Creative Insurgencies in Postdictatorial(ising) Brazil: Memory Conflicts, Artistic Practices, and Political Activism

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Luis Eduardo Quintão Guerra, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of PhD, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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Date: 14 September 2023.

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge and give my warmest thanks to my supervisor Timothy Laurie and my co-supervisor Ilaria Vanni Accarigi who made this work possible. Their guidance was essential in all stages of my project. I would also like to thank the panel members who made brilliant comments and suggestions to this thesis—particularly to Paul Allatson who besides contributing to this project as a panel member also copyedited and proofread the final document.

I would also like to give special thanks to all participants involved in this research whose work as political activists served not only as the object of analysis for this thesis but also as a source of hope and inspiration to myself across the last few years. Their perseverance during this period brings justice to the voice of past guerrilla fighters: "the only fight that can be lost is the abandoned fight."

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their continuous support throughout this journey, and to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my auntie Celene Quintão and my friend André Soares, both victims of COVID-19.

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the historical conditions for and creative practices around memory activism in post-dictatorial Brazil during and following the National Truth Commission (2012). Drawing on interviews with activists engaged in the struggle for memory, truth, and justice, the thesis examines the ways that collective memory regarding the dictatorship period (1964–1985) is disputed by non-State actors through creative modes of representation and performance, including street demonstrations, *escrachos* (public "naming and shaming"), critical toponymy, and urban installation. The thesis argues that young activists were impacted by State-sponsored initiatives, particularly those implemented from 2007 onwards, while seeking to extend its institutional limits to include popular participation. Working at the intersections of aesthetic experimentation and political expression, the activist collectives considered in this thesis also constructed critical dialogues between past and present, both by reworking critical art practices developed in the 1970s and by drawing attention to the legacies of the dictatorship period, including the continuing lack of accountability for many perpetrators of human rights violations. Drawing on frameworks from collective memory studies, studies in cultural trauma, and emerging scholarship on memory activism, the thesis demonstrates both the importance of State-led initiatives for reckoning with past State violence and its legacies in the present, and of participatory and public social actions to supplement and extend these State-led initiatives.

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GLOSSARY OF POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS AND PARTIES

ALN – *Ação Libertadora Nacional* / National Liberation Alliance

ARENA – *Aliança Renovadora Nacional* / National Renovation Alliance

CBA – *Comites Brasileiros pela Anistia* / Brazilian Committee for Amnesty

CEMDP – *Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos* / Special Commission on Political Deaths and Disappearances

CFMDP – *Comissão de Familiares de Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos* / Families' Commission of the Political Dead and Disappeared)

CONCLAT – *Conferência Nacional da Classe Trabalhadora* / National Conference of the Working Class

CUT – *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* / Central Workers Union Confederation,

GTNM – *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais* / Group Torture Never More

MDB – *Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* / Brazilian Democratic Movement

MFPA – *Movimento Feminino Pela Anistia* / Women's Movement for Amnesty

MR-8 – *Movimento Revolucionário 8 de Outubro* / October 8th Revolutionary Movement

MTNM – *Movimento tortura Nunca Mais* (Movement Torture Never More)

PCB – *Partido Comunista Brasileiro* / Brazilian Communist Party

PCBR – *Partido Comunista Brasileiro Revolucionário* / Revolutionary Brazilian Communist Party

PCdoB – *Partido Comunista do Brasil* / Communist Party of Brazil

PCR – *Partido Comunista Revolucionário* / Revolutionary Communist Party

PDT – *Partido Democrático Trabalhista* / Labour Democratic Party

PMDB – *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* / Brazilian Democratic Movement Party

POLOP – *Organização Revolucionária Marxista–Política Operária* / Marxist Revolutionary Organization–Workers' Politics

PSB – *Partido Socialista Brasileiro* / Brazilian Socialist Party

PSDB – Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira / Party of Brazilian Social Democracy

PT – *Partido dos Trabalhadores* / Workers' Party / Labour Party

VPR – *Vanguarda Popular Revolucionária* / Revolutionary Popular Vanguard

INTRODUCTION

> *Brazil deserves the truth [about its dictatorial past]; the new generations deserve the truth; and above all those who lost friends and relatives, and that continue suffering as if they died again and always, every day. (…) if there are children with no parents, parents with no grave, if there are graves with no bodies; there can't be a history with no voice. (Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil, May 2012. De Souza & Alencastro, 2012).*[1]

> *The President does not consider 31 March 1964 a military coup; he considers that society perceived the danger the country was under during that moment, and military and civilians together were able to recover and reposition our country towards a better route (…). (Jair Bolsonaro, President of Brazil, through his spokesman, March 2019. Mazui, 2019a).*

The song *Meu caro amigo* (My Dear Friend), written by Chico Buarque de Hollanda and released in 1976, is a letter to a dear friend who finds himself living on another planet. One of the key lyrics is the following: "here on earth people are playing football, there is a lot of *samba*, *choro* and rock and roll, some days are rainy, others are sunny, but what I want to tell you is that things are bad." Metaphors were a common device used by artists to avoid censorship during the dictatorship period in Brazil, and in this context, one understands that the characters are not on different planets, but in different countries due to exile. Despite Brazil's apparent normality of football and samba, "things are bad" because of the violent dictatorial regime still in place during the mid-1970s. But let us stick with Chico Buarque de Hollanda's metaphors and take this interplanetary friendship from the dictatorial period to Brazil's current democracy that is said to have begun in 1985 with the first civilian President. In 1995, this friend from another planet would hear that President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (a.k.a. FHC) had acknowledged and apologized for the atrocities committed during the dictatorship. Only in 2012 would they learn that the country had initiated its first National Truth Commission aiming to investigate and report on the crimes committed by the State during the dictatorial regime. But how would this friend from another planet feel upon receiving another letter, dated from 2019, saying that the State was now denying the crimes committed during the dictatorship and even encouraging celebrations of that period? How could Chico Buarque de Hollanda explain to this friend that seven years after the main State's official recognition of its responsibility for over more than 434 deaths, its own historical discourse would be contradicted by the State itself?

To understand this shift is not an easy task (for aliens and earthlings both). To do so it would be necessary, first, to look back at the social, political, and economic tensions that led to the military coup in 1964 and the consolidation of the authoritarian regime. Second, there is a need to assess the challenges and limitations of transitional justice in Brazil during subsequent democratic governments, identifying the actors and conflicts surrounding the development of institutional mechanisms to reckon with the dictatorial past. Third, there must be analysis of the evolution of memory policies during the 21st century when Brazil started its turn to memory by "slowly abandoning its previous discourse of reconciliation by institutionalized forgetting in favour of a new one based on reconciliation by institutionalized memory" (Atencio, 2014, p. 17) and reached its peak with the creation of Brazil's first National Truth Commission in

[1] All translations from the Portuguese in this thesis are by the author.

2012. Fourth, and here lies the key focus of this thesis, it is necessary to explore the effect of such policies on society and how they animated more demands for truth, memory, and justice, especially those produced by young activists. Fifth, and finally, the analysis must address to what extent this "turn to memory" and the work of young activists contributed to transitional, particularly considering the changes in the State and civil society that enabled the rise of dictatorial nostalgia that would culminate in the election of the militarized government of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018. These five lines of inquiry, which correspond to those adopted in this thesis, would allow Chico's "friend from another planet" to have a socially grounded perspective on the contemporary memory conflicts in Brazil. Moreover, it might lead him to realize that unresolved traumas from dictatorial pasts can come back to haunt democracy—a useful thing to know, just in case his planet also finds itself under the socioeconomic conditions of modern capitalism.

Part 1 of this thesis, comprising Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4, provides a political and cultural contextualization of the dictatorial period and explores the ways that key actors in the State and organized civil society have disputed the construction of collective memory and national identity. Chapter 1 presents the theoretical framework and methods adopted in the research. This chapter also highlights the importance of interdisciplinary theoretical approaches developed within Brazil and Latin America to understand the social and cultural contexts of memory conflicts in the Brazilian post-dictatorship. In this sense, the sociological frameworks of memory inaugurated by Maurice Halbwachs (1992), and advanced in more recent works by Aleida Assman (2011), Astrid Erll (2011), and Marianne Hirsch (2012), and those produced by scholars engaged in social movements and activist studies, such as Charles Tilly (2006), Donatella Della Porta (2006), and Jeffrey Alexander (2006), are combined with Latin American authors such as Elizabeth Jelin (2003), Caroline Bauer (2014), Carlos Fico (2017), and Edson Teles and Renan Quinalha (2020). This interdisciplinary approach to my research aims to provide the theoretical basis for comprehending the material and symbolic negotiation of competing practices of memorialisation.

In addition to the conceptual and methodological accountings for this research, Part 1 of the thesis also delineates the main characteristics of the memories around dictatorship in Brazil. In this respect, Chapter 2 investigates the social and political circumstances of the dictatorial regime by drawing on historical and cultural accounts of the period—for this reason Chapter 2 is separated into two subsections (one focusing on political aspects of the dictatorship, the other on cultural trends). Chapter 3 examines the approach to transitional justice adopted in Brazil, focusing on the institutional mechanisms developed for promoting retroactive justice from the Amnesty Law (1979) to the beginning of the first National Truth Commission (2012). Chapter 4 consists of a closer look at the State terrorism's[2] *modus operandi* (e.g., censorship, arbitrary imprisonment, disappearances, torture, and assassination) from 1964 to 1985 and how it affected Brazilian society as a whole and more specifically victims' relatives. At the same time, the chapter provides an overview of the first unofficial social initiatives demanding the right for truth and justice regarding dictatorial State violence.

Part 2 of this thesis, Chapters 5 to 10, consists of an investigation into the experiences and reflections of young generations engaged in the struggle for memory, truth, and justice regarding the Brazilian dictatorial past. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with key activists, Part 2 investigates how these generations – mainly those born during or after the transition – were actively involved in the disputes around Brazilian dictatorial memory and how they reacted to the emergence of revisionist discourses and exaltations of the military

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[2] The term "State terrorism" is frequently used in academic studies to address State violence in Latin American dictatorial regimes. In this thesis I understand State terrorism as "a threat or act of violence by agents of the state that is intended to induce extreme fear in a target audience, so that they are forced to consider changing their behaviour in some way" (Blakeley, 2009, p. 1).

dictatorship after 2014. In short, Part 2 explores memory activists' motivations and tactical preferences for opening spaces to elaborate and broadcast symbolic representations of the dictatorial past.

Chapter 5 assesses how institutional initiatives motivated second and third generations of dictatorial victims (which includes directly and indirectly affected victims) towards political activism. Chapter 6 analyses activists' use of urban public spaces as resources for disputing memory by focusing on actions of street renaming and street-art. Chapter 7 draws on performance-based theories to analyse the actions of public "naming and shaming" known as *escrachos* against those who have perpetrated or enabled human rights violations during the dictatorship period. Chapter 8 explores the aesthetic realm of memory conflicts by analysing the influence of past artistic tendencies on contemporary projects of memory activism. In Part 2 of the thesis Chapter 9 focuses on the trajectory and activities of collective FN-MVJ created by children and grandchildren of victims of State violence during the dictatorship. Chapter 9 demonstrates the potential of therapeutic projects in transforming individual suffering into an instrument of politicized citizenship.

Chapter 10 takes this investigation through the turbulent years of 2013 through 2018, the latter year marked by the election of Jair Bolsonaro's government. This chronological move aims to explore the main factors that contributed to the break in Brazil's turn to memory and the emergence of dictatorial nostalgia in the public sphere and governmental stances. Taking the investigation to the present day will also lead to a problematization of both the limits of current political activism in demanding truth, memory, and justice, and the limits of post-dictatorial democracies such as Brazil in dealing with their traumatic pasts.

I conclude by revisiting the warning given by different governments in our recent democracy and repeated by President Lula when he signed the Third Human Rights Program that requested the creation of a National Truth Commission (CNV, 2014, p. 20): "by fully knowing what happened during that unfortunate period of our republican life" Brazil will be able to avoid the repetition of past State atrocities. However, looking at recent examples of dictatorial nostalgia in Brazil's political debates, it is possible to question whether uncovering the truth is enough if it is not embraced socially and if it does not enable justice. Drawing on my analysis of the proliferation of contemporary memory activism between 2010 and 2014, I argue that younger generations were key actors during what Atencio refers to as Brazil's turn to memory (characterized by State-led initiatives between 2007 – 2014) due to their potential in expanding the limits of social participation to which previous generations might have accommodated themselves. I explore their political goals towards ending Brazil's culture of impunity regarding past and present State violence, and in this respect I highlight their limitations in producing structural changes. However, I also call attention to their creative potential in exploring forms of processing Brazil's dictatorial past that prioritise social participation and demand justice to be included in the country's efforts towards reconciliation. I argue that the analysed examples of contemporary memory activism in post-dictatorial Brazil were motivated by the "window of opportunity" enabled by State-led initiatives, while seeking to expand their limits through participatory forms of representing and processing the past.

PART 1: MEMORY CONFLICT IN BRAZIL AND ITS CONTEXTS

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN THE CONTEXT OF STATE VIOLENCE

> *Memory, on which history draws and which it nourishes in return, seeks to save the past in order to serve the present and the future. Let us act in such a way that collective memory may serve the liberation and not the enslavement of human beings. (Le Goff, 1992, p. 99)*

In 1964, the *Dictionary of the Social Sciences* claimed that the word memory was being used with less frequency in relation to terms such as "remembering" (Gould & Kolb, 1964). According to Klein (2000), the word was also missing in the 1968 edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. While this disinterest in the word remains unexplored by critics, many scholars nonetheless speak in terms of a "memory boom" to address the proliferation of memory discourses in the past decades. Huyssen (2003) refers to a "culture of memory" that became pervasive in the North Atlantic since the late 1970s, but especially in the late 1980s. Joel Candau (2009) uses the term "mnemotropismo" to explain this obsession with memory (expressed for example in commemorations, memory conflicts, and the taste for biographies) in our contemporary societies. In relation to this culture of memory Pierre Nora (1998) explains: "Some have witnessed a compulsive return of a repressed past, while others have searched for 'roots' or a 'national heritage.' There has been a bedlam of commemorations, a mushrooming of museums, and a revitalization of tradition in all its forms. No era has ever been as much a prisoner of its memory, as subject to its empire and its law" (Nora, 1998, p. xii).

The re-emergence of memory in the humanities and social sciences can be explained as the result of a "commemorative fever" (Misztal, 2003, p. 2) that included the fiftieth anniversary marking the end of World War II, the growing interest in ethnic groups' memories, the revival of debates about the Holocaust and the Vichy regime in France, and the end of the Cold War. It can also be explained by the growing importance of films, sites of memory, autobiographic genres, and the re-evaluation of national pasts in recently democratized societies such as post-apartheid South Africa, post-genocide Rwanda and Nigeria, post-dictatorial Latin America, and post-colonial Australia. Thus, the interest in the possibilities of memory as a conceptual tool has been explored in scholars' attempts to comprehend how societies remember and how they incorporate the past into the present.

Over the past two decades "memory as an interdisciplinary phenomenon has become a key concept of academic discourse across established fields" (Erll, 2011, p. 1). In this chapter I provide an overview of such an interdisciplinary phenomenon and explain my choice for working within it. In addition, I delineate the theoretical and methodological scope adopted in this thesis to investigate memory conflicts and political action in the present.

1.1 Why memory and what memory?

Memory is crucial to human lives and as such it has been explored by so many across history—from Plato's and Aristotle's metaphors such as the "wax tablet" to Enlightenment philosophers such as John Locke and modern psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud. At the same time, memory takes place within the social circumstances of the present. Although we remember individually, we do so within social frameworks. As Hoskins says: "Without frameworks, memories would flicker like dreams without anchors in the theatre of consciousness" (2016, p. 348). This means that through memory we can make sense of our present social circumstances and it is within our present social circumstances that we make sense of the past. Similarly, our

interest in memory also take place in accordance with the social circumstances in place. That is, the various accounts about how we remember as individuals, as societies, as collectivities, as nations, evolved in tandem with economic, philosophical and scientific demands. For instance, if the philosophical tradition of the Enlightenment favoured objectivist accounts of memory, the individualist facet of Romanticism favoured subjectivist approaches based on experience, such as Bergson's.

Henri Bergson's (1990) rejection of objectivist accounts of memory as a passive reproduction of the past enabled an understanding of memory as an active and fluid factor within human experience. Bergson's understanding would be later explored by Durkheim in relation to commemorative symbols and rituals in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1995). Later, one of Durkheim's students, Maurice Halbwachs (1992), would further elaborate on the relevance of the past in producing a sense of collective identity. Halbwachs's studies on the social frameworks of memory would grant him a prominent position as the founding father of contemporary memory studies.

In *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (1992) Halbwachs analyses the manifestations of collective memory within family traditions, religious groups and social classes, demonstrating that the production of memory depends on the collective frameworks "to reconstruct an image of the past, which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 40). Halbwachs observes that our recollections depend on placing ourselves within a group that will provide the means to reconstruct our memories. That perspective recognizes the intersubjectivity inherent to the mental processes involved in the apparently subjective act of remembrance and shifts the focus of investigation from individualized cognitive processes of recollection to an intersubjectivist sociology of memory. As Halbwachs puts it: "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38).

While Halbwachs used the term "collective memory" in order to address memory in relation to our everyday forms of communication and social interaction, some years before him art historian Aby Warburg coined the term "social memory" in order to address images as carriers of memory. This can be observed in Warburg's extensive and unfinished project entitled Mnemosyne in which he explored the "survivals" or "afterlife" of classical antiquity in Western culture (Warburg, 2015). Despite the differences in Halbwachs's and Warburg's concepts of cultural memory, what they do have in common "is the perception that culture and its transmission are products of human activity" (Erll, 2011, p. 21).

By dividing Halbwachs's concept of collective memory into communicative and cultural memory Jan Assmann (2008, p. 111) argued for a distinction between memory that is produced through social interaction and memory generated by our interaction with "artifacts, objects, anniversaries, feasts, icons, symbols, or landscapes." According to Assmann although things do not "have" a memory, they do carry memories invested in them, but in order to be appropriated by future generations they require institutions of preservation and re-embodiment. A similar approach is suggested by Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt (2012, p. 9) in relation to shifts between short-term and long-term memory, or "from embodied communicative memory to symbolically encoded cultural memory." These two modes of memory are useful for exploring the interchanges between more flexible (biographical and informal) and more stable (foundational and institutionalized) forms of remembering.

According to Assmann and Shortt (2012), changes in the format and status of memory can be related to actors and factors such as time, trauma, political regime change, social frame, generational change, and media events. As the authors observe, if the relationships between present and past are in constant change according to the representations disseminated in the public sphere (by media, political regime, social frame, and so on), then memory can be

understood as an agent of change. Argentinean sociologist Elizabeth Jelin, in her book *State Repression and the Labors of Memory* (2003), advances on this topic while studying how traces of recent dictatorships in Latin America echo in the present day. As suggested by the book's title, Jelin's conception of memory—in its relation to "labour"—is characterized by an understanding of its active role in transforming the social world. This productive position of memory in relation to the present is essential to the author's investigations about the prevailing presence of the dictatorial periods. According to Jelin, many of the Southern Cone military regimes in Latin America were not followed by a committed and transparent judgment of the events that unfolded in the context of authoritarian/dictatorial rule, turning memory into a territory of disputes between distinct political discourses. For the purposes of this thesis, memory will be investigated as it is transmitted and disputed by individuals according to the cultural, political, institutional, and social frames provided by their groups and societies.

1.2 Connecting memory and activism

As demonstrated earlier, the proliferation of memory as a conceptual tool characterized by an intersubjectivist approach mainly concerned with how societies incorporate the past into the present dates from the 1980s. The efforts of social actors organized in political movements, related to social movement studies, were rarely part of these concerns in memory studies. Only recently, as explained by Stefan Berger et al. (2021) and Yifat Gutman and Jenny Wüstenberg (2021), do we notice a more systematic dialogue between memory studies and social movement studies. In an initial mapping of such dialogue Ann Rigney (2021, p. 708) distinguishes three research agendas:

> Memory activism how actors struggle to produce and change memory, exemplified in Gutman, 2017; Wustenberg, 2017; Altinay et al., 2019), the memory of activism (how earlier struggles for a better world are culturally recollected, exemplified in Reading and Katriel, 2015; Eyerman, 2016; Rigney, 2016), and memory in activism (how the cultural memory of earlier struggles informs new movements in the present, exemplified in Harris, 2006; Zamponi, 2013; 2018; Della Porta et al., 2018; Chidgey, 2018).

To provide a more stable definition for "memory activism," Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021, p. 1) define memory activists as agents (individuals or groups) that "strategically commemorate the past to challenge (or protect) dominant views on the past and the institutions that represent them. Their goal is mnemonic change or to resist change." According to this definition memory activists rely on memory to advance reactionary or progressive agendas—memory activism can be a tool for invigorating democracy, but it can also serve to reinforce anti-democratic initiatives. In this thesis I focus on the "memory activism" of second and third generations of dictatorial victims, or "how actors struggle to produce and change memory" (Rigney, 2020, p. 708); however, processes of recollection of earlier anti-dictatorial struggles (memory of activism) and their influence on contemporary memory activism (memory in activism) will also be considered.

Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021) also suggest a typology to assist comparative understandings of memory activists. The authors stress three dimensions that capture variations among memory activists: (1) the *cultural roles* adopted by activists as they want to be presented—victims, resistors and heroes, entangled agents, pragmatists; (2) *modes of interaction* between memory activists and other actors, such as warriors, or pluralists; and (3) notions of temporality perceived by memory activists in relation to the past they are referencing (e.g., the past has ended, the past is still ongoing). This distinction will be useful for classifying

my participants and addressing the ways in which they position themselves and previous generations of activists in relation to the Brazilian dictatorship.

This approach to memory activism is also indebted to the contentious politics revealed by the theoretical perspectives developed by Doug McAdam et al. (2004), Charles Tilly (1978; 2006), and Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2015), which in turn contribute to my analysis of memory activism by situating activists' practices within their historical and cultural contexts. While analysing how macro-structural changes affect patterns of collective action these authors demonstrate that political demands and the repertoires of collective action developed to meet them vary according to economic, political, social, and cultural transformations (Tilly, 1978; Della Porta, 2006). These perspectives will be useful in different moments of this thesis in combination with other theoretical approaches.

Repertoires of collective action (i.e., the forms of action chosen according to specific political objectives) are examined in connection to the term "tactics" as developed in the works of Michel de Certeau (2002). His approach to the politics of everyday practices highlights the possibilities for weaker actors to disrupt "the surveillance of the proprietary power" (de Certeau, 2002, p. 37). The term *tactics* here will be used to describe each single action that comprises activists' *repertoires* and also to foreground their articulations with the particularities of everyday life to produce impacts on official accounts of the past.

However, these forms of action are not neutral means serving a strict political objective. As James Jasper suggests, we need to consider "feeling-thinking processes" that "guide or at least accompany political action" (2018, p. 169). This means that activist choices are affected by moral and affective commitments, and by the connections between beliefs and emotions. In the context of this thesis Jasper's approach to feeling-thinking processes serves as an attempt to connect the macro to the meso-analytical perspective of activists' feelings and perceptions about themselves and their actions. I examine these matters through semi-structured interviews with activists, and in accordance with their personal perceptions of their own social identities and trajectories toward participation in social movements.

Advancing towards a micro-analytical perspective, I draw upon the ideas of Ron Eyerman (2002; 2019), who combines the theory of cultural trauma with anthropological theories of social drama to account for significant events that affect a large group of people who are not themselves involved in those events—or at least, not involved in a direct and contemporaneous manner. Eyerman (2019, p. 5) argues that cultural trauma "tears" the social fabric, and that this tear must be "(1) articulated and represented, (2) laden with negative affect, and 3) accepted by a group." The theory of cultural trauma, which contrasts with the psychological accounts of trauma, is a conceptual framework for analysing historical events developed by a group of sociologists at the turn of the 21st century. Part 2 of this thesis draws on this framework to explore the cultural dimension of memory activism actions in the Brazilian post-dictatorship.

The studies on cultural trauma developed by Jeffrey Alexander (2004; 2006) are also relevant for Part 2. Alexander (2004) focuses on the way members of affected groups broadcast their symbolic representations of past, present, and future. These representations can be seen as *claims* "about the shape of social reality, its causes, and the responsibilities for action such causes imply" (2004, p. 11). The collective agents involved in broadcasting these representations are the *carrier groups*. In the end, the cultural trauma process can be likened to a social performance, since it has a speaker (the carrier group), an audience (the public), and a situation (the historical, cultural, and institutional environment within which the speech act occurs) (Alexander, 2004).

According to Alexander's conceptual framework "social actors, embedded in collective representations and working through symbolic and material means, implicitly orient towards others as if they were actors on a stage seeking identification with their experiences and

understandings from their audiences" (Alexander, 2006, p. 2). In this sense, every social performance is affected by (1) systems of collective representation; (2) the means of symbolic production available; (3) the choices of the *mise-en-scène*; and (4) the distribution of power in a society. In my analysis I combine Alexander's (2006) theoretical model of performance, by which social actors perform their demands in accordance with the collective imagination (i.e., social conventions and cultural systems), with Eyerman's (2019) approach to different actors (State, media, and civil society) and investigations on the role of corporeality, presence, acting and enacting.

