space where they were once a part of, to take them out of a state of disappearance and plant them back into reality.

This commemoration, with the help of 500 participants, turned into a reunion and also brought together many young people, including the sons and daughters of students and others who were disappeared. Twenty-seven young people met at the ceremony, and not wanting to separate after thanking the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo “for giving [them] the truth of [their] history,” decided to go on a camping trip in the hills of Córdoba. There, seventy young people founded H.I.J.O.S. (“Children for Identity and Justice and Against Forgetting and Silence”) which was the first national network of children whose parents were disappeared, assassinated, or died in exile.⁹¹ Feitlowitz quotes one of the H.I.J.O.S., “We did not want to make a monument like those to which were historically accustomed to in the West. We did not want to make an object of contemplation, where the viewer looks up, passive and silent, at a massive form on a pedestal. Nor did we want the monument itself to be isolated, a thing alone. What we did want was a place for the hopes and concerns and anxieties of the coming generations who will – we hope – build on the model of social commitment that has always been a part of this school. The repression made for rupture; this is about continuity.”⁹²

⁹⁰ Ibid., 209.

⁹¹ Ibid., 211.

⁹² Ibid., 211-212.

The monument sits in the center of the outdoor space of the school; constructed of a special tree, the linden, which is known in La Plata for its strength. It is surrounded by an amphitheater that encloses the tree and allows people to gather under the shade of the linden. Designed so that the spiraling stairs are smooth but with some irregularity to the bricks, the stairs represent the dead and missing architecture students. At this junction of smoothness and irregularity are granite plaques with the names of victims. Meeting in the center of the space with a beautiful tree provides a sense of hope, being the lowest point below the stairs but also directly stemming out of the earth. The description of this monument shows how a project like this was solely constructed out of members of a wider community that felt this particular space, an institution of education representing design, urban planning, and progressive social change, must have a commemoration to the young victims who were stripped of their future.

By June 1996, there were over 500 H.I.J.O.S. in a large national network. Now, with communications technology like the internet to reach larger audiences, the network of H.I.J.O.S. is transnational. In Argentina, the network followed the same movement as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, by forming local groups that met in specific plazas and parks and recruited others who could be part of the large network of children whose parents and grandparents were disappeared by kidnapping, torture, and murder. H.I.J.O.S. has grown to over 18 chapters across Argentina, including the large expansion of members of disappeared people living in exile in Europe and other Latin American countries.⁹³

The students recognizably transformed the National University of La Plata. Their mobilization has turned the school into their 'own,' including naming the library after the first desaparecida from the School of Social Work. They also decided the school would not hold

⁹³ Edward L. Jackiewicz and Fernando J. Bosco, *Placing Latin America: Contemporary Themes in Geography* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 169.

classes on March 24, the day of the coup, and was the first school in Argentina to do so. Instead, they gather together; the Mothers, activists, scholars, and survivors, to take back their history. It is necessary to think of their mobilization online and in physical spaces as both material and symbolic. By catering to a wider audience online, they were able to expand their reach. Through the other *hijos* they met and the experiences they shared online, the group was able to implement these shared demands and grievances in physical public spaces. This came in the form of their notorious *escraches* (screeching) and demonstrations of marching and chanting to publicly denounce perpetrators of the Dirty War in front of their homes and neighbors. The H.I.J.O.S. message, using the method of *escraches* and spray painting the words *asesino, violador, raptor de niños* (murderer, rapist, child abductor) on the walls of perpetrators' homes are clear messages to the perpetrators that they cannot live among the rest of society as normal citizens. These messages are also symbolic to the H.I.J.O.S., as they are taking justice into their own hands, by publicly "outing" such perpetrators and reclaiming their public space.

B. Grassroots Memorials: the Paine Memorial

The Paine memorial is another example of Chile's readiness to officially take part in commemorative initiatives. The community of Paine, a rural community outside of Santiago, was specifically targeted for repression during the dictatorship. According to the official truth commission report, Paine suffered the highest per capita rate of disappearance than any other Chilean community during the dictatorship.⁹⁴ Families of the disappeared in Paine initiated a multipart grassroots memorial in collaboration with the Chilean government to address the atrocities that occurred in Paine.