The theoretical focus on "performance" in studies of social movements is useful in at least two ways here: (1) to identify moments of tactical adaptation and innovation; (2) to analyse the emotions and meanings mobilized by activists while expressing their demands and identities through words, objects, gestures, and other instruments. The first focus, which relates to the practical conditions shaping social movements and protest actions (e.g., Tilly, 1978; 2015; Della Porta, 2006), may help us to understand the socio-political dynamics informing the development of tactics by activists in Brazil, while the second focus, related to feeling-thinking processes (e.g., Jasper, 2018) and studies of the transmission of cultural trauma (e.g., Eyerman, 2019; Alexander, 2004; 2006), assists in exploring the broader interplay between memory and activism in the Brazilian post-dictatorship.

By adopting this macro-meso-micro approach, I expect to explain not only the forms through which my selected examples of political activism interact with the social and political order of their time as a means to advance their demands, but also the cultural and political dynamics of memory throughout this process.

1.3 Approaching memory, art, and activism in post-dictatorial(ising) Brazil

Being a Brazilian researcher working in Australia, I came to realize that the unexpected benefit of developing sociological research in a country geographically distant from one's object lies in surprise encounters. While learning about colonial legacies in Australia and the ongoing forms of oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, I came across a book by Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson, from the University of Queensland, entitled *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (2015). In the chapter "I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in a White Postcolonizing Society," Moreton-Robinson (2015, p. 24) challenges "the assumptions that Australia is postcolonial because our [Indigenous Australians'] relation to land, what I call an ontological belonging is omnipresent and continues to unsettle non-Indigenous belonging based on illegal dispossession." While senses of belonging and colonial dispossession are important topics that are also entangled with the construction of collective memory in Brazil, I would like to focus on the author's choice in using the term "postcolonizing." Moreton-Robinson uses the term "to signify the active, the current and the continuing nature of the colonizing relationship that positions us as belonging and not belonging" (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 38). Such an active, current, and continuing nature of the past informs the author's refusal to adopt the commonly used term "post-colonial." This choice poses a question relevant to my own research: how should I approach the term "post-dictatorial" in the Brazilian context where the authoritarian legacies and political rhetoric are more visible today than at any time since 1985?

Philosopher and direct victim of dictatorial violence, Edson Teles (2018), explains that the current Brazilian democracy was born under the suspension of rights, which meant that the new Constitution approved in 1988 maintained the Brazilian Armed Forces as present in political governance and civil society. I discuss this in Chapter 3 by observing the creation of the 1988 Constitution and subsequent government policies. But what is particularly concerning is how so many Brazilians easily accepted the impunity granted to perpetrators of human rights

abuses as a merely judicial matter. According to Teles, the acceptance of impunity has been supported by different governments in the name of national reconciliation and governability. This can be observed in official discourses that address the dictatorial past by alluding to, for example, the logic of the two demons, which equates "the struggle of the resistance with the barbarism of the torture and murder commanded by the summit of the Armed Forces" (Teles, 2018, p. 28).

The ways societies remember or silence past atrocities influence the ways they make their transition to other forms of political regimes, but these ways are connected to social and political circumstances in the present. The 2004 United Nations report on "The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-conflict Societies" states that the notion of "transitional justice" comprises "the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation" (United Nations Security Council, 2004). At the same time, such processes and mechanisms are connected to their concrete historical conditions. In this respect Paulo Abrão and Tarso Genro (2010) affirm that the Latin American authoritarian regimes that flourished between the 1960s and 1980s were not addressed in a systematic manner due to the negotiated character of their transitions to non-authoritarian regimes. For this reason, official and non-official recollections of the Brazilian dictatorship have been created, circulated, and interpreted in relation to specific cultural frames and political constellations (Assmann & Shortt, 2012). These frames and constellations will be understood here in relation to four phases: (1) the dictatorship (1964–1985); (2) the transition and the first steps of democracy; (3) the official turn to memory that culminated in the National Truth Commission and contemporaneous memory activism; and (4) dictatorial nostalgia.

Considering one of this thesis' objectives—comprehending how cultural and political frames were formed and how they informed memory activists' tactical choices—it will be necessary to provide a panorama of post-dictatorial(ising) Brazil. This panorama draws on scholars who investigate the dictatorship and dictatorial legacies in Brazil (e.g., Teles, 2018; Teles & Quinalha, 2020; Schneider & Esparza, 2015; Atencio, 2014; Bauer, 2017; Reis, 2010). Although belonging to different research disciplines and utilizing different methods these scholars converge in affirming that the dictatorial past is still very much present. It is in the sense of signifying continuing dictatorial legacies that I use the term "post-dictatorializing." At the same time, the coherence of such a term within the scope of this thesis does not represent an attempt to replace the term post-dictatorial; rather it simply indicates the continuing legacies of the dictatorship as the context from which all memory activists work in Brazil. For this reason, the term post-dictatorializing will be used at some points throughout this research interchangeably with the term post-dictatorial.

As a researcher trained in the fields of communications and visual arts, and understanding that memory activists draw on available means of symbolic production to challenge dominant views around the past, I ground my case studies of artistic and activist collectives in their visual and discursive expressions. In particular, I draw on the activities and works produced by the following collectives: *Aparecidos Políticos* (AP, Political Appeared), *Coletivo Político Quem* (CPQ, Political Collective Who), *Frente de Esculacho Popular* (FEP, Front of Popular *Esculacho*), *Filhos e Netos por Memória, Verdade e Justiça* (FN-MVJ, Children and Grandchildren for Memory, Truth and Justice), *Coletivo Comum* and *Cordão da Mentira* (CC, Common Collective, and CM, Lie Parade). These collectives emerged in the 2000s, with no awareness of each other, in response to national issues regarding the country's dictatorial past but also influenced by transnational movements of anti-globalization, or "alter-globalization" as suggested by David Graeber (2007), and by the practices of creative activism that marked them. The tactics developed by these collectives are central to this thesis because

they provide exemplars of memory activism directly oriented toward cultural change within civil society in Brazil.

The tactics employed by the activist collectives discussed in this thesis (particularly in Chapters 5 to 10) often involve creative aesthetic interventions, including experimental practices more commonly discussed in the disciplines of art history and the sociology of art. For this reason, I make a working distinction between artistic practices, as employed by activist collectives (which often comprise both artists and non-artists), and institutionalized forms of Art produced with the intention of being exhibited or disseminated through galleries and museums. In this respect the artistic practices explored in this thesis might also fall into categories such as "activist art" as suggested by Lucy Lippard's analysis of combinations between "social action, social theory, and the fine arts tradition" (1984, p. 2), or "dark matter" as studied by Gregory Sholette (2011) that emerge in the art world "from below," and even in the famous approaches to activists' reclaiming of public spaces and hijacking of media channels known as "culture jamming" (DeLaure & Fink, 2017). Despite the influence of such approaches to creative activism and cultural resistance on Brazilian contemporary memory activism, the collectives explored here demonstrate more interest in practices and discourses produced in Brazil or South America. But while I do not aim to address theoretical debates within visual arts, I do draw on specific concepts and theories to assist my analysis of the relational and participatory art practices present in activists' actions (Bourriaud, 2002; Bishop, 2006; Ranciére, 2010) and of the symbolic possibilities for representing traumatic memories (Hirsch, 2015; Schwab, 2010).

1.4 Methodology

Considering that "memory is the experience of the past mediated by representation" (Misztal, 2003, p. 119), the ways through which the past is organized in visual and discursive narratives should have a central place in this research. Therefore, to answer the questions posed in this thesis I decided to combine different methods: (1) I use semi-structured and in-depth interviews to scaffold my case studies of specific actions by activist collectives; (2) I also draw on tools from the sociology of social movement, performance studies, and visual analysis to understand the meanings produced by activists; (3) I draw on supplementary media resources and artistic materials to understand the cultural context for activists' tactics; and (4) I draw on existing historical research to provide a wider context for the events relevant to memory activists and to better understand the role of the State in the conflicts of collective memory.

Before discussing my specific research methods, I would like to briefly explain my focus on the work of these specific Brazilian activists as a case study, given the wider relevance of struggles over post-dictatorship memory across Brazil and Latin America. I am a Brazilian researcher with a long-time fascination for artistic and activist tactics of urban intervention, belonging to the "third generation" that also comprises most of my research participants. Like them, I grew up in a social environment affected by dictatorial legacies and witnessed the emergence of heated public debates and of collectives of memory activism during the years that preceded the country's first National Truth Commission in 2012. This research has allowed for in-depth interviews and discussions with activist collectives with whom I have developed strong rapport and ongoing research relationships, and I have included all collectives of memory activism active between 2010 and 2014 in Brazil that myself and these other activists have knowledge of[3]. I will adopt a national framework, but I will also take opportunities to highlight cross-national influences on tactical choices and the flow of mediated narratives

[3] This "wave" of collectives of memory activism is also registered in the book *Lampejos* (Mourão, 2016), organized by the collectives themselves, which served as an important source to this research.

across State borders (Bauer, 2014; Rigney et al., 2016; McAdam & Rucht, 1993; Strang & Soule, 1998; Silva, 2013). Nevertheless, as my focus is on activism during the specific period through and following the National Truth Commission in Brazil, these cross-national influences are considered within the specific contexts and constraints of the Brazilian political environment.

I would also like to acknowledge some of the impacts of COVID-19 on my research methodology. My research design and overall methodological orientation has been guided by collective memory studies, which is widely concerned with the social mediation of the past through intersubjective practices and cultural meaning-making. In this sense, I have initially planned to immerse myself in the daily activities of memory activists and their collectives and collect visual and discursive data from activists but also from viewers witnessing their actions, and other details related to the sites where they happened. However, since the implementation of travel restrictions during lockdown, my primary method has been to use platforms for virtual communication (e.g., Zoom and WhatsApp) to undertake semi-structured and in-depth interviews with activists involved in contesting collective memory in Brazil[4]. These interviews have been supplemented by research into a diversity of texts and images that frame post-dictatorial memory in Brazil, including materials produced by government institutions (e.g., legislation, reports relating to the dictatorship period, public speeches), news media (e.g., major newspapers and television broadcasts), independent resources and "grey literature" (e.g., books, associations, public speeches), and works produced by activists themselves (e.g., actions, signs, manifestos). I provide a brief summary of these methods and resources below.

The thesis employs a mix of semi-structured and in-depth interviews to explore subjective accounts of the representations, frames, and meanings that provide the symbolic material for the disputes around dictatorial memory. Moreover, through interviews I aim to capture feeling-thinking processes (Jasper, 2018) and to understand how they affect the strategic choices of social actors ("carriers") engaged in the struggle for memory, truth, and justice in Brazil. I have selected eleven individuals who "have different levels of activism and participation in different factions of a movement" (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 100) but whose roles and identities have been very connected in the Brazilian context. I have interviewed lawyers, artists, and academics who have contributed to the kinds of advocacy and public discourse that informed contemporary memory activism. In relation to the National Truth Commission, these participants have also provided me with important background context for making connections between institutional and non-institutional initiatives. More specifically, two of the participants belong to the first generation of people affected by the dictatorship and were young adults during the dictatorial period; nine of the activists belong to the second and third generation of people affected by the dictatorship—within those, seven were members of the collectives studied in this research (see Appendix 1 for an overview of participants).

Although all participants were selected based on a common factor—being actively engaged with the struggle for memory, truth, and justice in Brazil between 2010 and 2014—some other commonalities and differences are worth mentioning. First, in relation to class, race, and education most participants are white and middle-class, and all of them have had access to higher education, reflecting the web of privileges that influence individuals' access to information about the dictatorship and their choices to engage in political activism. As demonstrated in several demographic studies, race is a central factor regarding inequalities of education and civic participation in Brazil. For example, in 2019 the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE, Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) (IBGE, 2019) reported that illiteracy rates in Brazil varied from 3.9% for white people to 9.1% for black or brown people. When combined with a lack of political representation (only 24.4%) and

[4] Approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at UTS (ETH19-4378).

homicide rates (a black or brown person has 2.7 more chances of being a victim of homicide), it is not difficult to understand that access to public space, and the feeling of "safety" and "belonging" in public space, are profoundly shaped by race and class in Brazil. As a result, the most high-profile activist collectives tend to reflect these kinds of privileges. Second, in terms of gender, five were female, accounting for almost half of my participants, which clearly illustrates the relevance of women's participation within the struggle for memory, truth, and justice (M. A. A. Teles, 1999). Third, in relation to location, three participants are from the Northeast (Recife, Olinda, and Fortaleza)—a region I chose because it is where I am from and therefore I could benefit from pre-existing connections to memory activists. Eight participants are from the Southeast (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro)—a region selected due to its economic importance during the dictatorship and in the present day as the most populated and urbanized region in Brazil.

The semi-structured interviews were initially designed as a part of an ethnographic work that would also involve participant observation and attendance at collectives' meetings. The interview questions were elaborated in accordance with the multi-scalar approach proposed by this research (micro, meso, macro) and therefore organized in three parts: (1) the participant's personal biography and relationship to the dictatorship period; (2) collective actions relating to memory activism; and (3) socio-political context. Although there was an intended order to the questions, they varied according to participants' responses. This flexible structure aimed to encourage participants to feel comfortable in reflecting on their biographies, experiences, and emotions, in keeping with the notion of feeling-thinking developed by Jasper (2018).

However, as mentioned above, due to travel constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to opt for online interviews using the videoconferencing platform Zoom. This sudden change to a virtual mode obviously affected data collection in many ways. I was required to adapt to my participants' time zone (e.g., doing interviews at 3 a.m.) and to rely on sometimes unstable internet connections, resulting in various forms of disruption and interference. Zoom interviews also lack nonverbal cues that enable other forms of communication, such as gestures and eye contact, and restrict possibilities for participants' connections with their physical environment, as participants focus primarily on the computer or mobile screen. This difference between in-person and virtual interviews was noticeable in 2022 when, after three years, I had the opportunity to travel to Brazil and conduct three in-person interviews, in which all participants shared personal archives (e.g., photographs, books, and documents) and introduced me to colleagues and relatives.

This mixed set of in-person and online interviews resulted in around 23 hours of audio and video material that was later transcribed and coded using qualitative data analysis software NVivo. I divided material into three scales of analysis (individual, collective, public), and then made thematic connections to specific topics (e.g., legislation, political events, direct actions), concepts and specialist terms relating to collective memory around dictatorship (e.g., democracy, justice, victims), and emotions (e.g., fear, anger, excitement). Along the way, I was also sensitive to the relevance of images within the stories told by activists, and have endeavoured to include relevant images (where possible) in my discussion of interviews in later chapters.

The thesis also includes supplementary media archival research, primarily from Brazilian newspapers and broadcast television, to provide an indicative sense of the ways that the dictatorship (and opposition to the dictatorship) were represented in the public sphere during and after the dictatorship. To do so, I have searched for events and terms that are relevant to this thesis (e.g., the 1964 coup, the promulgation of the Amnesty Law, the publication of the National Truth Commission's final report) in the digital archives of high-profile newspapers and public archives during the dictatorship in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (*O Estado de São*

Paulo, *Folha de São Paulo*, in São Paulo, and *Jornal do Brasil*, *O Globo*, and *Correio da Manhã*, in Rio de Janeiro) and after the dictatorship in the 1990s and 2000s (*Folha de São Paulo*, in São Paulo, and *O Globo*, in Rio de Janeiro). The choice to focus on the main media outlets of these two states (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro) is explained by their role in the concentration of mainstream media that in the 1960s represented 90% of the country's media production (Motta, 2013). The representations disseminated by these outlets are utilized throughout the thesis in relation to the representations produced and disseminated by memory activists and by governmental initiatives.

To observe the role of media representation for the construction of memory in the public sphere, I also draw on specific non-Brazilian scholars who recognize journalism as a key agent of memory work (Zelizer, 2008; Edy, 1999). At the same time, I include in my analysis the work produced by Brazilian scholars that focuses on journalism as a space for the production and dissemination of narratives about the country's dictatorial past (Motta, 2013; Maia & Lelo, 2015). In doing this I provide some background context for the media narratives and images that have influenced the work of memory activists.

The thesis also examines examples of creative works and artifacts such as graffiti, performances, signs, and flags, in order to understand how memory activists employ aesthetic techniques to produce culturally significant meanings (Doerr et al., 2013). The visual works examined for this research comprise photographs, digital and physical artworks, and stills from videos of activist actions. Sources range from activists' personal archives (used with permission) to public content shared on social media sites.

Intra-movements and transnational processes of diffusion are analysed by looking into how visual and discursive representations circulate within movements, mainstream media, and governmental institutions. Following the steps of other scholars (Doerr & Milman, 2014; Müller & Özcan, 2007) I borrow iconographic and iconological methods developed by art historians Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky to produce a contextualized comparison and interpretation of images. This will enable access to mnemonic aspects of images beyond their historicity and, following Warburg's approach, to "stand before the image as we do before a complex time" (Didi-Huberman, 2016, p. 19).

Government initiatives such as legislation, reports and public speeches are employed here to provide an overview of the State's role in the construction of narratives about the dictatorial past. I analyse key government initiatives from the 1960s until the 2010s—Institutional Act Number 5, the Amnesty Law, Law 9.149, *Caravanas da Anistia* (Amnesty Caravans), the Third National Human Rights Plan, and the National Truth Commission—that had an impact over the construction of dictatorial memory in Brazil. To do so, I first draw on previous studies of such initiatives developed by Brazilian scholars from different disciplines (e.g., Bauer, 2020; Benetti et al., 2020; Abrão & Torelly, 2011; Teles & Quinalha, 2020). Informed by these studies, I demonstrate how governmental initiatives influence the construction of dictatorial memory and, as a consequence, the strategic choices of memory activists.

Personal memories will also be mentioned occasionally to localize my positionality as a researcher within this project. This means observing, as a member of the Brazilian post-dictatorial third generation, memories of the dictatorial regime that were passed on to me by my family's testimonies, cultural productions, and school curricula. But this also means observing my own impressions about other more recent events analysed in this thesis.

Finally, the overall theoretical orientation which guides this thesis' questions comes mainly from the fields of memory studies and social movements studies, but it also includes concepts and theories from literary studies, cultural trauma studies, urban geography, and art history. Focusing on the social and political dimensions of collective memory (from Halbwachs, 1992, to Jelin, 2003, and Gutman and Wustenberg, 2021) Part 1 of this thesis

explores the authoritarian remnants over which Brazil's liberal democracy has been constructed (Safatle, 2010; Teles, 2018) and the State-led initiatives to reckon with them (Bauer, 2020, De Almeida Teles, 2010, and Schneider, 2019). Against this background of memory disputes, Part 2 draws on interviews and on an interdisciplinary conceptual apparatus to analyse how artistic and activist collectives and tactics emerged and interacted with State-led initiatives in the context of Brazil's National Truth Commission (Kitschelt, 1986, Rose-Redwood, Alderman, & Azaryahu, 2010, Alexander, 2006, Jasper, 2014, Hirsch, 2012, Vital, 2015, Boym, 2001). In sum, this theoretical itinerary aims to produce a multiscalar approach to Brazil's postdictatorial memory activism "attentive both to the 'politics of small things' and to larger systemic shift" (Rigney, 2021, p. 19).

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis is to explore the relationship between collective memories and contemporary memory activism in post-dictatorial Brazil by responding to the following questions. How have government and social initiatives influenced the construction of collective memory in post-dictatorial contexts? How have these initiatives influenced new generations of activists? And how do these younger generations incorporate such initiatives in their expectations towards the future?

In Chapter I have explained the theoretical framework adopted in this thesis and explained my choice to draw mainly on recent literature that combines memory studies and social movement studies, mainly under the term "memory activism." I have also explained how this framework will be supported by relevant academic production engaged specifically with the history of Brazilian dictatorship (1964–1985) and the ongoing conflicts related to it. Finally, I have acknowledged that while my focus is not on art history *per* se, I do draw on art historians and critics to understand the aesthetic elements of images and performances employed by memory activists, and to consider how notions of participatory art and relational aesthetics explain specific activist practices.

I would like to conclude by explaining my desire to contribute to this emerging literature by applying it to a Latin American context and, conversely, to contribute to social sciences in Latin America by approaching and raising points of discussion within such literature that will be of interest to Portuguese and Spanish-speaking publics. As I have mentioned earlier, over the past decades we have witnessed how authoritarian regimes and practices of genocide have been reckoned with and assessed by political and academic institutions. While interest in memory studies from a sociological perspective proliferated in the humanities, human rights have emerged within European contexts and advanced as a global norm to be pursued by all countries. However, as human rights can be considered to be a set of norms that mean nothing without discussing how they might be put into practice in different contexts (Assmann & Shortt, 2012), memory studies as a field for sociological inquiry requires researchers' efforts to diversify the geographic range covered by such studies. In this respect, Anderman (2015, p. 4) has called attention to the "relative marginality of Latin America within European and Anglo-American memory studies." For Anderman, this can be explained by language barriers that keep Spanish and Portuguese production in a semi-peripheral place in relation to the global academic market, but also by the experiences of neo-colonialism in Latin America that resulted from the conjunction between counter-insurgency States and the reconfiguration of liberal-oligarchic demands as a response to the threats posed by national–popular and democratic–socialist counterhegemonic projects.

One of the aims of this thesis is therefore to contribute to an expansion away from a European-centred perspective on memory studies by focusing on post-dictatorial Latin America, more specifically in Brazil. At the same time, by drawing on an interdisciplinary and

cross-national literature I also expect to contribute to sociological approaches to memory conflicts in the Brazilian post-dictatorship. In this respect, by exploring the relationships between memory, artistic practices, and activism in the Brazilian post-dictatorship context this thesis reinforces the necessity of questioning disciplinary and epistemological limitations.

CHAPTER 2: MILITARY REPRESSION AND ARTISTIC GUERRILLAS

It is estimated that in the year 1500, when the Portuguese kingdom first invaded the Atlantic coast of South America, around five million people lived in the region, hunting, fishing, and planting for their own consumption in a type of subsistence economy (Fausto, 1995). Following the Portuguese invasion, the land, and its natural resources, alongside First Nation peoples and their labour force, were usurped to favor European commercial expansion in the wake of the introduction of a capitalist economy. Although the name “brasil” has been found on maps that preceded 1500, the country’s baptism is commonly associated with the successful trade of the timber tree Pau-Brasil (Redwood) as the reason that led the usurpers to call this land after what it was worth for them: a land fit for foreign exploitation (Fausto, 1995; Ribeiro, 1995).

With the advancement of capitalism and the process of industrialization, the main exports started to include, besides Pau-Brasil, sugar and coffee. The end of slavery (1888), by turn, shifted the main labor force from slaves drawn from First Nations People and Africans brought to the continent, to the hired labor of poor former slaves and (also poor, but white) European immigrants (Fausto, 1995). By the end of the 19th century Brazil had constructed a firm but rudimentary economy aimed mainly at exporting raw materials and importing most of the products it consumed. However, economic inequality, and tensions between the State, the church, and the military sector, led to frequent social upheavals as well as military coups. The Brazilian Republic itself was founded in 1889, and what is commonly called the “Republic Proclamation” was in fact a military coup headed by Marshall Deodoro da Fonseca that, aiming to benefit the military sector, put an end to the monarchy (Fausto, 1995).

Understanding “coups” as a break of institutional order, it can be said that Brazil has had nine so far (ten if including the 2016 coup). As Bauer (2020) explains, the military coup of 1964 was the ninth in a row, but, unlike previous coups from 1964 the military remained in power for a long twenty-one years. Claiming to free the country from corruption and communism, and to restore democracy in the name of “Western Christian moralism,” the regime started to disseminate “a discourse permeated by threats and by the mobilization of fears” (Bauer, 2020, p. 176). Civil society’s response came in the shape of organized political associations and armed guerrilla groups, but also of creative cultural production (in theatre, cinema, music, poetry, and painting) to disseminate alternative political ideas and engage Brazilian society.

But despite the country’s familiarity with such interventionist methods, we can only attempt to understand their reasons if we are aware of the social structure and economic interests of the time. In this sense, to understand how younger generations in the 2000s have interacted with the memories of the dictatorship it is necessary first to provide a historical contextualization of the dictatorial period. While I acknowledge the extensive literature produced in Brazil as well as in other countries in relation to Brazil’s dictatorship (1964 – 1985) Chapter 2 selects and draws on prominent historians specialized in this period (Fico, 2001, 2014, 2017; Fausto, 1995; Reis, 2010; Napolitano, 2014; Filho, 2021; Anderson, 2019) and historical and aesthetic accounts on cultural production (Napolitano, 2001; Ridenti, 2014; Silva, 2010; Gullar, 1978; Shtromberg, 2016; Calirman, 2012), and also mainstream media publications and participants’ interviews, to contextualize the Brazilian dictatorship (1964–1985). This contextualization focuses, in Section 2.1 of this Chapter, on the socioeconomic aspects of the military regime as well as its repressive methods against political opponents. The contextualization continues in Section 2.2 with analysis of the anti-dictatorial political and cultural resistance represented by distinguished visual artists such as Cildo Meireles, Hélio Oiticica, and Artur Barrio. By doing so I hope to establish the historical grounds on which I

consider the social ruptures and permanencies of authoritarian traditions and how they affect struggles for truth, memory and justice within Brazil's current democracy.