⁹⁴ Collins, *The Politics of Memory in Chile*, 144.

The community, consisting of rural agricultural workers, largely worked on land owned by haciendas. With the agricultural reforms proposed by Allende in the 1970s, tensions intensified between workers and proprietors, as the expropriated land from wealthy landowners was redistributed. In 1973 after Pinochet's rise to power, landowners joined forces with the military police and persecuted the Paine citizens sympathetic to the Allende government. Paine was quickly ravaged by military force, and at least seventy Paine community members were disappeared, mainly in one night. What Paine community members could have hoped for with further reforms by Allende was rapidly destroyed; within the first two months of Chilean coup, more than 200 Paine citizens were detained and imprisoned. Of the disappeared and killed were students, agricultural workers, some businessmen, a schoolteacher, and political party activists.⁹⁵ The quick force and brutality by the military overwhelmingly shattered hopes for an egalitarian future.

What is particularly interesting about Paine's case besides the sheer quantity of violence, is that the community now consists of perpetrators living among victims' families, and this specific relationship affected the texture of the Paine Memorial. A powerful group created by women; the wives, sisters, in-laws, mothers, and friends of the disappeared in Paine endured a "ceaseless struggle"⁹⁶ of trying to get recognition for their disappeared loved ones among a community of military and police denying their claims. Considering the amount of violence in Paine, it would take years for this group of women to get their voices heard. The grief-filled women sought help through a human rights lawyer, Andrés Aylwin, who in 1974 helped the group ease their grief through death certificates and beginning prosecutions of those accountable.

⁹⁵ Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration*, 69.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

The Paine memorial is the representation of the true grief this group of women felt after losing family members and continuing to find ways to remember them. Moreover, as Hite curiously addresses, these women did not have time and were simply not allowed to mourn the loss of their loved ones. In a community where perpetrators lived amongst victims and where victims were constantly seen as the enemy, this group was continuously met with denial, hostility, and empty hopes regarding any answers about their loved ones. The memorial, thus, was the only way for the women of Paine to share their memories and creatively demand commemorating their loss.⁹⁷

In 1989 the Paine women walked through the streets of town demonstrating for truth and justice for the victims. In 1990, with new political leadership, the government found remains of fourteen bodies, and the newly appointed administrator for human rights cases called for mass exhumations around the country, including Paine. With the onset of public demonstrations and exhumations, the Paine memorial found its motivation: the horror of reliving the trauma, the silences out of violence, and the necessity to have a commemorative space. The group of women in Paine turned into a strong association known as the Association of Families of the Detained-Disappeared and Executed of Paine (AFDD-Paine),⁹⁸ who became crucial actors in the construction of the Paine memorial.

Officially inaugurated in 2008, the Paine memorial is a timber “forest” of 1,000 pine logs representative of the living descendants of Paine’s victims, minus seventy for the killed and disappeared. In the missing spaces, a collection of seventy memorial mosaics created by victims’ relatives to remember the lives lost and disappeared are displayed. The mosaics are represented through colorful icons and imagery, aiming to create ‘living memories’ of them while being

⁹⁷ Ibid., 75.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 80.

imprinted in their home landscape. The AFDD-Paine, in a collective cultural initiative with the children and grandchildren of the victims, conducted a survey prior to the memorial's construction and determined there were 1,000 descendants of the seventy men killed and disappeared in Paine. Due to this finding, the AFDD-Paine's idea for the monument was to focus on the integration of the community, the third generation of victims of Paine, and the recognition of Paine's events to the rest of the world.⁹⁹



Figure 3: Example of a Paine Memorial mosaic¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Memorial Paine, Memorial Paine, April 19, 2018, accessed April 30, 2018.

<http://memorialdepaine.org/memorial-paine-abre-registro-de-socios-para-sumar-mas-voluntades-por-la-verdad-y-la-justicia/>.