2.1 Contextualizing the military regime (1964–1985)

Two years before the 1964 military coup political scientist Wanderley Guilherme published a small book titled *Quem dará o golpe no Brasil?* (Who Is Going to Give the Coup in Brazil?). Considering the disposition of the main political figures and economic forces at the time, the author predicted that civilians reunited around politicians would attempt to take power. Despite some inaccuracies within Wanderley's predictions, some points are worth mentioning, notably the social causes of the coups in Brazil:

> Coup attempts are not a result of the paranoia of groups of individuals, military or civilian, but rather of the Brazilian social situation, in the present moment, that conduces the country's privileged minority to this sort of political behavior. (…) The coup is always a social phenomenon, and in consequence, its social causes are the ones to be researched and challenged. (Guilherme, 1962, p. 9)

The social causes behind military coups in Brazil, according to Guilherme, are normally connected to a fear of the advancement of popular forms of power—such as the struggles for legality in 1961, and the organization of students, urban, and rural workers. For Guilherme, in the beginning of the 1960s Brazil already lived in a dictatorship—that of a privileged minority ruling over a submissive majority. But despite its constraints—such as prohibiting illiterate people to vote, when more than half of the country was illiterate—it was undeniable that the space for political participation had expanded.

Reflecting on the years preceding the 1964 Coup cultural theorist Roberto Schwarz (1978) famously wrote that during the 1950s Brazil was unrecognizably intelligent. Schwarz refers to this golden age of cultural expression and political debates by recalling the political theatre of the *Centro Popular de Cultura* (CPC, Popular Cultural Centre) of the *União Nacional dos Estudantes* (UNE, Student National Union), as well as the films and music produced at that time that sought to connect the reality of workers and students. There was a "pre-revolutionary wind (…) filling the newspapers with land reform, peasant agitation, labour movements, nationalization of North American companies, etc. The country was unrecognizably intelligent" (Schwarz, 1978, p. 69).

Schwarz's (1978) analysis adds to Guilherme's (1962) understanding of the social causes that preceded the 1964 coup. Cultural production and political debates, encouraged also by other initiatives around the globe such as the 1959 Cuban Revolution, favoured social dialogues about structural reforms. Land reforms, according to historian Carlos Fico (2014, p. 46), were the most debated point of the *reformas de base* (basic reforms), a group of structural and institutional reforms proposed by President João Goulart—especially after the creation of the *Ligas Camponesas* (Peasant Leagues) in the Northeast around the mid–1950s, led by Francisco Julião. According to Fico (2014), such a development represented a threat to Brazilian conservative and right-wing elites, and also to the government of the United States, even more so considering that President João Goulart, although distant from communist ideals, was responding to the calls for land reform in rural areas and for labour rights in the cities.

On March 13 1964, during a speech to an audience of 300,000 in Rio de Janeiro, Goulart reinforced his commitment to land, urban, educational, and political reforms demanded by underprivileged sectors within each area (peasants, students, and industrial workers) (Images 1 and 2). Six days later in São Paulo, the response came in the shape of the *Marcha da Família com Deus pela Liberdade* (March of the Family with God for Freedom), comprising around 500,000 people, according to newspapers at the time, who exhibited signs against the "threat

of communism" (Image 3) represented by Goulart's government. By the end of the month, the solution to such "threats" took the shape of military agreements in favour of privileged classes—a well-known form of political resolution in Brazil. The result, as will be explored next, was escalating terror against those considered political opponents (labor and student unions, peasants' associations, and even churches), and censorship against socialist ideas in any form.

Image 1: March 13, 1964. Goulart speaking at Central do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro. Retrieved from: http://memorialdademocracia.com.br/card/comicio-da-central-300-mil-apoiam-reformas

Image 2: March 13, 1964. Crowd holding signs in support of Jango's reforms. Retrieved from: http://memorialdademocracia.com.br/card/comicio-da-central-300-mil-apoiam-reformas#card-2

Image 3: March 19, 1964. Crowd holding signs against Jango's reforms and against communism. Retrieved from: https://memoriasdaditadura.org.br/linha-do-tempo/marcha-da-familia-com-deus-pela-liberdade-em-sao-paulo/

FOLHA DE S. PAULO

Um jornal a serviço do Brasil

ANO XLIV ★ São Paulo — Sexta-feira, 20 de março de 1964 ★ N.º 12.696

Nova luta em Chipre

URSS dá automoveis

Nossa opinião

SÃO PAULO PAROU ONTEM PARA DEFENDER O REGIME

Povo, pela Constituição

A disposição de São Paulo e dos brasileiros de todos os recantos da pátria para defender a Constituição e os princípios democráticos, dentro do mesmo espírito que ditou a Revolução de 32, originou ontem o maior movimento cívico já observado em nosso Estado: a "Marcha da Família com Deus, pela Liberdade".

PAGS. 8, 9 e 10

Frente Popular tem programa e diz o que quer

Johnson pede 6 trilhões para ajuda

Depredada a "Ultima Hora" de Curitiba

Vai haver pronto-socorro nas rodovias

Estudantes "enterram" hoje Ademar

Bomba em onibus fere dois

Fogo deixa "Difusora" sem noticias

Um dia no mundo

Condenados Placido e Delelis

Politica de hoje

Image 4: *Folha de São Paulo*, March 20, 1964: "São Paulo stopped yesterday to defend the regime. People in favour of the Constitution." Retrieved from: https://acervo.folha.com.br/leitor.do?numero=1429&anchor=4447893&origem=busca&originURL=

Carlos Fico (2014) has demonstrated how the political-military movement that removed the constitutional government of President João Goulart, in April 1964, emerged as a consequence of different factors. During this period (1961–1964), Goulart had to deal with several right and left-wing upheavals, political and economic crisis, civil war threats, and even a brief shift to parliamentarism that led to the deterioration of his government. At the same time, conservative agents represented by private companies, rural oligarchies, the media, and the Catholic church (major sectors), constantly accused Goulart of incompetence, corruption, subversion, and anarchy, relying on a Cold War anticommunist discourse to interpret the antagonisms at work in Brazil. Finally, as Fico (2008) demonstrates, the support of the United States encouraged military agitation and helped to legitimate the calls for a coup against supposedly communist threats.

The implementation of the Brazilian dictatorial regime, in this sense, was orchestrated by a combination of national and international interests, supported by supra-national anti-communist rhetoric, and opposed to the development of a nationalist and progressive governmental project. These interests, defended by Brazilian military along with its civil allies, managed to produce a "conservative modernization" (Reis, 2005, p. 8) with a wide impact. While areas such as the economy, communications and technology experienced advancements, the authoritarian regime deepened the structural social inequalities in Brazil.

The 1964 military coup was, ironically, consolidated on April's fool day (April 1st, 1964) and despite the common assumption that it was not violent as it did not meet much institutional resistance, it led to the assassination of young protesters (Jonas Barros, Ivan Aguiar, Ari Cunha and Labib Abduch) (Fico, 2014). Once in power, the military issued their first Institutional Act (norms or decrees more powerful than the Constitution) to legitimate the regime. Signed on April 9, the Institutional Act Number 1 (AI-1) overthrew president João Goulart, whose government according to its text "deliberately wanted to bolshevize the country," gave the State the power to "suspend for a period of ten years the political rights of public agents and revoke legislative, state, and municipal terms," and determined that a new President should be elected "by the majority of the Congress in two days following this act [AI-1]" (*Ato Institucional* nº 1, de 9 de Abril de 1964).

The following Institutional Acts 2, 3, and 4 gave more powers to the executive government and approved the proposal for a new Constitution. But the Institutional Act Number 5 (AI-5), signed in December 1968, would legitimate State terrorism until 1979, when it was revoked. According to the AI-5 the president had the power to shut down the Congress, intervene in the country's states and municipalities, deliberate on any State-related matter without consultation, and suspend political rights. The AI-5 suspended the *habeas corpus* guarantee to those accused of acting against national security (Ato Institucional nº 5, de 13 de Dezembro de 1968).

Image 5: Police intervention during the mass for assassinated student Edson Luís in Rio de Janeiro/RJ, 4 April, 1968. Photo by Evandro Teixeira. Retrieved from: https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra28765/cavalaria-na-igreja-da-candelaria-missa-do-estudante-edson-luis-rio-de-janeiro-rj

Image 6: Police repression during the *Passeata dos Cem Mil* / March of the One Thousand, in Rio de Janeiro, 26 June 1968. Retrieved from: http://www.iea.usp.br/noticias/olhares-sobre-o-golpe-de-1964

The AI-5 "served as the basis for the installation of the apparatus that structured political repression" (Fico, 2015, p. 67) and paved the way for new and more repressive persecutions of civilians. According to Fico (2015, p. 67): "What moved these radical military men was a sort of 'authoritarian utopia' according to which Brazil would only become a 'great potency' if they eliminated the subversion and corruption that, as they understood, marked civilian politicians in particular." Besides politicians, the intensification of censorship impacted on artistic, journalistic, and scientific production by intervening in museums and galleries, media outlets, and universities. The Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, for example, was invaded and closed by the military several times between 1968 and 1979. During the year of 1969 the military regime issued twelve Institutional Acts. These Acts had the objective to determine new norms and address the regime's concerns in a short time and without further discussions.

Such circumstances, as stated by Reis (2005), favoured more radical and offensive forms of struggle. Influenced by the Cuban Revolution and the guerrilla experiences in other South American countries, some sectors from the left began to see armed actions as the only way to end the military regime. In this context, new armed groups were created—for example the *Movimento Revolucionário 8 de Outubro* (MR-8, October 8th Revolutionary Movement), the *Vanguarda Popular Revolucionária* (VPR, Revolutionary Popular Vanguard) and the *Ação Libertadora Nacional* (ALN, National Liberation Alliance), the latter formed by politician Carlos Marighella after abandoning the *Partido Comunista Brasileiro* (PCB, Brazilian Communist Party). And, although some of their members were trained in arms, and sometimes by other countries' guerrillas, the discrepancy between the military capacity of these groups and the National Armed Forces was obvious. Therefore, their actions had to be strategically planned to produce some sort of social impact. These actions involved attacks on institutions, kidnapping personalities, and bank robberies (called expropriations) in order to raise funds to support the structure of guerrilla groups.

As explained by Fico (2014) the tortures during the military regime began at different centers of information and operation such as the *Centro de Informações da Marinha* (CEIMAR, Navy Information Centre). But in 1969 the *Operação Bandeirante* (Oban, Bandeirantes Operation) was created "specifically to combat what the military named subversion and terrorism" (Fico, 2014, p. 71). Later the Oban would be converted into the *Departamento de Operações de Informações* (DOI, Department of Information Operations), and the *Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna* (CODI, Centre of Operations and Internal Defense). These two connected organs (DOI-CODI) would spread through different states constituting, alongside the *Delegacia de Ordem Política e Social* (DOPS, Department of Political and Social Order), the main centers of torture. These centers of torture were operated by a diversified staff: sergeants, soldiers, policemen, investigators, including members of the female police department. Doctors also worked at these centers supervising torture sessions "guaranteeing that victims could stay under torture" (Fico, 2015, p. 73), and falsifying death reports to conceal the State's crimes (as performed by Dr Harry Shibata who was targeted by memory activists in 2012, see Chapter 8). In addition to these roles, radio operators, mechanics and typists completed the staff employed in centers that specialized in eliminating the regime's political opposition.

In January 1970, due to her political activities alongside organizations such as the *Organização Revolucionária Marxista Política Operária* (POLOP, Marxist Revolutionary Organization–Workers' Politics),[5] *Comando de Libertação Nacional* (Colina, National

[5] *Organização Revolucionária Marxista–Política Operária* (POLOP, Marxist Revolutionary Organization–Workers' Politics) was created in 1961 by dissidents of the *Partido Comunista Brasileiro* (PCB, Brazilian Communist Party) and the *Partido Socialista Brasileiro* (PSB, Brazilian Socialist Party). POLOP was the first group Dilma Rousseff would become a member of (Amaral, 2011).

Liberation Command)[6], and *Vanguarda Armada Revolucionária Palmares* (VAR-Palmares, Revolutionary Armed Avant-Garde Palmares),[7] Dilma Rousseff—the future President—was arrested and tortured at the Oban[8] in São Paulo, which was directed by Major Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra. For twenty-two days she experienced the worst forms of torture such as *pau de arara* (literally macaw's perch, in which victims are suspended by their legs and arms over a pole), electrocution, and spanking. According to Rousseff there were other factors involved in the torture such as "not eating, the cold, the night. (…) and the waiting to be tortured" (Amaral, 2011, p. 198). Despite all the torture methods, she did not provide any information that would risk the lives of other members of the anti-dictatorial resistance. After about two months in the Oban, Rousseff was transferred to the Deops-SP[9] (also known as DOPS) where she stayed for a couple of months more, until she was transferred to the Tiradentes Prison, also in São Paulo. By the end of 1970 Dilma Rousseff was judged by the Military Court and managed to have her sentence set to two years (Image 7).

"I am the marks of my torture," said Rousseff regarding the torture methods employed by the dictatorship that affected her physically and psychologically and still do in the present (Sardinha, 2020). Such methods were taken from French and North American manuals brought to Brazil, considered a laboratory for experimenting them, and taught in Brazilian torture centers sometimes using prisoners as guinea pigs (Bauer, 2014; Martins Filho, 2012). The institutionalization of this method constitutes the most perverse form employed by the military regime of eliminating political opposition as it aimed to destroy victims from inside by erasing all traces of their constitution as social beings.

While some victims were able to survive the torture practiced by State agents, others could not endure the violent procedures and passed away. The latter were normally considered "disappeared" as the regime concealed their bodies, which resulted in extending the victims' torture to their relatives who would be left in a state of uncertainty about their loved ones' death (see Chapter 4). For example, on the same night Rousseff was arrested in São Paulo, founding member of PCBR Mário Alves was also arrested in Rio de Janeiro. Unlike Dilma Rousseff, Alves would be tortured until his death by impalement, and his body disappeared by the military. Even after the transition to democracy and State recognition about his death, Alves's body was never found. His wife and daughter took the search for truth and justice as a life duty that was picked up by his grandson in the 2000s (see Chapter 9).

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[6] Created in 1968 in Minas Gerais comprising several members of the POLOP (Amaral, 2011).

[7] Created in 1969 combining members of Colina and VPR (Vanguarda Popular Revolucionária) (Amaral, 2011).

[8] Located at Rua Tutóia, 921, São Paulo.

[9] Largo General Osório, 66, São Paulo. Nowadays this is the Memorial of Resistance Museum.

Image 7: Dilma Rousseff at 22 years old during her judgement by the military court. November 1970. Retrieved from: https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/reinaldo/o-que-a-foto-de-dilma-sugere-revela-e-esconde/

The military regime started its "slow, gradual, and safe" transition to democracy, as it became known, in 1974. According to Fico (2014, pp. 92–93), the exhaustion of armed groups due to "the lack of popular support and the fulminating repression against militants" was evident with the defeat of the Araguaia Guerrillas in the rural north during which "fifty-nine guerrilla fighters were killed with exquisite cruelty." Military agents identified with the repressive "hard line" would keep promoting terrorist actions until the last military government (see Fico, 2014, pp. 99–100). The main concern within the military was "how to return the power to civilians while shielding the military?" (Fico, 2014, p. 96). The solution came in the forms of an amnesty project that benefited political opponents and perpetrators. The Amnesty Law was approved in 1979, during the last dictatorial government, absolving torturers and tortured alike (the Amnesty Law will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3).

While the dictatorship negotiated the country's transition to democracy, social movements also started to get stronger and, at the beginning of 1980, unionized industrial workers intensified their claims for higher wages declaring strikes, and social movements such

as *diretas já* ("direct [elections] now") spread throughout the country, producing massive demonstrations especially in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. These movements expressed the democratic hopes in the country at that time. Implied in the claims for direct elections was a bigger claim for having a more authentic popular representative occupying the presidential seat. And within this bigger claim were included other demands for better salaries and working conditions, and social participation in political decisions, for example. But, in the end, the *diretas já* campaign depended on the Congress for approval.

The next indirect presidential elections saw the conservative *Partido da Frente Liberal* (PFL, Liberal Front Party) join forces with the PMDB (formerly MDB) in an "alliance for democracy" and announce Tancredo de Almeida Neves for president, while the military party PDS (formerly ARENA) announced José Sarney. Despite all strategies and efforts of the dictatorship's candidate, the opposition won the 1984 elections with votes from politicians from various parties (including some from the PDS), while Sarney got the vice-presidency. The transition to democracy was proceeding with Neves's victory but before he could take the presidential seat in a ceremony scheduled for March 15, 1985, health issues took him to the hospital and to a series of surgeries. He died on April 21. It was expected that the Congress President Ulysses Guimarães (PMDB) would assume the presidency but, again, a political agreement with the military led Sarney to the Presidential seat and, with him, the continuation of the Brazilian Armed Forces as political agents within Brazil's brand-new liberal democracy.

2.2 Art Guerrillas*:* cultural resistance and the artistic *avant-garde* during the *leaden years*

While Section 2.1 provided a historical contextualization about the twenty-one years of dictatorial regime (1964–1985), Section 2.2 explores some of the artworks produced during the dictatorship and considers their dialogical relationship to the social circumstances and political projects of their time. By investigating the aesthetic and political relations of art production under the dictatorial regime I expect to provide enough material to comprehend their survival across time and how they influenced memory activists between 2010 and 2014.

In a text about the aesthetic *avant-garde* and political revolution, art critic Ferreira Gullar (1978) explains how the military coup of 1964 was also against the emergence of a massive, participative working class engaged in social struggles for better living conditions. In this sense, "while the new regime deliberately tried to depoliticize the country (eliminating political leaderships, parties and controlling the Congress), the theatre, cinema, popular music, and poetry, and even painting, took the role of re-politicizing it" (Gullar, 1978, p. 8). To do so, the shape and function of different forms of artistic expression started responding to the constraints of the military regime (censorship, threats, torture) and to the aesthetic possibilities of their time (the open work, use of ambiguities, pseudonyms, systems of circulation including urban spaces, the influence of international tendencies, and the stimulus to viewers' participation).

As explained earlier, after the Coup emerged left-wing guerrilla groups with distinct views and methods regarding how to overthrow the military regime. Following the AI-5 and the institutionalization of State violence, these groups intensified their activities. In this context of escalating violence and persecutions, censorship artists explored different means to keep working while, sometimes, also confronting the military regime (including joining armed guerrillas as did such as artists Sergio Ferro and Carlos Zílio, discussed in Ridenti, 2014).

The conservative modernization brought by the "economic miracle" described earlier, which opened the country to foreign capital and cultural influences, affected artists who had to adapt to moral and political censorship while responding critically in line with international aesthetic tendencies. An example is the work *Guevara, Vivo ou Morto* (Guevara, Dead or Alive) (1967, Image 8) by the artist Claudio Tozzi. Influenced by pop-art, the work was

destroyed by right-wing militants using an axe while being exhibited in the National Salon of Contemporary Art in 1967, one year before the AI-5 was decreed (Kiyomura, 2018).[10] According to Magalhães (Cavalcanti, 2005, p. 31), "Tozzi appropriated Roy Lichtenstein, altering its context and its meaning by using it as a support, as a means to deepen criticisms of our cultural and artistic dependence." When asked about the art of the 1960s, Tozzi highlighted the changes in Brazilian art by alluding to dialogues between aesthetics and politics:

> The 1960s was a period characterized by ruptures and changes. We lived in a time of eagerness for freedom and transformation that manifested in the arts. The experiences and situations stimulated us to create a painting that would contribute to social changes. For such a new language was necessary, a rupture with traditional painting, the creation of new objects that would translate a new order: more just and humane. (Cavalcanti, 2005, p. 12)

The influence of pop art in Tozzi's and other artworks of the Brazilian *avant-garde* can also be understood in its tendency towards a "de-sacralization" of art (Lippard, 1971). The choice of materials and procedures in the elaboration of Tozzi's work also seems to work in this perspective. Through the appropriation of photographic images taken from Brazilian newspapers and the reduction by contrast to their basic visual elements, the artist produced an impactful image easily understood by the spectator. At the same time, the operation of taking elements of mass media out of their original context and re-arranging them to generate new meanings alludes to the practice of *detournement* or, "the juxtaposition of two independent expressions, [which] supersedes the original elements and produces a synthetic organization of greater efficacy" (Debord & Wolman, 2006 [1956], p. 14), explored in France during the 1950s by artists and cultural theorists engaged in the Letterist International and later in the Situationist International.

Image 8: *Guevara, Vivo ou Morto*, 1967. Claudio Tozzi. Mass and acrylic paint on chipboard. Retrieved from: https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra5078/guevara-vivo-ou-morto

[10] The work was later restored by Tozzi.

These dialogues with international aesthetic trends guided by national social and political objectives could be observed in the artworks of other artists such as Hélio Oiticica, an artist based in Rio de Janeiro known for his participatory approach in paintings, sculptures and performances, all produced in a close dialogue with Brazilian popular culture. I understand participatory art as "artistic practices that since the 1960s appropriate social forms as a way to bring art closer to everyday life" (Bishop, 2006). In Brazil, according to art historian Mario Pedrosa (2007, p. 164), the "origins of the famous participation of the spectator in the artwork" date back to Lygia Clark's *Bichos* (Critters) from 1960, but it can be clearly observed in two of Oiticica's most famous works, "Parangolés" (1964) and "Tropicália" (1967, Image 9). Aiming for the viewers' ludic engagement, these experiments welcomed spectators to wear, walk through, or play with the environment and its objects. This work would influence Caetano Veloso's composition of the song *Tropicália* and the creation of the movement Tropicalism in 1968, which revisited the movement of *Antropofagia* or cultural cannibalism of the 1920s, according to which the artist should "swallow" different aesthetic tendencies to strengthen his or her creative force (Napolitano, 2001).

Image 9: Tropicália, Penetrables PN 2 'Purity is a myth' and PN 3 'Imagetical' (1966–1967), by Hélio Oitica. The work "is a large-scale installation by the Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica that can be walked through by visitors. The floor is covered in sand, over which a winding gravel path has been laid. This path is flanked by tropical plants in terracotta pots and poems written by the artist on wooden boards." Citation and image retrieved from: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/oiticica-tropicalia-penetrables-pn-2-purity-is-a-myth-and-pn-3-imagetical-t12414

During 1967, a year that, according to Napolitano (2008), marks the peak of politically engaged art in Brazil, Oiticica, in collaboration with other artists and art critics (such as Frederico Morais), organized the exhibition *Nova Objetividade* that took place in the Museum

of Modern art of Rio de Janeiro (MAM-RJ). The exhibition aimed to present the state of Brazilian *avant-garde* at that moment, and whose main characteristics, as described in its manifesto signed by Oiticica, were:

> 1) general desire to construct; 2) tendency to the object while the canvas and easel are denied and surpassed; 3) spectator participation (corporeal, tactile, visual, semantic etc.); 4) approach and taking position regarding ethical, social, and political issues; 5) tendency to collective propositions and subsequent abolition of the 'isms' (…); 6) reemergence and new formulations about the concept of antiart (Ferreira & Cotrim, 2006, p. 154)

This exhibition in Rio de Janeiro represented the artistic spirit of the 1960s in its attempt to leave the "isms" of art history (systems of beliefs used to categorize a group of individuals) towards the collective and participative experiments of the "antiart" characteristic of the European and North-American *avant-garde*, but still exploring elements of national identity. In São Paulo in 1968, similar proposals were emerging in the context of dramaturgic plays. In the manifesto written on the occasion of the theatre spectacle *Primeira Feira Paulista de Opinião* (First São Paulo Fair of Opinion), the organizer and playwright Augusto Boal called criminals the artists who only repeat "the last Parisian trend and the last London release," those who "only present pink visions of the world," and those who ignore "the genocide in Vietnam, the slow murder by starvation of millions of Brazilians (…)." (Boal, 2018 [1968]).

This attempt to leave institutionalized spaces of art and to include popular participation could also be observed in the collective exhibitions taking place in public spaces. In 1968, Oiticica conceived the collective manifestation *Apocalipopótese* [Apocalyppopotamus][11] (see Image 10) and reunited his and other artists works (such as Antonio Manuel's *Urnas Quentes* [Hot Ballot Boxes][12]) in the beach of Flamengo, Rio de Janeiro, creating a public exhibition in explicit interaction with passers-by. According to art historian Claudia Calirman (2012, pp. 54–57):

> It [the event *Apocalipopótese*] was born of Oiticica's desire to break down the boundaries between the public and the work of art. Every Sunday numerous artists would stage simultaneous performances and actions, each having little to do with another but all united by their interactive, spectator-oriented quality. (…) The capes [*parangolés*] were made of materials used by the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro's slums, such as polyethylene, gauze, burlap, straw, silk, muslin, nylon, and netting. With these works, Oiticica fluidly danced from the labyrinthine slums of Rio to the city's asphalt, navigating between high and low, shifting from the closed salons of the MAM/RJ[13] and its elite society to the social reality of the shantytowns, from experiments with the international avant-garde to Brazilian popular culture.

Artists such as Oiticica and the *neo-concretists*, questioned the distance between art and people while using the spaces of the city as a support. According to Gullar (1978), these attempts at approximation were "the path these artists found to return to reality, without giving up the metaphysical conception that moves them" (1978, p. 34).In the repressive context of 1970s, intensified since the AI-5 (1968), these oppositional proposals to the traditional work of art started serving a movement of "cultural guerrillas," which can be observed in the experiments elaborated by artists such as Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles, and art critics such as Ferreira Gullar and Frederico Morais.

In 1970 Frederico Morais organized an artistic five-day site-specific exhibition entitled

[11] A pun on the words apocalypse and hippopotamus.

[12] *Urnas Quentes* was a series of works created by artist Antonio Manuel in 1968 that invited the public to break open sealed wooden boxes containing images and texts protesting the military dictatorship.

[13] *Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro* (Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro).

Do corpo à terra (*From Body to Earth*), which encouraged artists to reflect upon ideas of a turn to the land (to nationalist ideas and to the national issues of their time) from a participatory and situational perspective. For three days the city of Belo Horizonte saw its parks, mountain

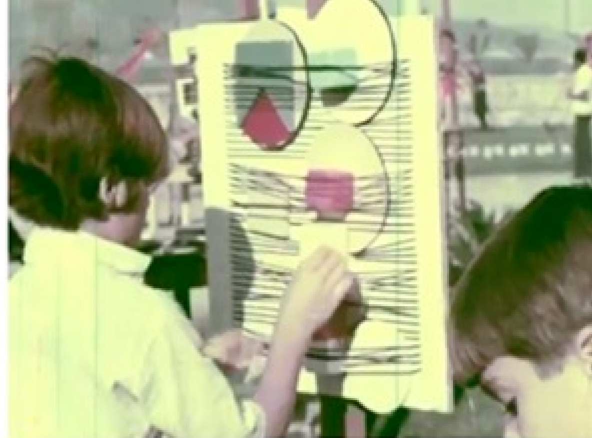

Image 10: Frames of the film *Apocalipopótese* by Raymundo Amado, 1968. Retrieved from: https://dasartes.com.br.

ranges, and art institutions being taken over by artistic experiments incorporated into everyday life. This encouraged the production of impactful works of high political connotation in public spaces, which attracted police interventions at different moments across the event (Shtromberg, 2016; Calirman, 2012; Cavalcanti, 2005).

Artist Artur Barrio contributed to the event with his work *Situações* (Situations). According to Calirman (2012), the artist bought twenty kilos of cow meat and bones from slaughterhouses and used them to fill fourteen bundles wrapped with blood-stained rope. These bags of meat and bones were anonymously placed in rivers and sewage sites at the Municipal Park in the city of Belo Horizonte as part of the exhibition. The “anonymous” bundles placed in public places alluded to the State violence and its methods for disappearing victims, leading viewers to leave momentarily the position of detached bystanders and become witnesses to the crimes committed by the military regime. By the end of the day, the police came, destroyed the bundles, and took the bones to be analysed in a laboratory.

Image 11: Cildo Meireles's work Tiradentes: totem-monumento ao preso político (1970). Retrieved from Cavalcanti (2005).

Barrio's work responded to Oiticica's *Nova Objetividade* proposal, outlined in the essay mentioned earlier (Ferreira & Cotrim, 2006), of an *avant-garde* connected to the reality of underdeveloped Brazil. This can be seen from the use of perishable materials to its intention of being experienced temporarily outside institutional spaces of art, until its probable destruction by deterioration or collection from the Sanitation Department. While there is a clear influence of foreign artistic experiences, such as those of Italian artist Piero Manzoni and his *Merda d'artista* (Artist's Shit) (1961),[14] the sensorial experience and disgusting reactions from the public demanded by Barrio's bundles were politically charged and addressed against the dictatorship.

Artists' use of unconventional and creative tactics to confront the military regime would be addressed by Frederico Morais as *arte guerrilha* (guerrilla art). In his essay "Contra a arte afluente" (Against Affluent Art) (1970), Morais questions the idea of "artwork" and states that the work of art as we know it no longer exists given that since modernity it has been merging

[14] Manzoni purportedly packaged his own excrement in ninety small cans, each labeled "Artist's Shit. Contents: 30 grams net freshly preserved, produced and tinned in May 1961." He then sold the cans by weight, basing their price on the market value of gold (Calirman, 2012, p. 87).

with everyday life—art is now a sign, a situation, a concept, and the artist "a type of guerrilla fighter":

> The artist today is a type of guerrilla fighter. Art is a form of ambush. Acting suddenly, where and when it is least expected in an unusual way (because everything today can become an instrument of war or art), the artist creates a permanent state of tension, a constant expectation. Everything can be transformed into art, even the most ordinary everyday event. The spectator, a constant victim of artistic guerrilla, finds themselves obliged to activate their senses. (Morais, 1970, p. 49)

Image 12: *Situações* (Situations) (1970), Artur Barrio. Municipal Park of Belo Horizonte. Retrieved from: Calirman (2012).

In this sense, according to Morais (1970), the artistic ambushes promoted by the Brazilian *avant-garde* confront the formalities of an art history that deals with finished artworks and generates "schools or isms" (1970, p. 51); such ambushes participate in a subterranean guerrilla history produced by unfinished and/or uncategorizable works. These ambushes derive from the movements of antiart initiated by the Dadaists (exemplified for Morais by Marcel Duchamp's famous ready-made L.H.O.O.Q., from 1919, featuring a moustache drawn over a reproduction of Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*) and are seen in the production of Brazilian guerrilla artists in their dealings with the social and political context of the dictatorship. Thus the production of a counter-history without categories, style, and authors gains other meanings.

The lack of authorship, for example, can be understood as an aesthetic decision but also as a consequence of the risks involved in art production under authoritarian regimes. In 1970 conceptual artist Cildo Meireles began exploring circuits of exchange (newspapers, reusable bottles of soda, and banknotes) to anonymously disseminate political messages such as "Yankees Go Home" and "Down with the Dictatorship" while avoiding military censorship. In

1975, following the death of journalist Vladimir Herzog,[15] Meireles revisited these works and started stamping banknotes with the question "Who Killed Herzog?" (Image 13).

As stated in other analyses of Meireles's work (Shtromberg, 2016; Calirman, 2012), the artist was already interested in circuits of exchange as a form of institutional criticism and of avoiding the surveillance and censorship of the military within the art world and mass communication venues. According to Calirman (2012, p. 140), the artist's question was rather "a rhetorical proposition underlining the fact that the official explanation given by the government was falsely generated to mask the real causes of Herzog's death." By asking "Who Killed Herzog?" the artist was doing more than inquiring about matters of authorship; he was confronting the official version given by the military. For this reason, Meireles's banknotes "did not last long in the hands of the recipient; people would neither keep them in their pockets nor rip them up, so they kept circulating quickly" (Calirman, 2012, p. 140).

The initial impact of Meireles's banknotes derived from the challenge they posed to viewer expectations. Although written messages on money notes were not unusual in the 1970s, an anti-dictatorial message would have been less expected given the political repression during that time. The shock to viewers derived from banknotes being repurposed to serve anti-dictatorial propaganda. In this sense, art historian Elena Shtromberg (2016, p. 33) argues that "by opening up a symbolic space of dissent, and by straddling both the unconventional modes of artistic production associated with conceptual art and the more underground tactics of urban guerrillas, the bills represent an important step in constituting resistance." Here Shtromberg calls attention to the influence of Marxist ideology, in vogue in the 1970s, in Meireles's emphasis on social exchange as a form of combatting alienation and on his use of the term *ideology* in his work. As demonstrated in Section 2.1, despite the military regime's efforts to eliminate—physically and symbolically—left-wing political opposition, in "the 1970s, Brazil had an active Marxist presence both culturally and politically" (Shtromberg, 2016, p. 31). In this respect Shtromberg observes the connections between Marighella's ideas, written in the *Minimanual do guerrilheiro urbano* (Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla) (2003), about the importance of circulating revolutionary ideas and Meireles's political insertions in the system of monetary circulation:

[15] Vladimir Herzog (Vlado) was the director of the department of journalism at TV Cultura in São Paulo. After torturing and killing Vlado, the military released an official explanation about his death affirming that he had hung himself in prison. In 1978 the Brazilian justice system recognized that Herzog was murdered, and in 1987 his family was compensated.

Image 13: *Quem Matou Herzog?* (Who Killed Herzog?) (1975). Cildo Meireles. Under military censorship Cildo stamped money notes with the question "who killed Herzog?" Herzog was a journalist killed by the regime that same year.

> Though decidedly less aggressive than Marighella's call to arms, Meireles's message was very much related to the ideas circulating in the revolutionary activist agenda of resistance to the authoritarian regime. (…) The Insertions series was inscribed by a potent political agenda and a visible critique of the military government. Such tactics unquestionably exposed Meireles to the possibility of retaliatory measures, which included political exile, imprisonment, and torture. (Shtromberg, 2016, pp. 31–32)

The experiments produced by artists from the "generation AI-5" not only drew on the tactical approach used by urban guerrillas but at times also echoed their political ideals. In a broader sense it is possible to say that the form and content of these "artistic guerrillas" redefined political participation against and stimulated criticisms of the military regime. In a moment when every act of resistance seemed useless, Meireles's banknotes "kept moving the ethos of opposition to the regime" (Napolitano, 2008, p. 79). At the same time, events like *Apocalipopótese* (1968), *Do Corpo à Terra* (From Body to Earth) (1970), and *Domingos da Criação* (Sundays of Creation) (1971)[16] addressed the main (global) concerns of 1960s participatory art—activation, authorship, and community (Bishop, 2006)—without disengaging from the social issues of the time.

Besides productions within the visual arts, music, cinema, and literature were also affected by the escalation of State authoritarianism following the AI-5. According to da Silva (2008, p. 40) this could be seen in music: "In the lyrics that spoke about 'trips' that led to nowhere identifiable, in the 'ports,' 'stations' unlocated in space or time [the songs of

[16] The first two events have already been discussed in Section 2.2. The third event, *Domingos da Criação* (Sundays of Creation), consisted of "a series of six events held the last Sunday of every month on the grounds of the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro. These events were hugely popular and drew thousands of participants. (…) Each Sunday, the public was encouraged to let their imagination run wild as they interacted with a single material structuring the event, including paper, string, fabric, bodies, dirt, and sound" (Shtomberg, 2016, p. 1).

desbunde]—or the songs that, using a cyphered language, tried, between the lines, to break the blockages of interdicted discourse." The topics addressed in the lyrics and the type of language they used characterized the choices available to Brazilian youth during that time: democratic resistance in small everyday gestures, joining guerrilla groups, and the *desbunde* (a term used to define contracultural trends that sought a life outside the constraints of society)[17] (Napolitano, 2018). In fact, these tendencies can be observed in the songs composed by young musicians such as Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, and Gilberto Gil.

"That's when everything got obstructed," said musician Chico Buarque about the period following the AI-5 in 1968. Although he already had seen censorship of some of his music and had himself gone through interrogations before, this moment was different. Afraid, Chico Buarque left with his family for Europe. Fourteen days after the implementation of AI-5 two other famous musicians, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, were arrested for offending the national flag and anthem (Gregorio, 2018). In prison Veloso and Gil had their hair cut, and after about three months were put in an airplane to be exiled in London. On the occasion, Caetano remembers, the military warned them not to come back and if they did, they would better surrender to the military straight away to spare their work looking for them.

According to Napolitano (2008) there are four basic factors to be considered in understanding the complex cultural scene post AI-5: 1) the exile of and censorship against famous artists and intellectuals; 2) the expansion of the means of mass communication; 3) the nationalist propaganda of the military regime; and 4) the search for new spaces and styles for cultural expression. In the context of the "economic miracle" (see Section 2.1), censorship associated with the expansion of consumption was expressed in the investments in easy entertainment associated with music and TV production.

Discussions about the "cultural emptiness" of the leaden years and the alienated artist surrounded the originally pejorative term *desbunde.* It was used to characterize changes in the behavior of youth during that period, which involved sexual liberation, interest in mystic traditions, and experiences with psychedelic substances, normally associated by the popular-nationalist left-wing with a lack of commitment to the pressing issues of the time. The aesthetic language adopted by Caetano Veloso was many times framed in such a way.

Veloso's works differed in form and content from most music production at the time. Exploring the experiences of a young generation that faced abrupt changes derived from technological development, countercultures, and sexual liberation, his artworks were not easy to apprehend. For this reason, his presentation of the song/spoken-word/happening *É Proibido Proibir* (It is Forbidden to Forbid), during the International Festival of Music in 1968, was constantly interrupted by the audience who accused him of being an alienated hippie (Napolitano, 2001).

Similar criticisms would be made in relation to the already mentioned movement Tropicalism created by Caetano Veloso along with other artists in 1968. Such criticisms can be synthesized in Augusto Boal's opinion regarding the movement: "Tropicalism is inarticulate—specifically because it attacks the appearances, and not the essence of society, and especially because these appearances are ephemeral and transitional tropicalism can't coordinate itself in any system—it only curses the chameleon's colour" (Boal, 2018 [1968]). Against this superficial attitude Boal claimed that it was necessary to explore reality from different perspectives, but always in connection to the popular classes.

It is possible, of course, to agree or disagree with Boal's opinion regarding the superficiality of Tropicalism. However, I would like to stress here that, within this debate, (implied by the terms *desbunde* and popular nationalist) both perspectives contain a certain degree of

[17] This trend, sometimes seen as an inconsequential view, is exemplified by da Silva (2008) in reference to the verses of the 1972 song *Besta é Tu* (The Fool is You) by the group Novos Baianos: "If there is no other world / why not live?"

romanticism and they nonetheless influenced many of the artistic productions between the late 1960s and the 1970s. As stated by Marcelo Ridenti in his investigations into the cultural and political interplays among Brazilian left-wing sectors:

> The romanticism of the left-wing was not a simple turn to the past, but also modernizing. It looked to past elements for the construction of the future's utopia. It was not, thus, a romanticism in the sense of an anticapitalist perspective imprisoned in the past, generator of an unachievable utopia. It was romanticism, but revolutionary. (Ridenti, 2014, p. 57)

This double light shines at the same time over the "superficiality" of Tropicalism, of Boal's search for "the truth," and of all the artistic productions mentioned in this Section that dialogue with the two. Such productions can be understood as "romantic responses" which dialogued with elements from the past to respond to the social, political, and economic conditions of their time.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 examined the Brazilian dictatorship (1964–1985) to establish the historical grounds over which political repression and cultural resistance were developed. Section 2.1 considered the socioeconomic factors that originated in the 1964 military coup as a civil-military response against popular emergence. This section also observed the use of an anti-communist rhetoric across different dictatorial governments to justify brutal and extralegal methods of political persecution of those considered "subversives." Section 2.1 ends by exploring the "slow, gradual, and safe" transition to democracy negotiated by the military itself, a transition marked by initiatives to shield perpetrators from accusations of human rights violations, such as the Amnesty Law (1979). Section 2.2 focused on the cultural production of left-wing sectors between the 1950s and 1970s and demonstrated that Brazilian artistic expressions were guided by a two-fold objective: to search for a national identity that celebrated the Brazilian common people, and to overcome the country's cultural and economic underdevelopment. Following escalating State violence in the early 1970s, many artists intensified their experiments with new languages and procedures that communicated (not always in a direct manner) anti-dictatorial messages. In this context artists started taking their activities outside traditional exhibition circuits towards public spaces while exploring foreign aesthetic tendencies (e.g., pop art and participatory art) in a critical manner and in order to address the social and political issues of their time and place.

The social and political circumstances set in place by the military repression observed in Section 2.1 influenced the shape and function of the aesthetic experiments investigated in Section 2.2. Those experiments developed during the early 1970s, and were characterized by the expression "guerrilla art," as used by art critic Frederico Morais (1970) in reference to the participatory and politically informed works of artists such as Cildo Meireles and Artur Barrio. Some forty years later these experiments in "guerrilla art" were taken up by young activists protesting the alarming presence of dictatorial legacies under democracy. As demonstrated by the actions of memory activism to be analysed in Part 2 of the thesis, not only were the aesthetic tendencies such as Brazilian Neoconcretismo and European Situationism assimilated by memory activists, but specific artworks were appropriated and reformulated to serve their struggle in the present. I argue that the shape and function of such aesthetic experiments were also influenced by the social and political circumstances of their time.

As will be explained in Chapter 3, the negotiated transition to democracy that followed the military regime was characterized by the State's investment in a form of reconciliation by forgetting that aimed to "turn the page" on the dictatorial period. But, as detailed in the case

study provided in Chapter 4, relatives of victims could not simply “turn the page”; they remained active in demanding truth and justice regarding the circumstances of victims’ deaths. Around 2007 these demands started to be addressed by the State during the Brazilian “turn to memory” (Atencio, 2014). As demonstrated in Part 2 of the thesis, young activists saw this shift as an opportunity to raise awareness, engage more people, and expand government initiatives against dictatorial legacies and their effects in the present. To do so they drew many times on the aesthetic and political tactics developed under the dictatorial repression of the early 1970s—the particularities of such transmission of cultural forms between dictatorial and “post-dictatorializing” periods will be discussed in Part 2.

Between 1969 and 1970, writing about Brazilian politics and culture of the initial years of the dictatorship, Roberto Schwarz (1978, p. 62) affirmed that “Despite the right-wing dictatorship there is relatively left-wing cultural hegemony in the country.” This so-called hegemony became more and more fragmented (or encrypted) following the escalation of State authoritarianism post AI-5 (1968) and less radical following the transition to a liberal democracy—as was evident in the successive terms of the Labour Party Government (2003–2016). About thirty years later, Marcelo Ridenti (2014) affirmed that despite the so-called “lack of memory” of Brazilians, there is an extensive literature about the dictatorship. Considering the recent emergence of right-wing extremism, I argue that the “relative cultural hegemony” of left-wing sectors or “extensive academic production” contributed to a relative acceptance of cultural and academic narratives about the dictatorial period. However, as demonstrated in the final chapter of the thesis, the relative acceptance of such narratives does not imply the extinction of right-wing authoritarian narratives.

CHAPTER 3. The Politics of Memory in Post-dictatorial Brazil

According to the literature produced in the intersections between studies on transitional justice and memory studies (De Brito et. al., 2001; Assmann & Shortt, 2012; Jelin, 2003; Schneider, 2011a), in societies facing transitions from authoritarian regimes to democracy "the future of the past is still uncertain" (De Brito et. al., 2001, p. 39). As such, the past needs to be constantly reworked in the present by official and non-official actors. In this sense, the expression "politics of memory" can mean policies of truth and justice in transitional contexts; in a wider sense, it can also mean how societies reckon with the past and mould their future in a wider cultural arena. Building on and synthesizing studies about the Brazilian politics of dictatorial memory, Chapter 3 identifies the major public policies and government initiatives that contributed to transitional justice, while acknowledging the important role of social initiatives. The Chapter draws on relevant literature (Atencio, 2014; Santos, 2015; Bauer, 2014; De Almeida Teles, 2010) to provide an overview of the politics of memory in post-dictatorial Brazil that will be expanded by a closer look into the social and political dynamics of memory provided in Chapter 4.

According to historian Janaína De Almeida Teles (2010) the fight for memory, truth, and justice in Brazil can trace its origins back to the relatives' struggles for the right to truth and justice developed during the dictatorial period. As explained by De Almeida Teles (2010), the institutional limitations to such rights did not cease in the democratic period but their efforts produced some successful outcomes. Political scientist Carlos Artur Gallo (2012) highlights the role of relatives in the construction of public policies such as the Law 9.149/95, known as the Law of the Dead and Disappeared, which in spite of its limitations served as the "necessary basis for the construction of other gains" (Gallo, 2012, p. 353).

In Brazil, institutional advances towards transitional justice,[18] expressed in the form of State legislation and other official initiatives, must be understood as a result of the struggle by relatives to reduce the hiatus between the oblivion promoted by the transition's "slow, gradual and safe" program and the memory produced by relatives, human rights advocates, and social movements in specific periods. In 1992, the pressure of victims' relatives convinced President Fernando Collor to demand the transferring of the Deops/SP archives to the São Paulo State Government, making them available for research. But it was only during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government that the State recognized its role in the death of political opposition members and established a scheme for compensating victims through the Law 9.140/95. At the same time, the policies for economic compensation developed by state and federal Laws did not provide for further investigations to uncover the truth regarding the circumstances of victims' death, the recovery of mortal remains, or the punishment of those responsible for civilian deaths. Such initiatives can be understood as negotiated responses between the Brazilian State and the Armed Forces to social claims for memory, truth, and justice.

In this Chapter I draw on the expression "politics of memory" to address both State and non-State initiatives developed during the transition to democracy and in the subsequent democratic governments to reckon with the dictatorial past. Thus, the politics of memory analysed here correspond to the social and political circumstances and to the power dynamics in each period. If, during the military regime, the plurality of mnemonic narratives could not find traction within the State or the mainstream media (which supported the regime), the transitional phase was influenced by the struggle of the affected families and by the global

[18] I understand transitional justice in this thesis as "a concrete answer to the systematic or generalized violation of human rights. Its objective is the recognition of victims and the promotion of possibilities for democratic reconciliation and consolidation" (Abrão & Genro, 2010, p. 23).

shifts toward a human rights discourse (especially for post-dictatorship contexts), resulting in the slow incorporation of new voices to the debates about the dictatorship.

3.1 The Amnesty Law and institutionalized forgetting (1979)

By the mid 1970s, during Geisel's *regime of transformation*, social movements intensified their claims for unconditional amnesty to all those accused of political crimes against the dictatorship. Created in this context were movements such as the *Movimento Feminino pela Anistia* (MFPA, Female Movement for Amnesty) and the *Comitê Brasileiro de Anistia* (CBA, Brazilian Committee for Amnesty) created in 1978 by lawyers, families and friends of political prisoners.[19] Their efforts for amnesty and democratization received the support of organizations such as the *Associação Brasileira de Imprensa* (ABI, Brazilian Press Association), the *Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil* (OAB, Brazilian Bar Association), and the *Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil* (CNBB, National Conference of Brazilian Bishops), strengthened by the regime's gradual restoration of civil liberties. The regime's transition plan was thus followed by the return of political debates to the public sphere.

As a response to these social claims, on June 1979 General Figueiredo sent his amnesty project to the Congress and, on August 22 1979, after an agitated voting session, the *Lei da Anistia* (Amnesty Law) was approved with 206 against 201 votes; it was sanctioned six days later (Lei nº 6.683, de 28 de agosto de 1979). According to political scientist Glenda Mezarobba (2010), the Brazilian process of reckoning with the dictatorial past began with the Amnesty Law. Framed as an attempt to provide national reconciliation, the law granted forgiveness to those accused of committing political crimes. On the one hand, the Amnesty Law benefited some of the regime's political opposition who had been in prison, in exile, lost their public positions and/or had their political rights suspended. On the other hand, it also shielded from prosecution those State agents accused of kidnapping, torture and murder. Therefore, what could have been an opportunity for collective reckoning with the past became a legalized protection for repressive institutions and impunity to members of the military involved in crimes against humanity. As psychoanalyst Maria Rita Kehl (2010) puts it, the forgetting of torture naturalizes violence as a social symptom.

The 1979 Amnesty Law represents, within the Brazilian transitional justice, the main form of silencing regarding the crimes committed by the military regime. Not only does the law formalize legal impunity, but it also supports the "two demons" theory, by which the regime was characterized by a confrontation between "two sides." According to this view, the transition to democracy should entail a rejection of radicals from the right and the left. By establishing a symmetrical amnesty, the Amnesty Law obfuscated serious and systemic crimes by presenting a false moral equivalence between State violence and resistance to State violence (De Almeida Teles, 2015; Reis, 2010; Bauer, 2015).

Historian Eduardo Aarão Reis (2010) calls attention to the three silences that followed the Amnesty Law: (1) the silence about torture and the torturers, encouraged by productions such as Fernando Gabeira's book *O que é isso companheiro?* (1979, What's This, Comrade?); (2) the silence about support for the dictatorship within civil society, a silence that is common

[19] The Brazilian Committee for Amnesty (CBA) was created in 1978 by lawyers defending those accused of political crimes, assisted by existing movements, such as the MFPA. Similar to the MFPA, the CBA was an organization recognized by the State, which thus allowed taking social opposition against the regime to institutional sites. Also sharing similar objectives with the MFPA, the CBA advocated for amnesty and against political persecution, imprisonment and torture. The Committee's headquarters were located inside the *Associação Brasileira de Imprensa* (ABI, Brazilian Press Association), in Rio de Janeiro, and attended by journalists, lawyers, religious leaderships and students, besides relatives of those affected by the regime. Rapidly the movement would spread to other places creating committees in many Brazilian cities and also outside Brazil.

in many societies that seek self-forgiveness after traumatic periods (e.g., German citizens' support of Nazism, or popular support for Stalinism in the Soviet Union); (3) and the silence about the leftist revolutionary efforts, defeated between 1966 and 1973. These silences are not random or *ad* hoc, but rather predictable results of the Amnesty Law and its subsequent impact on legal and political processes in the transitional period.

Observing the etymology of the word "amnesty" from the Greek *amnestia*—comprising two expressions: *anamnesis* (reminiscence) and *amnesia* (forgetting)—Bauer (2014) argues that the term has no necessary connection with "forgiving." This observation is relevant, since it resonates with the Law's intention as stated by Dictator General Figueiredo: "I don't want forgiveness because forgiveness presupposes regret and I am not asking them [left-wing opponents] to regret even the taking arms against us. I only want there to be reciprocal forgetting" (Bauer, 2014, p. 148). Through the Amnesty Law the military regime aimed to consolidate the idea that the democratic transition required silence about the past and granted impunity to perpetrators of human rights violations. In this sense Bauer (2015) notes that the military impunity and immunity legitimated by Amnesty Law was much more a military concession than an outcome of social mobilizations. Furthermore, in dialogue with Seligmann-Silva, Bauer (2014) highlights that this "reciprocal forgetting" was another arbitrary act promoted amongst other legal nonsenses produced by the dictatorship.

This reciprocal forgetting promoted by the 1979 Amnesty Law would be questioned by relatives, legal experts, and researchers in the following decades. In 2008 the Brazilian Bar Association initiated a legal action demanding the reinterpretation of the Amnesty Law by the Brazilian Supreme Court, in order to allow for the criminal accountability of State agents who have committed serious violations of human rights. The Brazilian Federal Supreme Court voted, seven against two, for the validity of the Amnesty Law. This decision, as pointed out by Santos (2015), certainly contributed to the 2010 decision by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) condemning Brazil in the Araguaia Guerrilla case.