The rural experience is not often presented in Chile's commemoration efforts. The Paine memorial, however is a rare case, as it was created by fully three generations of Paine's killed and disappeared descendants. State sponsorship and the collaboration with state-financed artists came out of the recent official appreciation and political value of commemorations and memorials. Although helping the memorial come to fruition, the relationship between the state and Paine's family organizations was and continues to be a bureaucratic struggle. Moreover, the site's texture is affected by the presence of perpetrators living amongst victims and through the dedication by the families' organizations. It is driven by remembrance *living on*; a timber "forest" representative of Chile's Andes landscape is composed mainly of logs symbolic to the living descendants. This also speaks to Chile's mode of memorialization of reconciling the past, the site's texture embracing the beauty of memory and continuity with the past.

It is important to note, however, that the families involved in the Paine memorial did not originally approve of the design selected from a public contest by a jury of government officials, artists, architects, and representatives of human rights organizations. The Paine Memorial is due to the families' human rights organizations whose aesthetic was to protest minimalist design and memorial practices. They focused instead on the lived experiences of Paine families. For Paine family members who do not have records of their disappeared loved ones, the memorial ties together gaps in memory by providing catharsis.

C. Location and Marketing Memory in the Parque de la Memoria, Argentina

Situated on La Plata River in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, the Parque de Memoria (Memory Park) is controversial. The enormous 14-hectare sculpture park overlooks the very body of water where drugged, but living bodies, were thrown out of airplanes and drowned in the

depths. The distance from the city places the park outside the city walls, creating physical distance and a removed memorial space. The creation of this site, officially inaugurated in 2007, is wound-up in contentious issues concerning the memory of past trauma; remembering the difficult past conjoined with external forces like politics and economics that turn memory into physical form.

The park was originally proposed by a group of former students of the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires and family members of the disappeared, to honor the victims of state terrorism and acknowledge their passing in a public manner. The stimulus for the creation of the park was to respond to these issues and to have “the significance of testimony, of a symbolic remembrance and homage to those beings the dictatorship tried to erase and that the world knows now by the name of ‘desaparecidos,’ as well as to those who were murdered...Future generations will face here the memory of the horror committed and will become again conscious of the necessity to take care that these events will NEVER AGAIN be repeated.”¹⁰¹ The park, from a proponents’ point of view, aims to connect the present to the past, to never forget the events that occurred and the loved lives lost. However, with a memory project of this size with both the government and human rights groups working to plan and create such a space, it becomes intertwined with personal, political, and economic factors that make these processes more difficult. The tug-of-war between the creative and the practical are about commemoration and commodification; how to turn memory into physical form.

During the time of the ‘memory boom’ that followed the infamous testimonies of Adolfo Scilingo about the death flights, Buenos Aires was going through a period of reconnecting the public with La Plata River. The government mandated the park be situated along the river; to

¹⁰¹ Nancy Gates-Madsen, *Accounting for Violence Marketing Memory in Latin America*, ed. Ksenija Bilbija and Leigh A. Payne (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 152-153.

attract visitors to the park and to the newly developed river area. The commission formed to oversee the project included representatives from the city's government, as well as ten human rights organizations, each one having a member represented on the commission (such as the *Mothers* and *Grandmothers* organizations). Economic factors like the 2001 economic crisis as well as the 2007 change to a more conservative city government, altered the creation and implementation of the project. Even in present day, many sculptures in the park already need maintenance before others are installed. How was the texture of the Parque de la Memoria subsequently altered not only by economic factors but by its location and disagreement among human rights activist groups and artist communities?

Many human rights groups and artists opposed the government officially sanctioning a site of memory, considering their notorious reluctance to acknowledging the violence that occurred. Hebe de Bonafini and her branch of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Association resisted memorialization practices sponsored by the state and those who have contributed to cultural erasure and amnesia of the violence, viewing memorialization tied to these individuals as keeping memory in the past and closing the door on victims whose names have not been accounted for. Bonafini's group of the *Mothers* along with other groups had a common goal to continue to promote memory of the dictatorship and not to create "cemeteries to bemoan [their] dead."¹⁰² For them, permanent fixtures of memory should not be created until the government accepts full responsibility and accounts for all of the victims.¹⁰³ This resistance to established memorial projects draws attention to the contention between human rights groups and the state, especially when a group like the *Mothers* was so polarized, and when many other groups and individuals wanted to have a space of fixed reflection and commemoration.