According to the IACHR report, while recognizing the State's efforts to reckon with the dictatorial past other measures are needed in order to "make sure that the Amnesty Law doesn't remain an obstacle to the legal prosecution of gross human rights violations that constitute crimes against humanity" (Ventura, 2011, p. 11). The Supreme Court followed the recommendation, reviewing the Amnesty Law and deciding to maintain the military interpretation. The debates around the Amnesty Law are still relevant and alive today, as can be seen in the movement for the reinterpretation of the Amnesty Law organized by different collectives for memory, truth, and justice, which in 2021 circulated the term #ReinterpretaJáSTF (Soares, 2021).

3.2 The role of relatives' actions and the case of the Araguaia Guerrillas (1982)

Legislative change and judicial activities can be important components of social and political mobilizations regarding memory, truth and justice and should also be considered in approaches to contemporary memory activism as they also participate in the frameworks from which they dispute meanings around the past. In the Brazilian context, the actions promoted by victims' relatives have been developed since the beginning of State repression, but their visibility, tactics, partners, and goals changed according to the circumstances in place during and after the transition to democracy. These actions, mobilized by "nonstate actors that are often represented at the margins" (Santos, 2015, p. 39), continue interacting with the Brazilian State and with the broader civil society up to the present day.

As stated earlier, since the early 1970s legal actions were initiated by victims and families of the victims such as the political disappeared or former prisoners. Most cases were against the State, not against individuals, as shown by Santos (2015, pp. 53–54), and plaintiffs

were more interested in having their rights for truth, memory and justice formally recognized rather than in securing financial redress. Only one case, known as "Tied Up Hands,"[20] demanded financial reparations in addition to civil accountability. This case was filed in 1973 by relatives of former military officer Manoel Soares, assassinated by the military regime, but it did not get much attention at the time. By contrast, the Herzog case (discussed in Chapter 2), filed by his relatives one year following his assassination under torture by the dictatorship, demanded the recognition that he was killed by the State and that he had not committed suicide—as claimed by the regime. In 1978, the decision favoured the complainants and according to Santos (2015, p. 56) "was widely covered by media and challenged the legitimacy of the military regime."

Another unique case worth mentioning due to its transnational aspect and to its ongoing presence within memory conflicts is the one related to the family members of Araguaia Guerrilla victims of the military regime. In 1982, twenty-two complainants, relatives of Araguaia Guerrilla members, filed a request at the *Justiça Federal do Distrito Federal* (JFDF, Federal Justice of the Federal District) demanding at the same time the truth about their relatives' deaths and the State's accountability for them. As demonstrated in De Almeida Teles (2010) in 2003 the State determined the disclosure of military information regarding their operations against the Guerrilla and created an inter-ministerial committee to help locate the victims' mortal remains. The committee requested the collaboration of the Armed Forces who, after affirming that all relevant documents had been destroyed, produced four different reports based on interviews with former and current staff. This committee concluded its job in 2007 after four years of a work, but with no interactions with society, and with a final report reaffirming the commission's commitment to restore the mortal remains to their families, but not to reassess the past. According to De Almeida Teles (2010), the commission also recommended that the State should review the laws regarding access to information, declassify documents and promote investigations inside the Armed Forces.

In 1995, "considering the delays of Brazilian justice in producing resolutions" (De Almeida Teles, 2010, p. 291) the same group of relatives filed a petition at the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights (ICHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS) with the support of international NGOs such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the *Centro por la Justicia y el Derecho Internacional* (CEJIL, Centre for Justice and International Law) (Santos, 2015). In March 2009, the Araguaia Guerrilla case was sent to the Inter-American Court on Human Rights (IACtHR) and in 2010 the Court condemned the Brazilian State and "ruled the non-compability of amnesty laws related to serious human rights violations with international law and the international obligations of the States."[21] According to Santos (2015) the IACtHR decision was influenced by the request filed by the Brazilian Bar Association at the Federal Supreme Court demanding a reinterpretation of the Amnesty Law. In this context the Federal Government signed the third *Programa Nacional de Deraitos Humanos* (PNDH-3, National Plan of Human Rights, analysed in this chapter) determining the imminent creation of a National Truth Commission. This outcome demonstrates how international support for the Araguaia Guerrilla case became an important means of overcoming legal limitations in the domestic Brazilian context.

Interactions between victims' relatives, social movements, human rights advocates, and academics should also be considered as important weapons within the Brazilian politics of memory. Since the first decade of 1970, with the support of national and international institutions, the "drama initially restricted to the private space of the families started to be taken to the public space" (Gallo, 2012, p. 333) by organized groups such as the *Comissão de*

[20] The case had this name because the victim's body was found in a river with his hands tied behind his back. (Santos in Schneider 2015).

[21] IACtHR 2010 resolution. Available in Santos (2015).

Familiares de Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos (CFMDP, Commission of Families of the Killed and Disappeared for Political Reasons), the *Movimento Feminino pela Anistia* (MFPA, Women's Amnesty Movement), the *Comitê Brasileiro pela Anistia* (CBA, Brazilian Amnesty Committee), and, in 1985, the NGO *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais–Rio de Janeiro* (GTNM/RJ, Group Torture Never Again–Rio de Janeiro). Besides interacting with national and international human rights advocates these groups also sought support within academic sectors.

In 1985 the GTNM/RJ officially initiated its work in a seminar at Faculty Candido Mendes, in Rio de Janeiro, reuniting victims' relatives, members of social movements, artists, and scholars. In the mid–1990s, historian and victim's relative Janaína de Almeida Teles, a historian and also the daughter of former political prisoners, organized a conference at the University of São Paulo. During the conference she managed to bring together scholars, attorneys and activists to discuss the recently created reparation commission *Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos* (CEMDP, Special Commission on Political Deaths and Disappearances). This effort resulted in the book *Mortos e desaparecidos políticos: reparação ou impunidade?* (Political Deaths and Disappearances: Reparation or Impunity?) organized by Janaína De Almeida Teles (2001). These examples illustrate how interactions between victims' relatives and the academic sector could contribute to the struggle for memory, truth, and justice by providing institutional spaces for legitimating victims' narratives and also to circulate them in publications.

Also important were the alliances made with politicians and local governments in the years following the transition to democracy. For example, the alliance with the governor of Pernambuco, Miguel Arraes, who was exiled during the regime, led to concrete outcomes. According to Santos (2015) in 1995 Arraes sponsored the publication of the dossier of dictatorial victims and wrote a short introduction to the book highlighting its importance within the process of redemocratization. Such alliances contributed to the production and publications of reports and to the support of families' legal actions against the State.

Changes in the social and political circumstances of the 2000s set a different context that contributed to the development of individual accountability. Besides changes within Brazil generated by State responses to relatives' legal actions such as the Araguaia Guerrilla case, advances in other countries also helped create a favourable context. For example, in 2003 Argentina's Federal Government revoked the laws *Punto Final* (Full Stop Law) and *Obediencia Debida* (Law of Due Obedience), thus stimulating new trials against former perpetrators. According to Santos (2015) in Brazil this favourable regional context encouraged the Teles and Merlino families to initiate new legal actions against Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, accused of torture and murder while commanding the DOI-CODI in São Paulo from 1970 to 1974. The case was filed in 2005 and the families won in all courts and levels of litigation (Santos, 2015).

These interactions between different State and non-State actors, and also national and international actors, as suggested by Cecília MacDowell Santos (2015), Janaína De Almeida Teles (2010), and Carlos Artur Gallo (2012), were influenced by (but also exerted influence over) the opportunities presented in specific social and political circumstances. Within the Brazilian post-dictatorial politics of memory, the legal actions and other efforts of victims' relatives have helped to build the movement for memory, truth and justice, and to strengthen pro-accountability discourses despite the resistance of some sectors within Brazilian society. The actions mentioned in this Section illustrate the works of victims and relatives to open up spaces for elaborating their trauma and disseminating their narratives. According to De Almeida Teles (2010, p. 298), by doing so, "they trace and retrace the limits of their (our) identities." Furthermore, these actions also exemplify the potential of non-State actors and those normally considered to be on the sociopolitical margins in pushing the limits of Brazil's transitional justice.

3.3 The production of the report *Brasil: Nunca mais (BNM)* (1985)

The efforts of victims and victims' relatives described earlier also influenced and were influenced by the work of human rights advocates. In this respect it is worth exploring the production of the report *Brasil: Nunca mais* (BNM, Brazil: Never Again, Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985) by the Archdiocese of São Paulo and its contributions to the struggle for memory, truth, and justice. As observed by De Almeida Teles (2012) the *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais–RJ* (GTNM–RJ, Group: Torture Never Again–Rio de Janeiro) can be understood as one of the outcomes of this publication.

In the preface to the BNM report published in 1985, Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns recalls the violent days of the military regime when he used to assist families looking for their relatives. He mentions a young woman who came to him after finding the wedding ring of her disappeared husband at her front door: "Mr. Priest, what does this return mean? Is it a sign that he is dead or a sign that I should keep looking for him?" (1986, p. 11). Arns then mentions an older woman who came to him asking, "Do you have any news about my son?" (1986, p. 11). After more than five years trying to help that mother look for her son through the *Comissão Justiça e Paz* (Peace and Justice Commission),[22]he saw her hopes fade on her body until the day she passed away. The Cardinal explains: "The 'disappeared' becomes a shadow that, in its darkening, obscures the last light of earthly existence" (p. 12).

Brasil: Nunca mais (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985) can be seen as the first relevant cultural production in the Brazilian memory operations in the period of democratization (De Almeida Teles, 2012). It was conceived by lawyers, former politician prisoners, historians and journalists, with the support of Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns and Reverend Jaime Wright and relies on official documents produced by the regime to report about its structure and its repressive apparatus, persecution of its opposition, and methods of torture used against that opposition. According to Atencio (2014) the book became an instant best seller, surpassing the mark of 300,000 copies sold. The book is recognized as one of the most important documents about the Brazilian dictatorship, and has served as a relevant source of data for other publications regarding the dictatorial period.

The research project began, "with the required silence and discretion" (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985, p. 20) in 1979 during Figueiredo's government following his promises to maintain the gradual transition to democracy, and was finally published in 1985. As described in the book's introduction, along with other ecclesiastic members and a team of specialists, Cardinal Paulo managed to compile through different means 707 complete cases (and many other incomplete cases) produced by the Superior Military Court from 1964 to 1979. These cases (more than one million pages) were copied and saved outside the country to prevent any governmental interference while, in Brazil, they were analysed and compiled in an initial report of some 5,000 pages. By using official documents produced by the State containing names of prisoners, torturers and the torture techniques applied, the project's methodology overcomes the doubts about the legitimacy of the reports produced by victims (commonly accused of being bound to ideological objectives). In that sense, the BNM reveals the violent nature of the military regime according to the regime's own judicial reports.

It is important to highlight the paradoxical role of religious sectors during the Brazilian dictatorship. As described by Philip Potter, former secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), in the preface to the BNM (1986), the first WCC Assembly, in 1948, encouraged churches to work in favour of the UN's approval of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the fourth Assembly, in 1968, the WCC highlighted the global character of Human Rights.

[22] The Peace and Justice Commission was created in 1972, in São Paulo, by Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns to defend human rights in Brazil.

And in 1975, the WCC Assembly emphasized the human rights situation in Latin America. However, the church was divided between progressive and conservative sectors and while most religious members welcomed the military dictatorship (be it for fear of communism or for sympathy with the military plans), some denounced State terrorism during and after the military regime.

The BNM report was published in 1985 with the support of the World Council of Churches and the São Paulo archdiocese with the aim of denouncing the regime's violence. The unquestionable significance of the BNM does not, however, prevent it from criticism. The very fact that the book's research methodology relies mostly on official documents condemns it to exclude from its findings a large number of nondocumented human rights violations. Also, while providing an appendix with the names of the "disappeared," the book does not list—for comprehensible reasons considering the uncertain times in which it was published—the names of the torturers, police and judicial members, nor those of the accused and prisoners. In this regard, the editors stated that the BNM's objective was not to organize proofs of human rights' crimes for a "Brazilian Nuremberg" (BNM, 1986, p. 25); nor was it moved by feelings of revenge. Instead the BNM hoped to reveal the obscure truth about the military regime and to engage its readers in the struggle against torture. However, as stated by De Almeida Teles (2012) in November of that same year, after the first local elections under a civilian government, the names of the torturers were released to journalists.

Therefore it is correct that De Almeida Teles (2012) affirmed that the BNM project reflected the paradoxes and limitations of the democratic transition that still affect our memory of dictatorship. But despite its small political and institutional advances, De Almeida Teles argues that the "contribution of the BNM is to enable society to deal with the dictatorial legacy from a juridical, historical and cultural point of view" (De Almeida Teles, 2012, p. 196). The project helped to form a social perception of the extent of the crimes committed under dictatorship and encouraged a moral condemnation of human rights violations.

3.4 Recognitions and negotiations: the Law 9.140/95 and the *CEMDP* report (1995–2007)

During the 1990s Brazilian institutional politics started to be affected more intensely by the human rights discourse following the growing influence of organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International in authoritarian or post-authoritarian contexts. Brazilian mainstream media outlets also opened their spaces to report on the political disappeared and their families' struggle for memory, truth, and justice while victims and activists demanded access to the "repression archives.[23]" On the other side, the military reacted by promoting its own versions of the past through books, articles and interviews.

The visibility that relatives of victims had in the public sphere encouraged them to approach the main candidates of the 1994 presidential elections, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Lula, who compromised to engage with the agenda for memory and justice (see GTNM agenda, Bauer, 2014, p. 208). Following his victory, Cardoso "determined that the Ministry of Justice should have a specific strategy for human rights" (Bauer, 2014, p. 207). But despite his declarations, and despite being a former exile during the military regime, his government's initiatives would demonstrate that processes for reckoning with the dictatorship still had to be negotiated with the military sector.

The Secretary-General of Amnesty International, Pierre Sané, met with President Cardoso to discuss the list of 144 disappeared during the military regime and to "exert pressure on him to apologize" (Schneider, 2014, p. 74). Following the meeting Sané declared his

[23] "Repression archives" is the expression used to refer to the documents produced by the dictatorial regime's security and information centres about their actions (Bauer, 2014).

disappointment with the government's submission to the Armed Forces and said that "the president does not seem to understand that the crime of [forced] disappearing is indefensible, it is a crime against humanity" (Bauer, 2014, p. 207). On that occasion, the president's assessors declared that idiomatic differences might have led to the Secretary-General's misunderstandings. It was clear that the creation of legal resources to investigate and provide justice to the crimes committed by the military regime had to be negotiated with the Armed Forces. This was evident in the bumpy path that led to the construction of the Law Project and its approval on December 4, 1995, as the Law 9.140.

To help its development the government, represented by Minister of Defense Nelson Jobim, reunited with members of GTNM who handed to him a dossier with a list of the disappeared and information about their deaths, and their main requests (Bauer, 2014):

> (1) Public and formal recognition of the State's responsibility in the prison, torture and deaths of political opponents during 1964–1985.
> (2) Urgent creation of a special commission formed by representatives from the government, the OAB (Brazilian Bar Association), and families' relatives with powers to investigate about the political disappeared and their death circumstances.
> (3) Commitment to prevent military staff implicated in crimes from being nominated for governmental positions.
> (4) Commitment to open unrestrainedly the archives on military repression.
> (5) Commitment to amnesty and to redressing victims and their relatives.
> (6) Guarantee through a new law that the Constitution will be respected in its regard against torture.
> (7) Demilitarize the Military Police and untie it from the Army.
> (8) Approve the project that forbid civil crimes to be judged by Military Justice.
> (9) Dismantling of all repressive apparatuses used by the regime.
> (10) Repeal the *Doutrina de Segurança Nacional* (National Security Doctrine).

With these documents in hand and the military pressure on his back, Cardoso's government initiated the negotiations that would lead to the creation of the new Law 9.140. While Secretary of Human Rights José Gregori guaranteed to the victims' relatives that he wouldn't spare efforts to meet their demands, President Cardoso and the Minister of Defense Nelson Jobim, communicated to the Armed Forces that this Law would not be led by any sense of revenge. These concerted actions reflect the government's submission to the Armed Forces and help explain the relative low efficacy of the law discussed here (Bauer, 2014).

After compiling all the data, Gregori prepared the Law Project 869 or Law 9.140 that was disclosed on 28 August 1995, on the 16th birthday of the Amnesty Law (Bauer, 2014). Curiously, Law 9.140 also echoed the "institutional amnesia" (Atencio, 2014, p. 5) that characterized the 1979 Amnesty Law. Despite recognizing the State's responsibility for the death of those listed in its Appendix 1, committing to redressing the victims and relatives, and creating a commission to investigate the cases, the project did not include investigations into those responsible or the circumstances of the victims' deaths. Even worse, it required a victim's death certificate so the family could receive the monetary benefits—but this was difficult since notary offices would commonly refuse to provide such documents.

For the Federal Deputy Nilmário Miranda, the law aimed to provide financial redress to the victims and needed to be improved; while it recognized the State's responsibility as a whole no one would be investigated individually. To this critique, Gregory replied that the law was an attempt to find a solution that would be favorable to all, considering "the deep wounds on both sides" (Bauer, 2014, p. 211). These debates, however, were not taken any further within the Congress and, between the victims' relatives' frustrations and the military's accusations of

vindictiveness, the Law was voted in in September and sanctioned in December 1995 (Lei nº 9.140, de 04 de Dezembro de 1995).

During the official ceremony President Cardoso recognized the role of the State in the political disappearances and deaths; but he also highlighted the benefits of forgetting by alluding to the positive outcomes of the Amnesty Law:

> (…) we criticized the legal instrument proposed by the Executive and approved by the Congress [the 1979 Amnesty Law], considering it timid and insufficient. The Amnesty Law's positive political outcomes, however, are explicit. The forgetfulness of the acts practiced by any side of the political spectrum allowed a complete democratic reestablishing.[24] (Fundação FHC, 1995).

Cardoso's speech also condemned State authoritarianism and the suppression of human rights and understood State terrorism as a "excessive reaction to those who stood up against it," thus justifying the importance of redressing those affected. Cardoso then mentioned the pain caused by the loss of some of his personal friends and academic pupils (e.g., Vladimir Herzog), killed by the regime, while also citing the pain of the military families who suffered the death of their relatives. In the end, he stated that:

> (…) what is important after all is the strengthening of democracy and the construction of the future and this cannot be achieved through resentment and vindictiveness. (…) And I am sure that all the affected families whose pain is unforgettable will understand this gesture as a claim for conciliation, and to violence nevermore (*nunca mais*). (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014a)

Through a brief analysis it is possible to observe that the serious tone of the President's speech reflected the gravity of the crimes committed during the dictatorial period and the importance of the new Law 9.140, but it did so through a discourse that equated the regime's institutionalized repressive apparatus to minor and powerless clandestine guerrilla groups (the already mentioned two-demons theory). In this sense it seems that the Law aimed to fit the human rights agenda by recognizing human rights violations and providing reparations to the victims. However, the Law refused to go further in promoting the right for memory and justice in a collective sense. For example, there was no attempt to judge perpetrators or to provide the truth about their crimes' circumstances, and even less to provide the nation with an official version of the military regime's history, essential to the country's identity constitution.

Guided by the "principle of reconciliation and national pacification" the Law 9.140 was created after the persistence of the affected families and their international supporters, and marked the first State-led steps towards the right to memory, truth and justice in Brazil (Lei nº 9.140, de 04 de Dezembro de 1995). Through this law, the State recognized as dead those detained for involvement (or accused of involvement) in political activities, from 1961 to 1988, who were still considered disappeared. In this sense, based on an initial list of 136 disappeared persons, the government established compensation for their relatives. The law also created the *Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos* (CEMDP, Special Commission on Political Deaths and Disappearances) to investigate other cases, search for mortal remains and regulate the compensations according to each case. The CEMDP was composed of seven members appointed by the president. Of the seven members four had to be chosen from (1) within the *Comissão de Direitos Humanos* (Human Rights Commission, also created in

[24] See Fundação FHC (1995) for Cardoso's speech. Cardoso's report to the CNV can be found at Comissão Nacional da Verdade (2014a).

1995),[25] (2) within those related to the disappeared, (3) within the members of the Federal Public Ministry, and (4) within the members of the Defense Ministry.

However, the measures implied in the law did not entirely meet relatives' requests and nor did they favour the struggle for memory and justice. In fact, according to Bauer (2014), Law 9.140 cannot be considered a memory policy since it only established the financial redress as a form of reparation to the victims' families. But it was more important to the families to locate their relatives' remains, to know the circumstances of their deaths and who were responsible for those deaths; receiving financial redress was the last of their requests. Furthermore, the CEMDP was created in agreement with the Armed Forces, with one perpetrator mentioned in the report *Brasil: Nunca mais*, General Oswaldo Pereira Gomes, as one of its members. However strange it might seem to have figures responsible for state terrorism participating in the investigation of their own crimes, the General saw it as necessary. On one occasion, he affirmed that he acted as a lawyer for the Armed Forces, since most of the other members of CEMDP held different opinions.

Despite its modest steps and evident submission to military demands, Law 9.140 was the first real action from the Brazilian Federal Government aiming to redress victim's relatives; it also influenced subsequent initiatives. Such contradictions within the Brazilian Federal Government's initiatives demonstrate that the State is not a uniform institution, and nor are the paths taken by transitional justice. Institutional mechanisms such as investigative commissions are subject to changes in the power dynamics within the state.

3. 5 Brazil turns to memory: the CEMDP final report and the Amnesty Caravans

In 2007 Brazil started to make its turn to memory by "slowly abandoning its previous discourse of reconciliation by institutionalized forgetting in favour of a new one based on reconciliation by institutionalized memory" (Atencio, 2014, p. 17). During that time the relative visibility of relatives' efforts and their international support (e.g., the Araguaia Guerrilla request at the IACHR) met an active group occupying relevant positions within Lula's government. Head of the Secretaria de Estado de Direitos Humanos (SEDH, Human Rights Secretariat) was former political prisoner Paulo Vannucchi who was essential to the CEMDP final report. Besides him, in 2007 Law and Human Rights specialist Paulo Abrão (P11) became president of the Amnesty Commission, and the former exile Tarso Genro took over the Ministry of Justice. While in their positions these figures helped to elaborate powerful initiatives towards transitional justice that would influence younger generations.

In 2007 the CEMDP published its final report entitled *Direito à Memória e à Verdade* (The Right to Memory and Truth). Published by the SEDH, headed by Paulo Vannuchi, the book of almost 500 pages presented the results of the Commission's work since 1995. However, besides its importance as an official report on the consequences of State terrorism, which would serve as an archival reference to activists as demonstrated in Part 2 of this thesis, the report limits itself to memory and truth, rendering justice invisible. In this sense it "embraces the discourse of reconciliation by memory" (Atencio, 2014, 86). The 2007 Commission's Report can be interpreted as an updated and State-led edition of *Brasil: Nunca mais* (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985). The project also integrated the inauguration of several monuments in memory of the State violence victims and a touring exhibition (Schneider, 2011b).

It is interesting to note, following Atencio (2014) and Santos (2015), that the report uses the term "justice" only once and equates it to "financial reparations." Moreover, the report

[25] The Human Rights Commission was created in 1995 following the national commitment to human rights marked by the 1993 UN Conference in Vienna (Câmara dos Deputados, n.d.).

does not discuss the families' demands for justice, and therefore ignores their understanding of the term. There is a persistent suppression, embedded in the hegemonic discourse, of family demands for criminal and civil accountability that thus delegitimizes them. In this sense, the legal actions waged by families struggling for justice, despite their relative visibility, were still treated as marginal.

One year after the report, the *Comissão da Anistia* (CA, Amnesty Commissions) under the leadership of its new president Paulo Abrão, and with the support of the SDH and a group of federal prosecutors (Santos, 2015), started to defend the need to go beyond memory and truth towards justice. From 2007 on, the CA established links with and obtained support from international scholars and organizations, such as the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), based in New York, and the United Nations, through a cooperation program. Thanks to these partnerships, the CA could organize conferences, publish articles,[26] and create the *Caravanas da Anistia* (Amnesty Caravans, also discussed in this chapter) contributing considerably to expanding the debates around transitional justice in Brazil.

In a comparison between Southern Cone countries' transitions to democracy, Bauer (2014, p. 221) argues that "the intensity of the past's presence in the present and the demand for memory depend on the commotion's intensity and the cultural and political fractures produced in those years." Even if it is commonly argued that historiographic production is a sign that the country is not silent about its dictatorship, it is important not to confuse, as Bauer (2014) reminds his readers, historical knowledge with the socialization of such knowledge. Considering that until this point in time in Brazil not much had been done effectively outside institutional policies, the Amnesty Commission elaborated a project to create platforms for those affected by the dictatorship to share their testimonies—the Amnesty Caravans.

The Amnesty Commission was created in 2002 under the Ministry of Justice—through the Law 10.559 (Lei nº 10.559, de 13 de novembro de 2002)—to analyse the request for redress made by all those who were financially affected by the dictatorship. Law 10. 559 conceded a declaration of amnesty and secured the right to economic redress according to the years in which politically persecuted people were prevented from working due to punishment or threats of punishment. Law 10.559 also included the right to complete academic studies that were interrupted by the dictatorship, and the right of punished public servants to resume their positions. Until 2011 the Amnesty Commission declared 35,000 people to be "politically amnestied"; of that number 15,000 were considered for economic reparations. In this sense the individual reparations provided by the Amnesty Commissions corresponded to advances in the recognition of State violence, but Law 10.559 addressed only financial redressing without ever mentioning the term "victim" in its text.