¹⁰² Bell, *The Art of Post-dictatorship*, 82.

¹⁰³ Gates-Madsen, *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America*, 157.

The park's unique, remote location outside the center of Buenos Aires is due to the partnership between the city, human rights groups, the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA), and the Ciudad Universitaria, in order to get the project off the ground and to attract more visitors to the riverbanks of La Plata.¹⁰⁴ Although there is symbolic significance of the river (where bodies were thrown off planes to be disappeared), the "Buenos Aires and the River Initiative" promoted recreational use of the waterway and highlighted the area's natural beauty. The location, situated along these banks, can seem intrusive, reminding visitors of the many lives lost in the water. Though its location was planned to be a positive use of the river, for individuals who lost loved ones due to state violence in this river, it remains a solemn place. Even with the park's symbolic location on La Plata River, it does not possess the same emotionally charged sentiment with memories of the violent past, like the ESMA and other detention centers. Instead, the Parque de Memoria has to "market" itself as a legitimate site of memory.¹⁰⁵

Designing the space came down to two open proposal competitions, one for the Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism and another for the surrounding sculptures for the remainder of the park. The monuments' proposals came from within the School of Architecture at the University of Buenos Aires, and the second competition was open internationally and judged by a panel of international activists, artists, art critics, and museum curators. By holding an open international competition for the remaining sculptures and the fact that most of the winning designs were created by non-Argentines, the purpose of a local, Argentine memorial seems to degrade the purpose of a local, Argentine memorial space. Holding an international competition was essential to market the site's visibility among a wider audience. This also led to the abstract forms of representation throughout the park, which many artists and architects

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 160.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 161-162.

advocated better represent an ongoing memorial process, however for victims and their families, they preferred more traditional forms that accurately represent those they lost.

On the other side, there is an installation in the park titled “Carteles de la Memoria” or “Signs of Memory” created by the art collective and human rights group Grupo de Arte Callejero. The group consists of young artists who predominantly work outside of traditional representational forms. In this project, they worked with the human rights organization H.I.J.O.S. in their public ostracizing “escraches” of former perpetrators of state terror. For the park, the group created a series of fifty-three street signs of past violence, like the kidnapping of pregnant mothers, home invasions, the role of the Church in contributing to violence, and current issues like a sign with the amount of foreign debt. Almost confused for real street signs, GAC’s sign installations are also reclaiming structures of power; marketing the truth by using normal objects in nontraditional forms. The conjoined work of the escraches with the art signs asks the viewer to be immersed in the performative experience, and the signs situate the viewer from the performance to the fixed state, directly connecting the performance to the violence. The signs comment on the structures of power and authority that society seamlessly adheres to, and asks the viewer to become a participant by locating the spectator from their whereabouts and transports them to the actual crime committed.¹⁰⁶ The first sign in the installation with the words “YOU ARE HERE,” asks the spectator to locate their body among the installation.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 170.



Figure 4: Example of GAC's sign installations at the Parque de la Memoria¹⁰⁷

Anti-monument sensibility is anti-authoritarian. The idea of the “anti” or “counter-monument” is prevalent in the park. This predominately stems from the concept that memories are still open wounds and should be treated this way, without putting them to ‘rest,’ and furthermore, that injustices of the past cannot be forgiven through the work of memorialization. Anti or counter-memorials reject the voice of the state in memorial projects.

With this drive, human rights groups, art collectives, and activists, created sculptures in the park that refute reconciliation, provoking questions that expose these open wounds and the lack of marking identities. Identities were voided when they were disappeared, and this commemorative method also signals to the many, still unidentified individuals who are unmarked. This type of

¹⁰⁷ Parque De La Memoria - Memory Park, Atlas Obscura, accessed April 30, 2018. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/parque-de-la-memoria>.

unsettledness presented through the various sculptures asks the viewer to participate in the gaping wound. In the main monument, Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado (Monument to the Victims of State Terror), the four large disjointed walls contain the 30,000 names of the disappeared and murdered inscribed alphabetically with the dates of their kidnappings. Several of the name plaques are intentionally left blank, indicating that the process of identification is still incomplete, and the memorial itself, is therefore unfinished.