But in 2007 with the beginning of Tarso Genro's term as head of the Ministry of Justice and Paulo Abrão as head of the Amnesty Commission the notion of transitional justice was expanded beyond financial reparations. Justice now aimed to include educational projects and initiatives of memory-stimulating debates within other sectors of society, taking into account the following elements:

> (1) the broader Brazilian civil society was disarticulated from the topic of the amnesty, which started to be developed by isolated sectors (…); (2) amongst the State powers it is the Executive that has always been the main promoter of transitional measures in Brazil (…); (3) the Brazilian process of transitional justice does not limit itself to the actions of the two redressing commissions and such a diagnostic is damaging; when added to reactionary attacks against reparation it limits the advancement of Brazilian democracy. (Abrão and Torelly, 2011, p. 35)

[26] Since 2009 the CA has published the *Revista Anistia Política e Justiça de Transição* (Political Amnesty and Transitional Justice Journal).

Considering the need to engage other sectors of civil society, such as academic institutions, in the debates about transitional justice, the Amnesty Commission created in 2009 the scientific journal *Revista Anistia Política e Justiça de Transição* (Political Amnesty and Transitional Justice Journal), the first periodical in Portuguese dedicated to the topic. In its first publication the journal stated its commitment to:

> (…) present recent advances in studies about this topic, publishing research, reports, and documents about the configurations of the policies for truth and memory, reparation, justice, and institutional reform in diverse locations as a form of comparing with the Brazilian experience triggering its democratic depth, and contributing to disseminating successful practices undertaken in the country. (Abrão & Genro 2009, p. 7)

Besides stimulating academic debates through the publication of the journal, as already noted the Amnesty Commission, under the leadership of Paulo Abrão, created the *Caravanas da Anistia* (Amnesty Caravans). Intending to take the sessions of the Amnesty Commissions to the places where State violence had occurred, the Caravans aimed to make the past accessible to the public by "transferring its everyday work within the marble walls of the Palace of Justice to the public square, schools, universities, professional associations and unions, as well as to all and any place where persecutions happened" (Coelho & Rotta, 2012, p. 15). In this sense the objective of the Amnesty Caravans was not to judge versions according to historiographic knowledge but to give voice back to victims and to those who resisted the dictatorship.

By giving voice to victims and providing an institutional platform for them to publicly share their memories, the State (represented by the Amnesty Caravans) intervened over the status of passive victims, or sometimes of unwelcome "terrorists,"[27] which was how victims were often framed within their neighbourhoods or towns. At the same time the State contributed to legitimizing victims' testimonies, to stimulating the right for truth, and to debunking conceptions of political participation as acts of subversion and resistors as "terrorists." In my interview with Paulo Abrão (P11) he highlighted the symbolic aspect of such an event:

> I remember when we travelled to small cities in the interior of the country; cities where victims and their families have been labelled as terrorists for all these years, and then they saw all these State agents in their suits, arriving by bus or helicopter or plane, asking forgiveness and thanking those who resisted against the dictatorship. You can imagine the symbolic impact this caused. (Paulo, P11)

By recognizing its own crimes, the State was contributing to the strengthening of democracy and affirming the role of civil society in resisting and denouncing those crimes. This helped to connect individual and collective memories and stimulated civil participation in the construction of the meanings about the dictatorial past. Furthermore, by taking place in public such events also helped to engage other generations in these historical constructions.

The book *Caravanas da Anistia: o Brasil pede Desculpas* (Amnesty Caravans: Brazil Asks Forgiveness, Coelho & Rotta) published by the Brazilian Ministry of Justice in 2012, compiled the work developed in the four years of the Caravans and included reports and impressions of victims. For example, the wife of educator Paulo Freire recalled "the emotion of knowing that after a long 45 years our country wanted to redeem itself from the insane and perverse actions imposed on a man who was humble by conviction and by his own nature"

[27] It is important to state that the term "terrorist" used to refer to members of the militant opposition during the dictatorship is not accurate, since it was developed by an illegal State. Thus, those who repeat this term are reproducing the vocabulary of a repressive State (Schneider, 2011a).

(Nita in Coelho & Rotta, 2012, p. 27). And according to one of its creators Tarso Genro, “the Caravans were part of the most important public policy in terms of transitional justice (…). Its activities of memory, victims’ recognition, education for the youth and social mobilization served as the basis for the creation of the National Truth Commissions” (Tarso Genro in Coelho & Rotta, 2012, p. 207).

The Amnesty Caravans resulted from an expanded comprehension of the concept of transitional justice brought by the work of Paulo Abrão and Tarso Genro as heads of the Amnesty Commission and the Ministry of Justice respectively. This expanded comprehension pointed to the need of creating participatory means for processing traumatic experiences that affected the whole country. This transgenerational democratic construction (Abrão and Cardozo in Coelho & Rotta, 2012) was an important aspect of the Amnesty Caravans and influenced subsequent Government initiatives towards transitional justice.

3.6 The Third Human Rights National Program PNDH-3 (2009)

In 2009, during the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the *Terceiro Programa Nacional de Direitos Humanos* (PNDH-3, Third Human Rights National Program) was published under the auspices of the *Secretaria Especial de Direitos Humanos* (SEDH, Special Secretariat of Human Rights), headed by Paulo Vannuchi.[28] Within its guidelines the Program recommended the development of national policies to “foster debates and disclose information so that public places and buildings won’t hold names of persons identified as perpetrators.”[29] The PNDH-3 was also responsible for promoting the creation of the Comissão Nacional da Verdade (CNV, National Truth Commission) that, from 2012 to 2014, investigated human rights violations committed by members of the State from 1946 to 1988—those dates related to the promulgation of two democratic constitutions—in order to “implement the right for memory and for the historical truth and to promote national reconciliation” (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014c, volume 1).

The PNDH-3 did not have legal power but rather served as a human rights manual according to which the government should direct its actions. However, the PNDH-3 re-ignited the struggle over dictatorial memory, and specific sectors and institutions started to accuse the program of being a threat to democracy. For example, religious sectors reacted against the plan’s guideline to support abortion decriminalization; ruralists, on the other hand, reacted against the over-protection of victims of rural conflicts; the mainstream media outlets reacted against the program’s proposal to punish press, radio and TV outlets that disrespect human rights. In this sense, TV Globo’s political journalist Arnaldo Jabor made the following comment during the network’s most important daily news broadcast:

> This [Human Rights Program] is beautiful from the outside but Soviet in the inside. First, they want to reassess the Amnesty Law for crimes committed 40 years ago! Nowadays, the military generals are 50 years older, they don’t even know what the dictatorship was, while the government’s communists still have their heads turned to 50 years ago. (Jabor, 2010)

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[28] Paulo Vannuchi’s life story is strongly influenced by imprisonment and torture. During Lula’s government he was a key agent in fostering memory of the military regime. A former guerrilla-member of the ALN, he spent five years in prison suffering constant torture. His cousin, Alexandre Leme Vannuchi was tortured to death in 1973 (Schneider, 2011a).

[29] The Right for Memory and Truth is the 6th guiding principle in the text of the Decree where are outlined the objectives of the National Plan for Human Rights (PNDH-3). There can be read: “The investigation about the past is essential to the construction of citizenship. Studying the past, recovering its truth and bringing up its events is a form of transmitting historical experience, which is essential for the constitution of individual and collective memory” (Decreto nº 7.037, de 21 de Dezembro de 2009).

Jabor's comments reproduce the discourse of "non-vindictiveness" combined with a Cold War anti-communist approach according to which Brazilian democracy needs to be oblivious to past dictatorships in order to prosper, while the "communists" insist on looking back to the past. During another TV program, from TV Bandeirantes, the host Ives Gandra described the PNDH-3 as a law and said that it "establishes censorship of media outlets, confronts property rights and religious freedom. Specialists consider the document a first step to a dictatorial regime" (Gandra, 2010). In a similar way the magazine *Veja,* as Nina Schneider (2011a) points out, published in January 2010 an article satirizing the PNDH-3 and its "crazy" intention to improve human rights in Brazil. Schneider (2011a) calls attention to the terms used by the Brazilian mainstream media (famous for its support of non-democratic Governments and movements) to blackmail Lula's government: "the article from *Veja* magazine entitled 'Coisa de maluco' [Crazy Stuff] (…) repeats the term 'ex-terrorist' instead of Vannuchi's official designation, Federal Minister. It blames him for 'revanchism' and brings into disrepute the entire Lula government by labelling it 'crazy' (…) and *bolshevik*." Schneider shows that the article's objective (like similar articles that also used depreciative language) was to construct Vannuchi and the entire Lula government as insane, and to portray Vannuchi as a disguised communist infiltrator.

Opposing reactions also came out of military institutions. Besides being against the creation of a National Commission of Truth, military officials were also opposed to the program's proposal to uncover sites of repression, and to prohibit the naming of public places (streets, squares, monuments) after officials involved in human rights violations. In this sense, military staff condemned the PNDH-3 as being "excessively insulting, aggressive and vindictive." In support of the officials, the Minister of Defense Nelson Jobim threatened to resign over the creation of the CNV (Schneider, 2011b). In order to deal with this quarrel between two of his ministers, Lula invited both for a meeting that resulted in decree amendments and changes to the original PNDH-3 text.

The reactions from several conservative sectors varied from constructive criticisms to the use of false terms and the production of fake news in order to depreciate the plan. In that scenario the government stepped back to engage in a dialogue with its critics that aimed to fit their demands and objections into the program. Afterwards, the Program's text was altered before presenting its final version, excluding some of its most polemical parts such as the right to abortion. In the end, the PNDH-3, even with all the changes imposed on it, represented an important step in strengthening respect for human rights and, along with it, the right for memory and justice. Indeed, one of the program's actions was to elaborate, until 2010, a Law Project to establish a National Truth Commission (CNV). This commission would be created under Dilma Rouseff's government, two years later.

3.7 The National Truth Commission, CNV (2011)

The creation of the *Comissão Nacional da Verdade* (CNV, National Truth Commission) was an initiative launched by the PNDH-3 (created by the decree 7.037 in December 2009). In the PNDH-3, the guideline number VI, entitled Right to Memory and Truth, was composed of three principles: (1) "recognizing the right for memory and truth as a Human Right and as a state duty"; (2) "preservation of memory and public construction of truth"; (3) "modernization of the legislation related to the promotion of the right to memory, strengthening democracy." The strategic objectives of each of these principles aimed to promote investigations about human rights violations in the context of Brazilian political repression and, furthermore, to demand the creation, until April 2010, of legislation to establish the first National Truth Commission:

> [The aim was to] Designate a work group composed of representatives of the Civil Office, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defence, and the Human Rights Special Secretariat (SEDH), to elaborate, until April 2010, a law project to establish a National Truth Commission, composed in a plural and non-partisan way, with defined terms and deadlines, to examine Human Rights violations practiced in the context of political repression within the mentioned period. (Decreto nº 7.037, de 21 de Dezembro de 2009)

As expected, even before being established this effort ignited negative reactions from military sectors, conservative politicians and, as usual, the mainstream media. The electoral context of 2010 helped establish the ground for intensifying these criticisms and journalists started a campaign to damage the image of candidate Dilma Rousseff, connecting her to several false accusations regarding her past as a guerrilla member (explored in Chapter 2). In the same context, Human Rights Minister Paulo Vannuchi started to be framed as a former terrorist—recalling his engagement with the guerrilla group *Aliança Libertadora Nacional* (ALN, National Liberation Alliance). Some mainstream media outlets even published opinions that combined false information and conspiracy theories to suggest that there was a communist scheme to take over the federal government (Dias, 2013, 75). Also in 2010, General Maynard Marques de Santa Rosa published a letter calling the National Truth Commission the "calumny commission" (Amorim, 2019), composed of "the same fanatics who in the recent past adopted terrorism, kidnapping of innocents and bank robbery, as a way to fight the regime to obtain power" (Dias, 2013). He was removed from his post after the episode.

On the other side of the political spectrum, several human rights movements criticized the differences between the initial proposal of the Law Project 7.376 of May 2010 and the final text of the PNDH-3. In this sense they accused President Dilma Rousseff of surrendering to the pressure of conservative groups and to the blackmailing by the Minister of Justice and military staff against the Program. According to them, "the government modified several important topics of PNDH-3, including the ones regarding the Commission that, immediately, lost the word 'justice' from its name" (Dias, 2013, 81). The president of the Brazilian Special Commission on Deaths and Disappearances affirmed similarly that the Commission should be renamed as the Truth and Justice Commission because the country should not only know its history but also provide justice based on it.

This turbulent context would be aggravated by the Intra-American Human Rights Court's condemnation of Brazil in the Lund case in November 2010 (discussed earlier in this chapter). The judicial dispute was filed by the families at the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR) in 1995 requesting the Brazilian state to provide information regarding their operations in the Araguaia Guerrilla. After different national and international legal requirements and orientations (see Dias, 2013), the case was eventually judged by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR), which condemned the Brazilian state.

In this context debates emerged inquiring the contradiction of the IACtHR decision and the Brazilian Supreme Court position against the prosecution of torturers (based on the Amnesty Law). Officially, it was clear that the Brazilian state stood by its Supreme Court resolution. On the other hand, it is possible to affirm that the IACtHR decision exerted pressure on the creation of the National Truth Commission, which supports Schneider's assessment that the CNV involves a "complex negotiation process that may involve local, national and global protagonists" (2019, p. 3).

With "some" delay, on November 18, 2011, President Dilma Rouseff signed the Law 12.528 which in its first article created, within the Civil Office, the *Comissão Nacional da Verdade* (CNV, National Truth Commission). During the ceremony, members of the national Congress and the President delivered their speeches to a room filled with families of the

victims, members of the Armed Forces, and politicians who supported the cause, amongst others. It is interesting to note that one person, Vera Paiva, was supposed to deliver a speech but it was cancelled at the request of the military (Schneider, 2019).

The work of the National Truth Commission began in May 2012 and, besides operating at a Federal level, it also set up a network of approximately 100 local truth and justice committees. The Commission was composed of seven members, committed to upholding democracy and human rights and designated by the President, and counted on the support of more than 100 local truth commissions created by state assemblies and universities, among other institutions.

The Brazilian CNV, created almost three decades after re-democratization, aimed to examine and clarify gross human rights violations committed between 1946 and 1988 "in order to accomplish the right for memory and historical truth and to promote national reconciliation" (Lei nº 12.528, de 18 de Novembro de 2011). The time span analyzed by the commission, from 1946 to 1988, was "a concession to revisionists who were keen to downplay the brutality of the dictatorship" (Schneider, 2019, p. 5). Despite its many limitations, unlike previous investigative commissions (1995 and 2001) this Commission managed to go further into the possibilities of the transitional measures regarding justice and institutional reform as recommended by the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

On December 10, 2014, after two years and seven months, the CNV published an official report of its investigations, conclusions and recommendations for the development of public policies "to prevent the violations of human rights, assure its non-repetition, and to promote an effective national reconciliation" (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014b, vol. 1, parte V, capítulo 18). The report recognized and confirmed the existence of 434 cases of deaths and disappearances of political opponents and identified the names of 377 public officials responsible for these crimes (Gonzaga in Schneider, 2019). It comprised three volumes and over 4,000 pages that included data taken from previous reports such as the 2007 CEMDP report, and the 1985 *Brasil: Nunca mais* report, as well as new material collected from the testimonies of victims and agents of repression. Santos (in Schneider, 2015) analyzes how this report related to the struggles led by the organized groups of victims' families.

Amongst its conclusions the report reaffirmed the "institutional responsibility of the Armed Forces" and the need to review the 1979 Amnesty Law. Amongst its 29 recommendations it advocated: the creation of a permanent group to monitor whether these recommendations are being followed or not; the strengthening of existing commissions such as the *CEMDP* and the Amnesty Commission; the annulment of the Amnesty Law for agents accused of having committed human rights violations; and, the demilitarization of the police. Also important, the 28th recommendation, prescribed in Part V of Volume 1 of the report, highlights the necessity of "promoting the renaming of public places, streets, buildings and public institutions (…) that allude to public or private agents who are clearly connected to serious violation practices" (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014c, vol. 1, parte V, capítulo 18).

The number of deaths confirmed by the CNV report, as pointed out by Gonzaga (in Schneider, 2019), might seem apparently small. But this is due to the fact that the Commission was counting only those victims who died in situations of political resistance. This number would have been much higher if the CNV had considered the deaths of Indigenous populations, peasants, miners, and so on. Gonzaga also reminds us of the more than 35,000 Brazilians compensated by the Amnesty Commission due to political persecution and torture. This view is complemented by Furtado's (2017) analysis of the silences promoted by the CNV. As Furtado (2017) states, "in the Brazilian case, truth-seeking also produced its own form of 'silence.'" He calls attention to the contradictions regarding the CNV that, while denouncing 377 perpetrators as "demons" responsible for the regime's terrorism, it also developed a

depoliticized idea of the victims as "dreamers" who fought for liberty and democracy. This inaccurate version of the facts silences the diverse political projects of the Brazilian left and contributes to other silences regarding violence in general (e.g., against the poor, black people, women, and LGBTQ communities).

It is undeniable that the atrocities committed regarding the systematic human rights violations must be investigated and legally punished. However, Furtado's (2017) analysis of the CNV's final report leads to the conclusion that its narrative reduces the plurality of left-wing groups and the military regime to "dreamers" and "demons," reorganizing and selecting what silences will be broken. Therefore, besides depoliticizing resistance by framing it as a "non-ideological defence of the rule of law," the CNV report fails to understand the wider dimensions of impunity. While it aims to ensure that torture/violence never happens again, it does not connect the regime's violence with "violence that never ceases to happen" (Furtado, 2017, 18).

Conclusion

This Chapter drew on existing scholarship on Brazilian history (Atencio, 2014; Santos, 2015; Bauer, 2014; De Almeida Teles, 2010) to provide an overview of the politics of memory in Brazil. The chapter understands the politics of memory as the public policies and official initiatives developed towards transitional justice as well as the social efforts and non-official initiatives promoted by victims' relatives and human rights advocates. With this understanding, it was possible to demonstrate how such official and non-official initiatives are produced in relation to specific historical opportunities and circumstances. At the same time these initiatives mobilize public debates and influence the political background from which contemporary activists develop their actions and performances.

The development of a Brazilian politics of memory during and after the country's transition to democracy, as demonstrated in this Chapter, reflects the dynamics of voices and silences and the power dynamics between State and non-State actors regarding the dictatorial past. In this sense the chronological approach utilized here evidences the (slow) changes and continuities of conflict narratives. As I argue, the Brazilian Government's investments in reconciliation by forgetting exemplified by the Amnesty Law (1979) were confronted by relatives' efforts, with the support of national and international actors, in the following decades. In the 2000s, especially after 2007, the claims of relatives and victims started to be addressed more systematically by institutions such as the Amnesty Commission and the Secretariat of Human Rights, which sought to take the State initiatives outside institutions and give voice to victims. Referred to in this thesis as the Brazilian turn to memory, following Atencio's (2014) investigations, this period culminated in the creation of the National Truth Commission (CNV) in 2012. However, as demonstrated through the reactions to the CNV from the military and other social sectors (e.g., mainstream media), silences about State violence and misconceptions about victims (seen, for example, in the ongoing use of terms such as "terrorists") are still in place, as are other dictatorial narratives such as those of anti-communism and the threat of internal enemies.

This Chapter aimed to contribute to the overall arguments proposed in the beginning of this thesis regarding the origins of collectives and the forms of memory activism developed in the context of the National Truth Commission. In this sense the concrete examples explored here support my approach to Brazil's turn to memory as a movement that influenced the wave of youth memory activism between 2010 and 2014. The data presented in Chapter 3 will be used in the following Chapter in which I provide a more detailed study on the social and political dynamics that configure the (ongoing) struggle of victims' relatives for the right to memory, truth, and justice.

CHAPTER 4: PERSISTING ABSENCES AND THE LABOURS OF VICTIMS AND RELATIVES

As seen in Chapter 2 the State terrorism that took place under the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–1985) generated deep traumas. In its attempt to eliminate political opponents while maintaining social legitimacy, the Brazilian State persecuted, kidnapped, tortured and murdered those considered subversives while concealing their bodies and denying information on their whereabouts. This *modus operandi* scaled up after the inauguration of the Institutional Act Number 5 (AI-5) in 1968, a governmental decree that institutionalized violent forms of repression and engendered another struggle—the crusades of families to unearth clues about the "disappearances" of their loved ones.

As demonstrated in Chapter 3 the construction of memories following the last Brazilian dictatorship is as varied as the number of social actors implicated in that era and as fluid as political circumstances can be. From investments in institutionalized forgetting to the creation of policies of memory, governments' initiatives affected the way society processed the acts of terror perpetrated by the military regime. The development of such initiatives, however, cannot be understood without accounting for the persistent struggle of victims' relatives and human rights advocates.

From a sociological perspective, these State-sponsored absences, however, could only be processed by relatives according to the given social and political circumstances. With this in mind, Chapter 4 aims to reflect on Brazilian post-dictatorial mnemonic conflicts by observing how different levels of memory interacted with the political sphere in the process of coping with political disappearances. I focus here on the history of Fernando Santa Cruz who was tortured and disappeared by the military regime. By drawing on interviews with Marcelo Santa Cruz (Fernando's brother) and Nara Santa Cruz (Fernando's niece) and the institutional mechanisms developed by different governments presented in Chapter 3, I argue that State-sponsored absences during the dictatorship are constantly being (re)constructed according to the social and political circumstances of the present.

To examine how dictatorial victims' absences were processed at institutional, collective and individual levels during the Brazilian transition to democracy, it seems suitable to discern, drawing on Jan Assmann (2008; 1995), the three levels of memory: individual memory, social memory, and cultural memory—each corresponding to a temporal dimension and to the construction of a certain type of identity. According to Assmann, individual memory refers to a personal neuro-mental system within a subjective time and the construction of an individual identity. Social memory, which has affinities with Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, refers to our social self that depends on interaction and communication, generating what Assmann calls a communicative memory. Cultural memory, by turn, is more institutionalized and depends on a "body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image" (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 132).

In this sense, the official documents produced and circulated by the Brazilian State regarding its dictatorial past will be related to the cultural memory level. On the other hand, relatives' testimonies, collected mainly through oral transmission, will be related to communicative memory. But these levels are not fixed or enclosed within themselves. It is precisely this active role of memory, and the dialectical tensions between its different levels, that will be explored in this chapter in accordance with victims' relatives' efforts to organize

their individual experiences and elaborate their meanings within broader social and cultural frameworks.

4.1 The first days of absence: from State-sponsored disappearance to State-sponsored doubt

On February 23, 1974, at the age of 26, Fernando Augusto de Santa Cruz Oliveira was kidnapped by the military regime in Rio de Janeiro along with his friend Eduardo Collier. Fernando was a civil servant with a stable job and fixed residence in São Paulo, where he lived with his wife and his two-year old son Felipe. Despite his participation in the revolutionary organization *Ação Popular Marxista-Leninista* (APML, Marxist Leninist Popular Action), created by Catholic students to resist the dictatorship, Fernando was neither accused of any crimes nor wanted by the regime at any stage. Notwithstanding his legality, during a carnival holiday, after leaving his brother's house at about 4 p.m. to meet with Eduardo Collier, Fernando was abducted, never to be seen again.

This date marks the beginning of the story of Fernando's absence under the status of the *desaparecido político* (political disappeared). Such a condition of absence, generated by a sudden disappearance and followed by a scarcity of information within the context of a state of exception, is particularly painful given it is constantly present. For if the physical appearance of the body allows the present to re-visit the past, its unexplained absence continually interrupts the present to point to traces of an unsolved past.

The initial impact of a *desaparecido* on Brazilian families will be addressed here in accordance with Fernando's family's search procedures. According to them, these searches usually consisted of "endless journeys, information that frequently fell into the fallacy's swamps, painful hours of apprehension in the halls and antechambers of torture and death" (De Assis et al., 1985, p. 19). After Fernando's disappearance, his family proceeded to the kind of "pilgrimage" so common to victims' relatives within Brazilian (and Latin American) dictatorships. Following the few clues they had, they roamed through different military headquarters only to be mocked or threatened or provided with misleading information that would extend their suffering. This was a highly unsafe search considering that the relatives' request commonly defied the official versions and therefore their legitimacy. Nonetheless, the imminent risk of being framed as subversives and having the same fate as their relatives was not enough to stop them.

The relatives' search would also take the shape of letters and telegrams written to President-dictators themselves and/or to different members of his government—and even to their wives, to sundry politicians, lawyers, and members of the church, and to international institutions, media outlets, and human rights NGOs such as Amnesty International. Fernando's mother Mrs. Elzita Santa Cruz Oliveira wrote to all the people cited above plus other figures and institutions such as US senator Edward Kennedy and the International War Crimes Russell Tribunal, which vainly demanded that the Brazilian regime provide clarification on Fernando's disappearance. Between condolences, silences, enraged replies and even threats, concrete and reliable evidence was rare.

In a letter to Marshall Juarez Távora three months after Fernando's disappearance, Elzita appealed to his influence as a high-ranking military officer to intercede in her son's case. By invoking his fights for justice in the past, for which he was famous in the North and Northeast, and by highlighting that he himself was a father, Elzita tried to convince the military to help obtain information about Fernando's life and fate. The emotionally-charged letter reflected the impact of Fernando's recent disappearance on Elzita and her hopes that he would still be alive—especially when compared to her later letters.