Vikki Bell describes her tour of the park as an eerie experience and unfinished in tone. The placing of the sculptures, due to economic, political, and contentious artistic and activist ideas, has been a slow process. Not very welcoming to visitors, it is contradictory to the plan of the park becoming a type of urban development project to attract visitors to La Plata River area. Bell describes not only are bureaucratic issues present, but there is a clear tension between “landscape and human endeavor, between the landscape’s tendency to forgetting and the park’s insistence on the need to remember...”¹⁰⁸ The scale of the monument with its disconnected walls echoes to the immense quantity of names inscribed, the names perhaps overpowering, yet they ask the viewer to acknowledge the quantification of violence.

Those who have been touched by the monument have a much more personal, individual response to the monument. But is the visitor supposed to move through the names and pass by each wall? By passing through the monument, is the visitor merely following a design implemented by the state to navigate through the park? There is a sense of fleetingness for the visitor unattached to the thousands of names displayed, but for the individual searching for a specific name, they must follow the multiplicity of names before finding singularity.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Bell, *The Art of Post-dictatorship*, 83.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.



Figure 5: Monument to Victims of State Terror¹¹⁰

In stark difference to the ESMA memorial, the Parque de la Memoria is not haunted or representative of past ghosts. While the ESMA implements direct textural results from the human rights movement, the memorial park is an example of how its texture is transformed from the lack of human rights in its implementation, but the presence of human rights groups and artists using counter-memorial methods in individual aspects of the park. Despite the park's out of reach location and somewhat low visibility, activists, artists, and human rights organizations utilized and reclaimed the space designed by the state, and molded it into a type of experimental space. Although the government intended to create an urban remodeling project for La Plata River area which is symbolic for violence, human rights groups and artists aim to reconstruct Argentina's national memory through commemorative anti-memorial projects as seen in the park. While the density and enormity of the Monument to Victims of State Terror can be

¹¹⁰ Parque De La Memoria - Memory Park, Atlas Obscura.

regarded as passive, it speaks to the anti-memorial trope by mixing multiplicity with the embodied experience of finding singularity; it demands viewers to be aware of the lives lost due to state terrorism and the wound that will never be healed in Argentine society. With varying degrees of support from human rights and artist groups to outward opposition from other groups against the state, the Parque de la Memoria in these ways is the complete representation of Argentina's mode of memorialization; to not reconcile the past, keep memories alive, and continue to demand recognition and accountability.

Conclusion

Looking at the history of memory studies is important to understanding the contexts of Argentina and Chile's modes of memorialization. In the aftermath of the destruction of World War II, memory studies as a field pertaining to how whole societies memorialize violent pasts became pivotal in nations' physical and emotional rebuilding. Modern historical memory studies evolved from the work of French and German scholars who were grappling with how problematic parts of their histories were transmitted to social memory, including how the Nazi period affected societal memory.¹¹¹ The term "collective memory" refers to the shared pool of knowledge in the memories of a social group, which can be passed on and further constructed through the generations. Emerging as a term in the second half of the twentieth century, its sociological definition is critical when analyzing and exploring the construction and social meanings of monuments and memorials after devastating events such as the Holocaust. Not only is this term used to explain how whole societies rebuild while still acknowledging the atrocities and commemorating the victims of the past, but it is also essential to the narrative of those living in present day.

Holocaust memorials in Germany influenced sites of memory in Argentina and Chile. For example, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Chile takes Chile's past and transforms it into a universal lesson of human rights and democracy for the present and future generations. The MMHR stuck to a model of memorial museums borrowed from the Holocaust by connecting the memory of the dictatorship in Chile to a generalized meaning of memorialization: upholding human rights and democracy. However, in sending the message of universality, international

¹¹¹ Wilde, *The Politics of Memory in Chile*, 31-32.

expectations and ideals for coming to terms with violent pasts can hinder the complexities and particularities of the events, leaving out important details of history and in ways only exhibiting partial memories. This tension is a common critique of memorial museums, as Sodaro writes on the MMHR, “While the forms used to remember past violence may be global, the violence that they remember is located and particular in a way that can be lost in what can seem a generic, one-size-fits-all memory container.”¹¹²