> It's been three months, we don't know what accusations are held against Fernando. I plead to your highness with the warmth of a *pernambucana* [a woman who is born in the Northeastern state of Pernambuco] mother, suffering the anguish and affliction of a son's absence, of the uncertainty of his destiny (…). What should I say to my grandson [Fernando's son] when he becomes older and asks me about his father's whereabouts (…)? Should I say he was executed without a trial? Without a defence? On the sly, for a crime he hasn't committed? (De Assis et al., 1985, p. 136)

Távora wrote back three days later assuring his commitment to forward her letter to the Chief of the State, General Golbery do Couto e Silva. After four months with no answer, in October 1974 Elzita wrote again to Távora complimenting his efforts to pass on her letter but considering that eight months have passed she just wants to know if he is alive or not, acknowledging she was starting to think that the worst had happened. In December of that year Távora wrote back quoting the information he managed to collect with military agents according to whom Elzita's allegations were untruthful and there was nothing left he could do "given the current circumstances" (De Assis et al., 1985, p. 144).

While Elzita and her family's search managed to mobilize some politicians and military figures, it also managed to displease others. In the end, no official response was provided by the government. Only one year later, responding to relatives' pressure, President Geisel's military government would comment on the case through its Minister of Justice Armando Falcão. The Minister's official note denied Fernando's kidnapping and prison, limiting itself to declare that:

> Fernando Augusto de Santa Cruz Oliveira, son of Lincoln de Santa Cruz Oliveira and Elzita Santa Cruz Oliveira. Militant of the subversive-terrorist organization *Ação Popular Marxista Leninista–APML.* He is wanted by the security organs and is now found to be on the run. (De Assis et al., 1985, p. 34)

In response to the official statement expressed by Falcão, Elzita wrote him a public letter challenging his version. In all its formality the letter stated that his allegations that Fernando would be a terrorist on the run were paradoxical since Fernando had a fixed job and residence where he could be found at any time. After challenging his arguments, the letter ended by saying:

> What type of 'run' would this be, that transforms a respectful, loving and dignified son into a cruel and unhuman being, that would despise his old mother's pain, his young wife's affliction, and his very loved son's affection? (…) I cannot accept purely and simply Your Excellency's arguments (…) and expect clarifications about what really happened to my son. (De Assis et al., 1985, p. 35)

Elzita's letter this time was more assertive in challenging the official version, but the earlier fear about Fernando's destiny seems to have been replaced by the uncertainty caused by the regime's obscure and misleading information. About ten years later, Elzita commented on that official statement provided by Minister Falcão. According to her it showed "a lack of respect for other peoples' feelings" (De Assis et al., 1985, p. 90). Moreover, it demonstrated the government's unwillingness to heed the families' requests for answers that would at least put them out of that uncertainty. As Elzita said, the worst thing in all this process was the doubt, the lack of a conviction that, as bad as it can be, it is always better than the doubt.

This State-sponsored doubt came as a consequence of the way the State addressed the absences it produced. It can also be understood as part of the regime's strategy to perpetuate fear and induce silence. The effects of this traumatic circumstance can be identified in the melancholic way relatives coped with it—in the difficulty of writing or talking about it, in the refusal to change their phone numbers or to alter the victim's room—which will be addressed

later in this Chapter. On the other hand, the condition of constant doubt shared by many victims' relatives also led them to correspond between themselves, and with human rights institutions and social movements, creating a web of solidarity that strengthened their claims for truth and justice. As demonstrated by political scientist Carlos Artur Gallo (2012), the relatives' claims would gain visibility, inside and outside the country, during the transitional period from authoritarianism to democracy.

4.2 Disputing absences: relatives' political and cultural efforts for truth and justice

In 1974 the *regime of transformation* of President-Dictator Geisel began a slow and gradual shift from authoritarianism to liberal democracy while preserving military sectors from being held accountable for their gross human rights violations. During that time social movements intensified their claims for unconditional amnesty to all those accused of political crimes against the dictatorial State. Movements such as the *Movimento Feminino Pela Anistia* (MFPA, Women's Movement for Amnesty) and the *Comites Brasileiros pela Anistia* (CBA, Brazilian Committee for Amnesty—created in 1978 by lawyers, families and friends of political prisoners) originated in this context. Victims' relatives created the *Comissão de Familiares de Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos* (CFMDP, Families' Commission of the Political Dead and Disappeared), demanding: 1) the truth about deaths and disappearances; 2) the localization of mortal remains; 3) punishment for all those responsible (De Almeida Teles, 2010).

In this context, members of the CBA took an open letter to the National Congress with reports on the torture and murders promoted by the military State, demanding the installation of a human rights parliamentary committee of inquiry. The letter was received by members of the *Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (MDB, Brazilian Democratic Movement), and on March 10 1979, during the MDB party convention, family members presented their testimonies. On that occasion, Rosalina Santa Cruz, Fernando's sister, gave her testimony:

> Enough with the conciliations in the name of an 'alliance for peace' that, deep down, justifies the connivance with the military in their desire to remain in power and to conduct the irreversible process of the country's democratization. What the military intend with their 'alliance for peace' is to grant amnesty for themselves and to remain in power. (…) the fight for the elucidation and total clarification of such crimes cannot be in the hands of former prisoners and relatives. It is necessary that the whole of civil society take on this historical duty. (…) It is not vindictiveness. It is simply a desire for justice. (…). (De Assis et al., 1985, p. 55).

The MDB politicians voted 69 against 57 to support the investigations on human rights violation. Even though they knew it would be difficult to judge the torturers, it would be a possibility to register the human rights violation committed during the regime. The proposal was defeated by the government party ARENA and officially dismissed, but nonetheless it can be seen as an example of the relatives' organizational demand for their right to elucidate the truth about the disappeared and to hold those responsible to account.

Reacting to social claims and the escalation of national and international human rights abuse denounces, in June 1979, President-Dictator Figueiredo sent his amnesty project to the Congress and, on August 22 1979, after an agitated Congress voting session, the Law 6.683, known as the *Lei de Anistia* (Amnesty Law), was approved with 206 against 201 votes. Intended to provide national reconciliation, the law granted forgiveness to those accused of conducting political crimes. While it benefited some of the regime's political opponents who have been in prison, in exile, lost their public positions or had their political rights suspended, the law also favoured immunity to state security agents accused of kidnaps, torture and murder.

The Amnesty Law's impact over the construction of a cultural memory can be assessed by its ability to stimulate oblivion. The establishment of a reciprocal amnesty consisted in forgetting the crimes by making them equivalent. In this sense, what could have been an opportunity to provide means for individual and collective reckoning with the past functioned as a restriction to it by legalizing protection of repressive institutions and impunity to military members involved in crimes against humanity. As for the disappeared, the law stated that relatives could request a declaration of absence for those who were involved in political activities and are now found to be disappeared for more than one year. Followed by a public hearing to analyse the request, relatives could be granted a certificate of "presumed death." Thus, the Amnesty Law did not meet relatives' demands since it did not seek to provide information on or justice for the victims of State violence. It only granted the legal possibility of turning their absences into "presumed death."

While many Brazilians celebrated freedom and the return of those in exile, the democratic expectations of victims' relatives competed with a sense of disappointment. This can be evidenced in Elzita's testimony when she stated that the movement for amnesty "was very important, there were so many people outside the country, so many people arrested, and liberty is always a wonderful thing for everyone. [But] I wasn't waiting for Fernando to come back because I knew he wasn't arrested in any place" (De Assis et al., 1985, p. 92).

The project of a conservative and conciliatory democratization enabled popular participation at a public level at the same time as it invested in oblivion policies. The construction of memory became a territory of narrative disputes on how to address the recent dictatorial past. Countering official efforts towards impunity and forgetting, relatives of victims organized, with the support of religious groups and human rights associations, to promote their narratives of memory, truth, and justice through conferences, talks and publications. These initiatives are represented by the books *Brasil: Nunca mais* and *Onde está meu filho?* (Where is My Son?), both published in 1985. Besides detailing the different forms of violence employed by the State such publications also provided irrefutable proof that violence was part of the regime's strategy and not the result of "occasional excess" as claimed by the military sector. Despite the regime's refusal to acknowledge these books' existence they became immediate best-sellers that helped to denounce State violence and contributed to the embrace of global human rights discourse by the Brazilian elite (Atencio, 2014, p. 14).

The term *desaparecidos* (disappeared) appears in the text of both books in its figurative meaning to address victims' bodies that were in fact concealed by the State. About this practice BNM sees it as a continued form of torture towards the victims' relatives: "the perpetuation of suffering by the uncertainty about the destiny of a loved one, is a practice of torture much crueller than the most creative human device for tormenting" (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985, p. 628). After relying on real examples, the book draws on a religious approach to describe the drama experienced by the relatives of the *desaparecidos*. By combining Biblical passages with classic literature and official war conventions the text highlights the importance of respecting the dead and their relatives' right for a burial. The book's final pages are dedicated to a list with the names of the 125 disappeared since 1964 (the ones known at that time); the name of Fernando Santa Cruz appears as number 38.

The same year of 1985 saw the publication of the book *Onde está o meu filho? História de um desaparecido político* (Where Is My Son? History of a Political Disappeared), organized by five authors in a concerted effort with Fernando Santa Cruz's friends and relatives (De Assis et al., 1985). The book is divided into three parts corresponding to: 1) the regime's repression; 2) the subsequent impunity; 3) the relatives' pain. The first and second parts report on Fernando's disappearance and his relatives' struggles while providing background to the dictatorship's history and methods. The third and longest part is dedicated to interviews with Fernando Santa Cruz's friends and family and describes their process of coping with

Fernando's disappearance. The feelings of revolt and sadness that permeate these pages are reinforced during Elzita's interview, transcribed in the subchapter "Where is my son?" that gives the book its title.

Similar to the project *Brasil: Nunca mais*, *Onde está o meu filho?* was at the same time a denunciation and a homage. It provided a way for the families of the disappeared to share their stories and denounce dictatorial State violence in the context of an amnesiac democratization process. Or, as the book describes in its preface, its approach aimed to "interrupt the gala parties of the New Republic (…) to call for justice" (De Assis et al., 1985, p. 5). By narrating Fernando's disappearance and his family's drama alongside recent Brazilian political history, the book provided a singular account of the dictatorial past. The painful experiences shared by relatives on the level of a social memory were (re)organized alongside institutional actions. Through this process it was possible to elaborate a unified discourse about the national past and validate the relatives' claims for justice.

4.3 Coping with absence: between mourning and melancholy

Following the persistence of families and international pressure the Brazilian State would, ten years later in 1995, approve the Law 9.140, also known as the Law of the Dead and Disappeared. Through this Law, the State recognized its responsibility for the 136 deaths of those "who participated (…) in political activities (…) and that for this reason have been detained by public agents and have disappeared since then" (Lei nº 9.140, de 04 de Dezembro de 1995). In addition, it acknowledged relatives' right to receive death certificates and financial reparation, establishing the Special Commission on Political Deaths and Disappearances (CEMDP) to do so. Annexed to the Law are also the names of 136 disappeared in which number 41 reads: "Fernando Augusto Santa Cruz Oliveira, Brazilian, married, born in 20 of February of 1948 in Recife-PE, son of Lincoln de Santa Cruz Oliveira and Elzita Santos de Santa Cruz Oliveira. (1974)" (Lei nº 9.140, de 04 de Dezembro de 1995).

Besides the financial redressing, the Law 9.140 was very much limited since it did not oblige the State to investigate and proceed to recover the victims' mortal remains. If the 1979 Amnesty Law, approved during the dictatorial State, paved the way for the institution of oblivion policies, Law 9.140 of 1995 legitimized this process within democracy by providing the partial right for truth but with no justice. Thus, the construction of Brazilian "official memory" according to these two pieces of legislation relied in large part on a problematic reconciliatory logic according to which post-dictatorial democracies needed to "turn the page" in order to flourish. But the relatives of the *desaparecidos* could not simply "turn the page."

This project of reconciliation through forgetting also affected the way relatives processed the absences of their *desaparecidos* by hindering their desire for proper mourning. Victims' absences were, in this sense, turned into a living and present matter to their relatives. This can be evidenced in testimonies describing the way these absences were experienced. In this respect, Elzita's statement is relevant when she says that "until these days, when it's Christmas, I hear his voice calling me (…) when these parties come, when everyone gathers, and that one is missing (…) There's always that one missing" (De Assis et al., 1985, pp. 85–89).

Elzita's statements find a parallel in other mothers' testimonies, as demonstrated by historian Janaína De Almeida Teles (2014). Drawing upon her interviews with the relatives of the *desaparecidos*, De Almeida Teles distinguishes an ideal type of loss from a real type of loss and relates the former to melancholy and the latter to mourning. Thus, in cases such as Elzita's (and her family), where the event of a loved one's death bears no material evidence, it is common to observe an inability to process the loss properly, thus leaving the relatives in a state between melancholy and mourning. In this sense, an important step towards mourning

would consist of relatives having contact with the victim's body and the fulfillment of the right to a funeral. This right, denied by the Brazilian state—and by many Latin American countries that experienced dictatorships in the mid–20th century—represents an essential ritual within Brazil's large Catholic population. The material absence of the body leads relatives to a dilemma since mourning, which should be reached through testimony, has to deal with "the permanent difficulty of establishing correspondences between experience and narrative" (De Almeida Teles, 2014, p. 93). In the Brazilian context, the task of mourning becomes even more difficult considering the political obstacles between the traumatic event and its accounting. To the absence of the body is added the absence of information and active platforms to elaborate narratives, which restrain the access to proper mourning.

4.4 Conciliating with absence during Brazil's turn to memory

The turn of the millennium witnessed a gradual but significant invigoration of the culture of memory and human rights in Brazil. From this period on, as observed by Rebecca Atencio in her book *Memory's turn: Reckoning with dictatorship in Brazil* (2014), the country slowly started to make its turn to memory by "abandoning its previous discourse of reconciliation by institutionalized forgetting in favor of a new one based on reconciliation by institutionalized memory" (Atencio, 2014, p. 17). The initiatives promoted during this period would work toward assisting relatives and society as a whole in reckoning with the dictatorial past.

Regarding these reconciliatory policies it is possible to point out—not without criticisms—some governmental initiatives that promoted a more favourable scenario to the struggle for memory, truth and justice. For example, in 2001 the Amnesty Commissions were created to facilitate and intensify the financial redressing to victims of the dictatorial regime, and in 2005 a series of new programs were developed by human rights minister Paulo Vannuchi, a former political prisoner and torture victim. To observe the interlinkages between institutional mechanisms and relatives' ways of coping with victims' absence, two government initiatives will be considered here: the publication of the CEMDP's final report *Direito à memória e à verdade* (Right to Memory and Truth) in 2007, and the National Truth Commission final report published in 2014.

Direito à memória e à verdade was published in 2007 as the final report on the CEMDP's findings (CEMDP, 2007). Within its 500 pages it aims to make public the Commission's findings, officialize a final narrative about the period, and overcome the regime's inherited interpretations. Or, as the book states in the introduction:

> The colliding versions (…) of runaways, hit and runs, and suicides disseminated during those dark times by security organs could no longer remain in existence. (…) This report-book registers for history the redemption of this memory. Only by deeply knowing the dungeons and atrocities of that regretful period of our republican life, will the country learn how to build efficient measures to ensure that similar human rights violations will never happen again. (CEMDP, 2007, p. 18)

After a historic contextualization of the regime and its methods against all forms of resistance, the book proceeds to relate the stories of the *desaparecidos*, who are addressed often by the term "political opponents." Fernando's disappearance and his family's struggle are narrated in the book, alongside 355 other cases of death and disappearance. Combining information collected through official documents and personal testimonies, the version of Fernando's state-sponsored death is corroborated in the book. Citing another institutional publication, the section on Fernando's case briefly suggests the intergenerational effects of State violence when reproducing his son's declaration as a child: "The soldier killed my dad, I just don't know why. Mom says I'll understand when I grow up. But when I grow up I'm going

to the barracks to find out where they hid my dad" (CEMDP, 2007, p. 373).

During the book's release ceremony at the Presidential Palace, President Lula highlighted the government's responsibility towards the relatives' struggle for their right to a proper burial for their disappeared family members. Elzita, also present at the ceremony, emotionally addressed Lula and his ministers, urging the government to promote further investigations into where Fernando's mortal remains might be: "I trust that you will give us a prompt response because I am in an advanced age, and I don't think I will have more courage to take this battle to the end" (TV Viva, 2012). Following a generalized commotion, Lula stood up and comforted Elzita.

Five years later the first National Truth Commission (CNV) was inaugurated, its aim being to "examine and elucidate gross human rights violations (…) in order to consolidate the right for memory and historical truth, and to promote the national reconciliation" (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014c). Despite its numerous contradictions and limitations, the Commission was a relevant initiative towards a public reckoning with the dictatorial past—even though without justice. Assisted by local sub-commissions, members travelled the country collecting testimonies and publicizing their findings in an attempt to engage Brazilian society in the Commission's work.

In 2013 a public hearing on Fernando Santa Cruz's case was promoted by the sub-commission of the city of São Paulo with the presence of Fernando's brother Marcelo Santa Cruz (P9) and sister Rosalina Santa Cruz. The hearing, which is available online at the official government website, began with Rosalina mentioning her mother who had been actively fighting for memory, truth, and justice, despite her 99 years of age, but who could not be present due to recent health problems. Rosalina also criticized the Commission's limitations and the lack of an emphatic national campaign for its work. Following her statements, the hearing proceeded and all information collected on Fernando's disappearance was discussed by lawyers, historians, relatives, and politicians.

The CNV's work was synthesized in a final report published in 2014 (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014c). Consisting of three volumes, the report provides an official historical account of the period from 1946–1988, which includes the Brazilian dictatorship. The name Fernando Santa Cruz appears three times in the first volume: in a brief description of his story, and in the list of the dead and disappeared annexed to it. His name also appears in the transcription of a public hearing with Cláudio Guerra, a Chief Police Officer during the dictatorship, in which he relates that Fernando, like many others, was murdered and his body incinerated.

In the third volume, which reports on each case of dead and disappeared victims according to information collected so far, Fernando's case is related with more details. The individual report is divided into: (1) biography; (2) review of the case before the CNV; (3) circumstances of disappearance and death; (4) place of disappearance and death; (5) and identification of the authors (from the President-Dictator Médici, to the Army's Minister and their direct subordinates). The report ends with a brief conclusion and recommendation:

> Fernando Augusto de Santa Cruz Oliveira was arrested and murdered by agents of the Brazilian State and remains disappeared (…). It is recommended that the death certificate be corrected (…) and the investigations of the circumstances of his disappearance should continue in order to locate and identify his mortal remains, as well as to identify and hold responsible other involved agents. (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, vol. 3, 2014c, p. 1607)

The CNV's work and its final report therefore represented an attempt to elaborate an official version of the atrocities committed by State agents during the Brazilian dictatorial past. For the relatives, it constituted an opportunity to register their traumatic experiences and to reconcile

them within an official discourse. Their memories, shared on a social and familiar level, could now find correspondence at a cultural level represented by the official report.

On the other hand, the CNV's work can also be considered "too little, too late" as suggested by historian Nina Schneider (2013), for example. According to Schneider (2013), by emphasizing truth over justice, the Brazilian National Truth Commission did not encourage the promotion of any trials following the human rights violations openly reported by military personnel during public hearings. This approach seems to have undermined the possibility of an effective reckoning with the past at a national level. Consequently, versions that challenged the CNV could still find a place within military sectors and among conservative politicians, and they would escalate following a scenario of growing ideological polarization.

After the 2014 elections in a context of left-wing vs right-wing political disputes, questioning the CNV's credibility and relativizing past human rights violations became an ideological practice. In 2016, during the impeachment process, right-wing politician Jair Bolsonaro used the moment of his voting to celebrate the memory of the torturer Brilhante Ustra, the only Brazilian military member ever condemned, who was responsible for President Dilma Rousseff's torture during the dictatorship. Two years later, Jair Bolsonaro would be elected president.

In 2019, following criticisms against the Brazilian Bar Association headed by Felipe Santa Cruz, Fernando's son, Jair Bolsonaro said that one day he would tell Felipe how his father died, but he wouldn't like the truth. Following intense social and institutional reactions Bolsonaro said that Fernando was killed by leftist groups. In reply, Felipe Santa Cruz wrote a public letter highlighting the president's cruelty towards his family's pain and requesting him to disclose all the information he claimed to have.

The events presented above unfolded following the period defined here as the Brazilian memory turn, and demonstrate how the process of reconciliation by institutionalized memory interacted with the relatives' struggle for truth, memory, and justice. By observing the ways Fernando's absence was accounted for by official mechanisms and by relatives during this period it is possible to affirm that it represented a moment of official reckoning with the past where relatives' experience could be reconciled with the national memory. However, these events also suggest that the elaboration of an official account of the past through official reports does not guarantee its stability within national memory. Perhaps, sociologist Elizabeth Jelin is on the right track when she quotes Yosef Yerushalmi to raise the question: "Is it possible that the antonym of 'forgetting' is not 'remembering,' but justice?" (Jelin, 2003, p. 122).

As noted in the Death Certificate of Fernando Santa Crus shared by his brother Marcelo (P9), the absences of those who were "killed by the State in the context of systematic and generalized persecution of the population identified as political opponents to the dictatorial regime of 1964 to 1985"[30] persist until the present. They persist in the memory conflicts between State silencing and social efforts to remember; they persist in Brazil's everyday conflicts between State violence and social efforts to survive; they persist in the relatives' revolt and anger. In 2016 one of Fernando's brothers Lincoln Santa Cruz Oliveira Filho passed away, and as shared by his daughter Nara (P8), during his final moments he mentioned Fernando many times, including in the note he left where he stated he didn't feel revolt or anger about his disease: "But the revolt and anger that time won't erase from me is the cruelty that the dictators from the fascist right-wing showed to my dear brother Fernando (…) I will never forgive those torturers."[31]

Conclusion

[30] The death certificate of Fernando Santa Cruz is also available at Netto et al. (2019).

[31] Note left by Lincoln Santa Cruz Oliveira Filho in 2016. Document shared by Nara (P8).

By tracking the way Fernando's disappearance was addressed by the State and by relatives in different moments throughout the Brazilian transition until the present day, this chapter aimed to analyse the social and political interlinkages regarding the various levels involved in mnemonic constructions.

Corresponding to the period in which State violence was denied by all government institutions, the years following the victim's disappearance were marked by the relatives' desperate search. Affliction, long waits, and uncertainty paralleled correspondence with members of the military regime and nationally and internationally relevant figures. The lack of an official response held Fernando's relatives in a state of doubt that would eventually lead into social organizations pressuring the government for amnesty and investigations on human rights violations.

The relatives' organization and national and international denunciations of human rights violations created a scenario for the democratic transition. The first civilian president to come to power after the regime marked the beginning of a new era. This era was characterized by a combination of the expansion of popular participation in political debates and of reconciliation through institutionalized forgetting. Within my investigation, this is represented institutionally by the 1979 Amnesty Law granting impunity to both victims and perpetrators, and socially by the 1985 publication of two books denouncing State terrorism.

The third moment corresponded with the first time the government acknowledged its role in the disappearances and granted financial redress to victims and their relatives through the Law 9.140 of 1995. Providing a partial truth but without justice meant holding relatives in a state between mourning and melancholy. This is affirmed by my biographical and historical investigations, and exemplified through the testimonies of Fernando's relatives.

The fourth moment corresponds to what Rebecca Atencio conceives as the Brazilian memory turn that began with the arrival of the 21st century and culminated in the installation of the first National Truth Commission. At this point the government started investing in reconciliation through institutionalized memory, when it was possible to observe a series of initiatives aiming to investigate and report on the cases of the *desaparecidos*. Here, the relationship between government, victims and their relatives, became much more active, which contributed to the production of more spaces for trauma elaboration.

This investigation leads me to conclude that post-dictatorial mnemonic conflicts correspond to victims' efforts to process their traumatic experiences within the political circumstances of specific historical moments. In this sense, the collectivization of their struggle through organized groups and the production of cultural means (such as the book published by Fernando's relatives) appear to have a singular relevance. By exploring such strategies, Fernando's relatives were able to situate their individual experience within a broad official history. In this respect, the Brazilian case demonstrates that the mnemonic narratives shared at the social level might reach the status of official memory. And the *desaparecido* that once was a "subversive on the run" to the State can be officially recognized as a victim "murdered by agents of the Brazilian State" 40 years later. However, memory policies and official symbolic reparations without justice might leave space for contradicting versions.

The continued absence of *desaparecidos* persists on different levels and assumes different forms. It is true that the *desaparecidos* persist in the discourses that frame victims as terrorists and that thus support State terrorism and an idealized version of the dictatorial past. The *desaparecidos* also persist within family members and the (State-sponsored) lack of closure that leave them in a space between melancholy and mourning. But they also persist in cultural productions (biographical books produced by friends and relatives, and in the reports produced by the State) and artistic expressions that try to represent the weight of such absences (Image 14).