Memorialization in Berlin also brought forth the conception of “counter-memorials,” sites not sanctioned by the government or without financial support from local governments. Instead, they are produced by activists, organizations, artists, and survivors, who, as larger-scale memorials are erected among the city, find deeper resonance by not conforming to the voice of the state. Similarly, in Argentina, human rights groups, art collectives, and activists utilize this method of counter-memorial or “anti-memorial,” to what they think, better embodies commemorative practices. As mentioned, in the streets of Buenos Aires, the group H.I.J.O.S. publicly denounces perpetrators from the Dirty War by using *escraches*, (literally screaming), marching, and protesting in front of their homes. Other human rights groups like Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, see fixed, government-sanctioned memorials to detract from the living memories of their loved ones. Like the *escraches* in Argentina, artists, activists, and human rights groups in Chile also use counter-memorial practices. The Funa, a social justice group similar to H.I.J.O.S., uses direct-action public displays to ‘out’ or ostracise former torturers at their homes or workplaces. By not conforming to the state, such groups are able to reclaim commemorative practices and public space, taking memory into their own hands.

¹¹² Sodaro, *Museum of Memory and Human Rights*, 133.

Generational studies, how generations deal with, interpret, and pass on memories of difficult pasts, stems from Holocaust studies as well. There are children born during the Holocaust who were too young to understand its context and children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors who grew up with a deep sense of what happened through the memories of their elders. Generations evoke important questions about how those memories are consciously and unconsciously transmitted throughout the generations. In Argentina and Chile, there are generations of individuals who feel deeply connected to their elders' pasts and are still discovering how to make sense of the memories in current life. Trauma, as shown from Holocaust studies, is transferred throughout and within generations.

Retribution and Reconciliation throughout the Globe

In keeping with the concept that memorialization out of violent pasts is universal, interesting comparisons can be made with other countries' experiences. Both the South African and Chilean governments believe truth-telling and reconciliation to be interdependent objectives. With South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and memorials to victims of apartheid, a national narrative was constructed about reconciling the past and humanizing perpetrators and victims. Archbishop Tutu reinforced the narrative through the TRC, and Nelson Mandela made a point to visit the contested apartheid symbol, the Boer Voortrekker Monument, in 2002. In Chile, the government created a truth commission to balance polarized views of the causes of repression and political violence, and aimed to find a consensus on human rights principles by both "sides."

Coming out of decades of racial apartheid that legally allowed for thousands of deaths and the marginalization of millions, South Africa's first democratic government set up the TRC. Like in Chile's case with the Rettig and Valech truth commissions, the TRC was framed under

reconciliation; emphasizing truth, investigation, and acknowledgement of the atrocities under apartheid. With more than 7,000 confessions of perpetrators and about 20,000 statements from victims,¹¹³ the TRC aimed to unify the country's polarized political sides. As seen in both countries, the insistence of reconciliation through "restorative justice" can be understood as the government's need for political stability; in South Africa between the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party, and in Chile between Pinochet loyalists and the political left. Furthermore, both countries implemented amnesty laws that pardoned perpetrators in the name of reconciliation and unification.

While Chile's past is still highly contested, memorialization seeks not to "forget," but instead, to demand remembrance through acceptance of the official narrative. That narrative, as seen through the MMHR and the Paine Monument, is acknowledging vast human rights abuses and focusing on victims of such crimes. As seen through the activism of the human rights movement in Chile, their role has not only been to provide evidence through investigations and truth commissions but to also archive the evidence in memorials to continue to teach lessons of human rights and the promotion of democracy. The MMHR's texture embodies Chile's national narrative through the activist tool of archiving. In South Africa's AUHRM, the national narrative of reconciliation is also proposed through activist tools of archiving. The memorial will support a permanent memorial to victims of mass atrocities and genocide and house a research and documentation center through a collective effort by various activist and human rights groups. Through these examples, we can see how human rights activism in documenting and archiving evidence of past atrocities affects memorialization and the textures of commemorative projects.

¹¹³ "Exploring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," South Africa: Overcoming Apartheid, accessed April 28, 2018. <http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/unit.php?id=65-24E-3&page=2>.

Germany's mode of "retributive justice," as seen through the Nuremberg Trials, can be compared to Argentina's use of reconciliation through their trials of Dirty War perpetrators. Retribution relies on trials to prosecute perpetrators of human rights violations and hold them accountable for their actions. The true value of the Nuremberg criminal trials against members of the Nazi regime was not just about the conviction of perpetrators but also about forcing the public to come to terms with their recent, repressed past. The trials, especially that of the 1963-1965 Auschwitz Trial, brought memory to the forefront after long periods of amnesia. Similarly, in Argentina, trials of the architects of the Dirty War and confessions by perpetrators like Adolfo Scilingo's, reawakened memory in the public.

Commemorating the Holocaust has been widely controversial. Located on the expanse between the Brandenburg Gate, Potsdamer Platz, and Hitler's former chancellery in central Berlin, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (known as the Holocaust Memorial), resides. It was originally conceived as a monument to all of the Nazi's victims, but due to long and contentious human rights activism led by the German activist Lea Rosh, the memorial is solely associated with Jews killed in the Holocaust and is located in a visible part of Berlin.

While the Holocaust Memorial is representative of large-scale commemoration financed by the state, there is a recent emergence of counter-memorial efforts led by human rights activism as well. In homage to the Holocaust Memorial, a smaller version of the memorial was constructed outside the home of a member of the far-right Alternative for Germany party by the Berlin-based art collective, Center for Political Beauty.¹¹⁴ The project's purpose is to publicly shame this man in front of his home. This can be compared to Argentina's counter-memorial

¹¹⁴ Adam Taylor, "Activists Build a Mini-Holocaust Memorial outside German Far-right Politician's House," *The Washington Post*, November 22, 2017, accessed April 28, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/11/22/activists-build-a-mini-holocaust-memorial-outside-german-far-right-politicians-house/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.82e62c30785b.

efforts by H.I.J.O.S. and the Grupo de Arte Callejero that publicly ostracized Dirty War perpetrators. Furthermore, Berlin's Stumbling Stones memorial reclaims the streets through installations of bricks identifying where Jews were forcibly removed. With the help of wide-reaching activism, the project has extended to 30,000 commemorative bricks throughout Germany. In both Germany and Argentina, human rights activist projects and counter-memorials are part of the anti-redemptive nature that brings trauma of the past to the present, rather than fixing them solely to the past.

We have seen that historical 'truth' of violent pasts comes in different forms. While Argentina and Chile share similarities of the breakdown in democracy, brutal dictatorships during the same time period, and democratic transitions, we see that Argentina applies retribution and Chile extends reconciliation following their violent pasts. The constant in both cases has proven to be the human rights movement, whose activism has transformed both memorial landscapes; altering the textures of memorials in society.

There are two alternative arguments that can explain the divergence in Argentina and Chile's modes of memorialization: the differences in their democratic transitions and the state of their economies pre-and post-dictatorship. While these arguments offer compelling explanations, memorialization is, however, primarily due to how the human rights movement "framed" their demands towards their respective governments. Their action-oriented sets of demands; through political demonstrations and seeking truth, justice, and acknowledgement by the government for the violence of the past, allowed the human rights movement to mobilize and motivate collective action that resonated with the public. In doing so, they subsequently transformed the textures of Argentina's and Chile's memorials and commemorative activities; with a strong emphasis on living memories, victims, and upholding human rights.

As shown through these examples, commemoration efforts and memorials are universal lessons that aim to promote democracy, human rights, and never again let the past repeat itself. Although Argentina and Chile largely diverge on methods of retribution and reconciliation, their memorial landscapes would not exist without the activism of human rights organizations. Their work in demonstrations and protests, preservation and archiving, and their political, social, economic, and creative demands in memorials, reconstruct and transform memorials' textures to fit their modes of memorialization. In Argentina, the ESMA memorial is preserved as it was used during the dictatorship to keep the 'ghosts of the past.' The Parque de la Memoria delivers an experimental, anti-memorial experience for visitors. In Chile, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights relies on archival evidence to teach lessons of the past. The Paine Memorial has a strong emphasis on the on the living descendants of the community's disappeared.

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