Image 14: Ausências (2012). Photographer Gustavo Germano used a photo taken in 1967 with Fernando Santa Cruz next to his family and reproduced it in the present (2012) showing relatives reunited without Fernando. Retrieved from: https://g1.globo.com/sao-paulo/noticia/2015/07/fotografo-refaz-imagens-de-familias-para-mostrar-ausencias-da-ditadura.html

PART 2: MEMORY ACTIVISM AND THE BRAZILIAN (BRIEF) TURN TO MEMORY

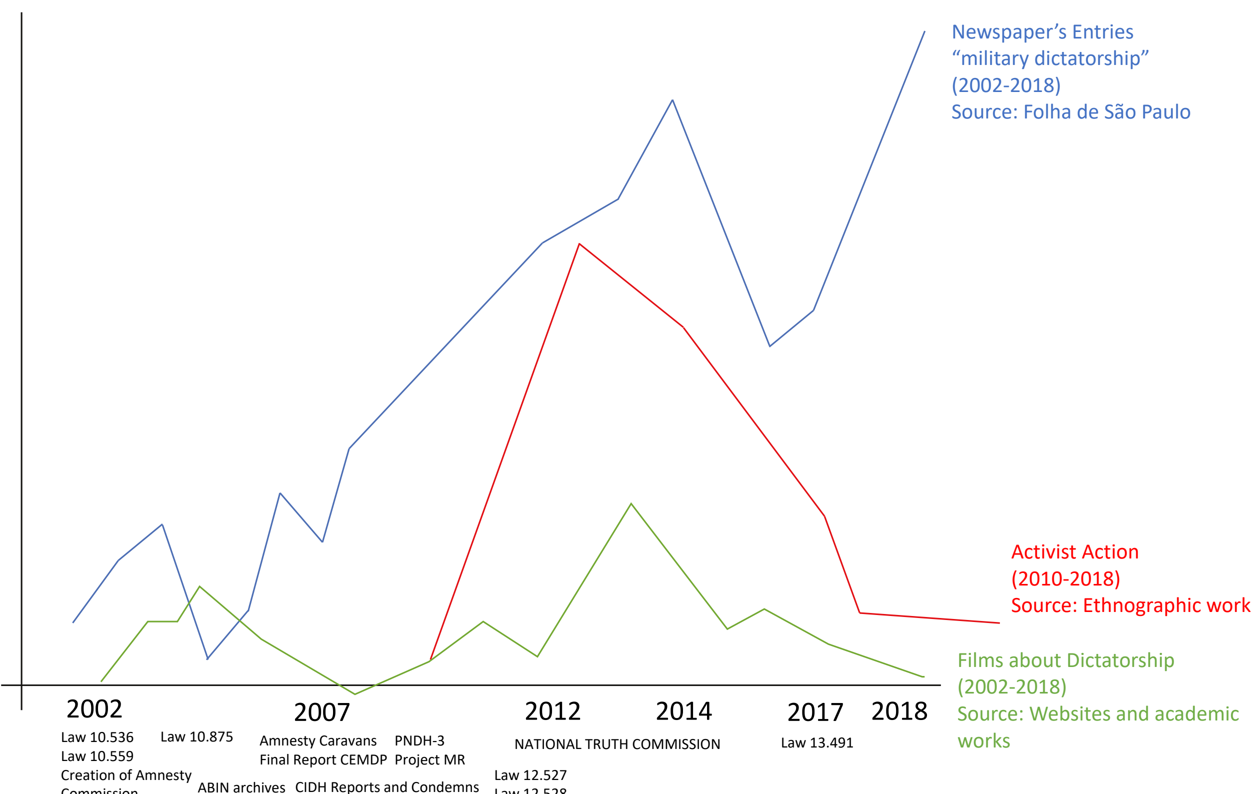
Forty-eight years after the military coup, the concerted silence regarding Brazil's dictatorial violence would suffer a brief disruption following the commencement of the first *Comissão Nacional da Verdade* (NTC, National Truth Commission), established by then-President Dilma Rousseff—a torture survivor herself. Aiming to "implement the right for memory and for the historical truth and to promote national reconciliation" (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014c), the NTC provoked discussions from the moment it was announced by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (a.k.a. Lula) in 2009, as part of the Third National Program of Human Rights (PNDH-3) (Comissão da Verdade não é "caça às bruxas," 2010). Amongst clashes between ministers (Cantanhêde & Iglesias, 2009), military reactions, and scepticism from victims' relatives (see Chapters 3 and 4), the NTC began its work in 2012 reigniting discussions around the construction of the dictatorship memory.

Despite, but also in part because of, all sorts of criticisms, the implementation of the first NTC had yet another outcome. In 2012 the country watched an escalation of activist actions adding their claims to the discussions about the country's dictatorial past. In different cities young activists of the groups *Levante Popular da Juventude* (LPJ, Youth's Popular Uprisal) and the *Frente de Esculacho Popular* (FEP, Popular Esculacho Front) started to expose former torturers by performing the *esculachos*: publicly naming and shaming the unpunished criminal in front of their house or workplace. In São Paulo, the political-carnivalesque parade *Cordão da Mentira* (Lie Parade) took to the streets for the first time, relying on the playful aesthetics of Brazilian carnival to critique Brazilian transitional justice. In Fortaleza, the collective *Aparecidos Políticos* (AP, Political Appearances) promoted activities, workshops, exhibitions, and actions such as the performance *Corpo de Cristo* (Christ's Body), a homage to the religious figure Frei Tito, who committed suicide in 1974 after being tortured. During a religious ceremony in front of Tito's grave, the collective read one of his poems and distributed communion wafers that carried the faces of those killed by the State during the dictatorship. In Rio de Janeiro, a group of artists and activists were harassed by the police for protesting in front of the military club where the 1964 military coup was being celebrated. On this occasion, the group projected onto the club's building a photo of journalist Vladimir Herzog, killed under torture by the regime in 1975.

Graphic 1 (still in its tentative phase) is presented here with the aim of providing an initial visual support to the following arguments regarding the favourable context of 2012, when activist demonstrations for memory, truth, and justice became more intense. In this sense, the graphic crosses three types of data: 98 actions performed by six activist groups from 2010 to 2018 (given that these collectives only started to be created in 2010); different laws and State initiatives from 2002 to 2018; entries of the term "military dictatorship" in one of the main Brazilian newspapers, *Folha de São Paulo*, from 2002 to 2018; and 42 movies about the military dictatorship released between 2002 and 2018. Obviously, several discussions could emerge from analysing this graphic. However, it is presented here with the purpose of demonstrating the convergence of curves between the number of actions, the number of entries in the newspapers, and the number of movies released during the time in which the National Truth Commission (2012–2014) operated. Graphic 1, in this sense, evidences the concurrent growth of discussions about the dictatorial past on social, political, and cultural levels at the emergence of the Brazilian "memory's turn."

In her book *Memory's Turn: Reckoning with the Dictatorship in Brazil* (2014), cultural theorist Rebecca Atencio examines the interactions between institutional mechanisms and cultural productions during the period of the turn to memory in Brazilian culture and politics. This period began in 2007 with the work of the Amnesty Commission's new President Paulo

Abrão and the publication of the official report on the dead and disappeared *Direito à Memória e à Verdade* (CEMDP, 2007). It intensified in 2009 with the (*Terceiro Programa Nacional de Direitos* Humanos (PNDH-3, Third Human Rights' Program) and culminated in 2012 with the beginning of the country's first National Truth Commission. As already stated in Chapters 2 to 4, this period came as a consequence of two interrelated factors: (1) the victims relatives' continuous efforts to guarantee their right to memory, truth, and justice, and (2) the shifts in the State's discourse from reconciliation through institutionalized forgetting to reconciliation through institutionalized memory. Part 2 of this thesis thus investigates the influence of such factors over collective demands and tactics mobilized by a second and third generation of memory activists.



Graphic 1: Crossings between newspapers' mentions, activist actions, and film production about the military dictatorship in relation to the development of governmental initiatives.

Atencio (2014, p. 6) identifies patterns in the dynamics between the institutional and cultural spheres, which she calls "the cycle of cultural memory in Brazil" consisting in (1) a *simultaneous emergence* between an institutional and a given cultural work, (2) an *imaginary linkage* between the two established within the general public, (3) a *leveraging* process in which a group explores the imaginary link to make it meaningful, and (4) a *propagation* phase when the original cultural work encourage other cultural works. The author identifies different cycles of cultural memory since Brazil's transition to democracy and suggests interactions between cultural works and institutional mechanisms, such as the movie *Hoje* released in 2011, and the National Truth Commission. The movie was inspired by previous works (such as Fernando Bonassi's novel *Prova Contrária*) and following its imaginary linkages (such as public discussions framing the film "in terms of the context of the National Truth Commission") and leverages (for example, when "truth commissioners" attended a debate about the film) propagated other cultural works. Drawing on Atencio's (2014) framework, it is possible to affirm that the actions of memory activism analysed in this research were part of a

cycle of memory that began around 2007. This is a useful framework to examine how cultural works in interaction with institutional mechanisms might have an impact on memory struggles "over the long run" (2014, p. 125), however, the following chapters rely on interviews with activists to explore the intimacies of such interactions, for example how the aesthetic and political choices behind specific works of memory activism dialogue with State-led initiatives.

In this respect, it is important to restate (see Chapter 1) that the development of unofficial methods aimed at temporary disruptions in the construction of official memory suggests a connection to what cultural critic Michel de Certeau (2002) calls *tactics*. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (2002) de Certeau distinguishes "strategy" from "tactic" by relating the first term to institutions that establish places of their own, and the latter to individuals and "users" who operate in "the space of the other" (de Certeau, 2002, p. 37). Tactic, in this sense is "an art of the weak" (de Certeau, 2002, p. 37) which, in the context of Brazil's memory disputes, is triggered by institutional strategies but aims to confront them. In a political reading of de Certeau's tactics, these examples of quick and unexpected attacks can also be related to the guerrilla tactics largely explored by small revolutionary groups against dictatorships in South America in the mid-20th century.[32]

The term guerrilla has been employed in a diversity of contexts (e.g., guerrilla media, guerrilla television, guerrilla marketing) to account for a range of different activities. Philosopher Umberto Eco's *semiological guerrillas,* for example, would "re-introduce a critical dimension to passive reception" (2016, p. 114), whereas *guerrilla marketing* would aim mainly for the opposite "as advertisers strategize and experiment with persuasion through increasingly covert and outsourced flows" (Serazio, 2013, p. 2). In Chapter 2 I demonstrated how this term was used in reference to the Brazilian artistic *avant-garde* of the 1970s. However, in its most literal translation, guerrilla means "small wars," and "is used to characterize undeclared wars or covert military operations against an established regime" (Kruijt, 2008, p. 4).

Through military methods such as ambushes, acts of sabotage, and hit-and-run actions, popular movements around the globe, organized in small and mobile guerrilla groups, managed to fight larger and more static armies. As already pointed out by guerrilla commanders, the fundamental characteristic of guerrilla bands is their mobility, which allows a rapid change of fronts, and an ability to adjust actions to surprise the actions of the enemies contributing, in the long run, to a revolutionary victory: "guerrilla warfare is a phase that does not afford in itself opportunities to arrive at complete victory. It is one of the initial phases of warfare and will develop continuously until the guerrilla army in its steady growth acquires the characteristics of a regular army" (Guevara, 1998, p. 5).

From a tactical standpoint, the guerrilla's main approaches—surprise, rapidity, and constant adaptation to the position of enemies—can be observed in the abovementioned collectives' efforts to disrupt official discourses through symbolic operations within the Brazilian "memory wars." Due to such tactical similarities and for analytical purposes this Part of the thesis will use the expression "mnemonic guerrillas" as a term that reunites forms of contemporary activism with drives to memory, truth, and justice in Brazil. It is important to state that this choice does not expect to uncover deep relations between two very different forms of social action; rather, it seeks to draw from a traditional term an analysis of how new actions of weaker actors provoke substantial social and political changes.

Regarding the theoretical framework used in this Part of the thesis, as already explained in Chapter 1, I draw primarily on authors working in the intersections between social movements studies and memory studies: Charles Tilly (2006), Donatella Della Porta and Mario

[32] But also in countries fighting for independence such as Algeria and Vietnam. Other examples can be found in East Timor, Mozambique, Palestine, South Africa, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba and Nicaragua—the last two being examples of victorious guerrillas.

Diani (2006), Jeffrey Alexander (2006), James Jasper (2014) and Ron Eyerman (2019). This framework will be supported by investigations from other fields such as visual arts, urban geography and literary studies. I believe that this sociocultural approach provides a relevant interpretative key for examining the symbolic and material dimensions of social action in relation both to the activists' personal history and the political circumstances of their specific space and time.

In short, Part 2 of the thesis focuses on the rise of memory activism during the first decade of the 21st century. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with key activists, I explore activists' motivations and tactical preferences for opening spaces to elaborate and broadcast symbolic representations of the dictatorial past. Based on their experiences and reflections, I will assess: how State-led initiatives influenced young generations' memory activism (Chapter 5); how activists' tactics interacted with memory "embedded" in the physical spaces of the city (Chapter 6); what is the potential of symbolic performances of popular justice to expand the limits of Brazil's (Chapter 7); what is the role of aesthetic agency in the elaboration of activists' tactics (Chapter 8); how memory activism can be understood as a form of individual and collective healing (Chapter 9); and how memory activists were affected to the emergence of revisionist discourses and exaltations of the military dictatorship after 2014 (Chapter 10).

CHAPTER 5 – ONE FOOT INSIDE, THE OTHER OUTSIDE

> *I see [the interaction between institutional dynamics and the collective's work] as something very well related. Especially when we look at the collective's ten years of activity. As a matter of fact, our work as a collective came about during this wave of the Labour's Party centre-leftist governments, when public policies got stronger, although we had several criticisms of them. The PNDH-3 [Third Human Rights Program] was the beginning of the National Truth Commission. (…) When we talk about the publication of our Minimanual of Guerrilla Urban Art, it would be unimaginable nowadays, we don't even dream about it. At that time, we did a project of air intervention at radio Muda. We took the transmitter and did free radio transmissions, something not allowed by the Government's Department of Communication, something illegal, but the Department of Culture's tender allowed it because they considered public communication an important matter to be discussed. So, (…) I was very critical of Lula and Dilma's governments although I voted for them, but [after them] things changed a lot. Nowadays we don't even compete for public funding. (…) So, in my opinion, public policies on memory fostered the group's action. (Alexandre, P1, founding-member of art-activism collective Aparecidos Políticos)*

> *Talking specifically about the governments I think that, well, Fernando Henrique Cardoso created the Commission of Dead and Disappeared and then the Amnesty Commission (…). So it was timid but good progress for the time. (…) But we saw that Lula and Dilma's governments advanced more in these matters, although being inside the government I think more resources could have been re-located. (…) After this moment comes the chaos. (…) My guess is that the PNDH-3 brought the dictatorship and the creation of the National Truth Commission into the public sphere for discussion. So, we ended up entering this breeding ground that was very cool at the time. We were happy and we knew it. We knew it but we were insatiable, to be honest. Because activists always want more. If I knew we were to fall into the disgrace we are in today I would have enjoyed more that moment, which was an impressive and unique breeding ground of culture and activism (…). We thought, we always think it will continue, it will progress, but history, as Hegel teaches us, is not linear. (…) (Rafael, P4, founding-member of art-activism collective Coletivo Político Quem)*

> *The National Truth Commission was important because it multiplied into local Truth Commissions, in Commissions inside universities. It was a fantastic movement that influenced me a lot. So, the context of the National Truth Commissions influenced me to engage in this struggle once and for all. (…) In August 2013 there was a public hearing with one of my grandfather's torturers and I was literally face to face with him, and after the hearing I went to speak to him, tense, but the State was talking about my grandfather (…). So, the context of the National Truth Commission influenced a lot (…) it was a moment that instigated us to do something. (Leo Alves, P3, founding-member of group Filhos e Netos Por Memória, Verdade e Justiça)*

> *It was in this time during the National Truth Commission, especially because I was close to events such as OcupaDops, they were happening on my street (…) But beyond that, the discussions that society started to engage with, from the moment when Dilma became President, in a certain way made me think about my family history, and to read again my grandfather's book, which he never published, and I started engaging in this form of activism. (…). (Mariana, P2, member of group Filhos e Netos Por Memória Verdade e Justiça)*

The year of 2012 corresponded to a moment of active interplay between government initiatives and claims for memory, truth, and justice; at least on the discursive level, State apologies gained a different tone. If in 1995 President Fernando Henrique Cardoso recognized the role of the State in the political disappearances and deaths while highlighting the benefits of

forgetting (as described in Chapter 2), in 2012 the Federal Government's Amnesty Commission published the official report of its Amnesty Caravans entitled *O Brasil pede perdão* (Brazil Asks Forgiveness*,* Coelho & Rotta, 2012). In response, activists and social movements started to encourage government actions while pointing to its limitations and contradictions by employing different tactics from street art, occupying public spaces, public naming and shaming, street renaming, and clandestine radio broadcasting, to publishing books and putting on art exhibitions

Chapter 5 investigates the "favourable context" that enabled the emergence of new activist collectives engaged with the struggle for memory, truth, and justice between 2010 and 2014. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with key activists, this chapter explores their motivations and tactical preferences for opening spaces to elaborate and broadcast symbolic representations of the dictatorial past. Two main questions guide this task: (1) how were the emergence of new activist groups and their initial activities influenced by the development of institutional mechanisms for transitional justice? and (2) how were governmental stances influenced by the emergence of new activist groups engaged with the agenda of transitional justice?

The data collected in semi-structured interviews with key second and third-generation Brazilian activists engaged with the transitional justice agenda reveal mutual interactions between institutional initiatives and their choices for collective action. Although all the passages drawn from the interviews appear to be representative of the relationship between governmental action and activist mobilization, they also tell us that such interactions may happen in different ways. Whereas Rafael (P4), an activist not directly affected by the dictatorship, emphasized the impact of such actions within broader social contexts, stimulating discussions and a "breeding ground of culture and activism," Leo (P3), whose family has been affected directly by dictatorial violence, highlighted how these actions had direct impacts on his personal life and family history.

Aiming for a more detailed examination of governmental and activist interaction, Section 5.1 observes the initial trajectory of three activist groups, created in the context of the Brazilian memory turn (2007–2014), and represented here by four activists. The Section demonstrates in what ways political shifts might affect the characteristics of activist mobilization and actions. By comparison, Section 5.2 will explore how activist actions mobilized to affect institutional domains. The three activist groups focused on this chapter are:

1. *Coletivo Aparecidos Políticos* (AP, Collective Political Appeared) was created in 2010 in the city of Fortaleza by artists and students not directly affected by the dictatorship. The name *Aparecidos Políticos* is a pun on the term *desaparecido politico* (political disappeared).

2. *Coletivo Político Quem* (CPQ, Political Collective Who) was created in 2011 in the city of São Paulo by academics and activists not directly affected by the dictatorship. The name *Coletivo Político Quem* highlights the impunity of those *who* killed and tortured during the dictatorship.

3. *Filhos e Netos Por Memória, Verdade e Justiça* (FN-MVJ, Children and Grandchildren for Memory, Truth, and Justice): Represented here by founding-member Leo Alves and member Mariana Lydia Bertoche, FN-MVJ was created in 2014 in the city of Rio de Janeiro, by second and third generations of people affected by the dictatorship.

5.1 The role of governmental initiatives in triggering activist mobilization

The origins of the group *Aparecidos Políticos* (AP), created in 2010 in the city of Fortaleza,

reflects the complexities of activist mobilization and collective action. They are interlaced with the history of Bergson Gurjão Farias, but also with his mother's and other relatives' struggles, with governmental initiatives, and with young activists' social and political predispositions. Bergson was a student and activist from the city of Fortaleza, killed by the military in 1972. His mortal remains were found in 1996 but only identified in 2009, three months after the Inter-American Court of Human Rights accepted the case of the Araguaia Guerrillas[33] (see Chapter 3), and after several relatives' and forensic anthropologists' requests were accepted by government organs that conducted a DNA exam to confirm the victim's identity. Upon receiving the results, Human Rights' minister Paulo Vannuchi sent an assessor to give accounts to the family in person, and after 37 years the State finally allowed Bergson's mother Luiza Gurjão to have a funeral for her son. The ceremony was held at the Federal University of Ceará, where Bergson used to be a student, and attended by about 300 people including family, friends, affiliates of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and the Labour Party (PT), human rights activists, as well as by members of the Human Rights Secretariat.

Watching Luiza's struggle to find and bury her son's body finally coming to an end, amongst the funeral's crowd a group of young art students and activists, born under democracy, were shocked by the weight of that belated episode of "justice," a moment that could be seen as the recovery of a legal right over enduring dictatorial remnants responsible for denying the truth and depriving a mother from her son's funeral for thirty-seven years. About this moment one of AP's founding members, Alexandre Mourão (2013, p. 9) wrote:

> Distance leads to this…
>
> A weight that still bleeds and smells like people's bodies coming from the soil (…)
> Such a strong weight—that always comes back—called: Justice and Memory!

Curiously, right next to the funeral ceremony, inside the University of Ceará, an auditorium held the name Castelo Branco, an homage to the dictator responsible for signing the Institutional Act Number 5 (AI-5) that initiated the most violent period of the dictatorship. The contradictions of that event—from the university's physical space to the 37 years of belated justice—made evident to the young people the impunity and oblivion that marks the Brazilian way of dealing with its dictatorial past. Some months later, in 2010, the group *Aparecidos Políticos* was created. Since then, the group has promoted urban interventions such as radio art experiments, public street renaming, street art, and occupying public spaces, focusing on the debates around the right for truth, memory, and justice.

By combining artistic practices and political activism the group aims to resist ongoing forms of oppression within Brazilian democracy, something they refer to as "stumbles," based on philosopher Vladimir Safatle's (Safatle, 2010) perspective on Brazil's dictatorial remnants. To Safatle, the Brazilian democracy is not stable; on the contrary it "stumbles on the same problems and it is uncapable of overcoming the issues that for 25 years have been tormenting it" (Safatle, 2010, p. 250). Recalling the philosopher's perspective, the group has stated that: "We participated in Bergson's funeral ceremony and observed that our city, Fortaleza, knew very little about the fact. Even worse, it celebrated those who made several political opponents disappear. Facing this situation, we decide to create a collective" (Mourão, 2015, p. 41).

Adopting a more relational perspective to activists' description regarding the genealogy of their collectives, it is possible to suggest that AP (as well as the other collectives analysed

[33] As observed in Chapter 2, Luiza Gurjão and other relatives of the Araguaia Guerrillas, killed by the military around 1972, filed their case with the Organization of American States (OAS). The organization's requests for investigation weren't met by the Brazilian State and the case was sent to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Teles in Safatle & Teles, 2010). The case was judged in 2010 and its resolutions are available at Inter-American Court of Justice (2010).

here) were an active part Brazil's turn to memory but also a consequence of it, meaning that their work came about in direct interaction with State-led initiatives towards reconciliation by memory (e.g., legislations, public hearings, reports, and other forms of symbolic and material reparations), for these initiatives configured changes in the political opportunity structure that encouraged activist mobilization. For this reason, this sub-section considers, as political scientist Herbert Kitschelt (1986) suggests, the "configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilization, which facilitate the development of protest movements in some instances and constrain them in others" (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 58). Obviously, as Kitschelt (1986) himself points out, these changes do not determine the course of social movements, and therefore it is not possible to affirm that collective AP would not have been created in other circumstances. But it is certainly possible to demonstrate how the circumstances enabling the creation of the AP, and other collectives, were deeply connected to State-led initiatives that created new venues of political opportunity.

These interactions between State-led initiatives and memory activism can also be evidenced in the way collectives elaborated and performed their actions. For example, in 2010, in search for ways to engage ongoing debates about the Brazilian dictatorial remnants and its embodied relationship with the city, the AP proceeded to a critical examination of their city's landscape. After realizing the number of homages to dictators to be found around Fortaleza's streets, institutions, neighbourhoods, schools, and even childrens' educational centres, the group developed the action *Ex-sem-voto* (2010). Interactions between institutional mechanisms and memory activism can be observed here in two ways: in the AP's use of official reports to inform the action's use of victims' photographs, and in their choice of locations aiming to have impacts on ongoing institutional debates. As a matter of fact, not only the information but also the victims' photos used in this action were taken from the official report *Direito à verdade e à justiça*, published in 2007 that, according to Mourão, inspired the group in this action. On another level, it is possible to comprehend the decisions over which locations interventions would take place in as being influenced by the profusion of debates regarding transitional justice. As will be detailed in other chapters within Part 2 of the thesis, the choice of performing the action in front of the Military Police Courts was related to the polemics involving requests for the Human Rights Secretariat to exonerate public agent José Armando Costa, accused of torture by victims of the military regime (Associação 64/68—Anistia, 2009).

The discussions on transitional justice that accompanied the progress of institutional initiatives (see Graphic 1) awakened in younger generations not directly affected by the military regime an interest in Brazil's dictatorial past. Founding member of *Coletivo Político Quem* (CPQ), Rafael (P4), a lawyer and human rights specialist (former public agent of the Human Right's Department of São Paulo's City Hall) recognized the importance of this favourable context in igniting a part of national history only briefly mentioned during history classes at school. In our interview he recalled the context that influenced his academic and activist choices. The profusion of discussions following the announcement of PNDH-3, in 2009, circulating in the newspapers, and the debates promoted by partnerships between governmental institutions and universities were decisive for his contact with those engaged in the struggle for memory, truth, and justice in Brazil.

The *Coletivo Político Quem* (CPQ, Political Collective Who) was created in 2010, in the city of São Paulo, by students of the University of São Paulo (USP), to raise awareness about dictatorial legacies through artistic-activist interventions that could cross academic and journalistic domains. The name *Coletivo Político Quem* () reflects their call to question the dictatorial past: "who killed? (…), who tortured? (…), who concealed corpses?" (CPQ, 2011b). These questions represented, in that moment, the group's intention to contribute to the debates about transitional justice by highlighting the lack of justice in the Brazilian initiatives for truth and memory:

> I barely knew about the dictatorship because our schools spoke very little about this period. So, my contact with what was the dictatorship happened during my doctorate. (…) I participated in a debate, a partnership between the Ministry of Justice and the USP's Faculty of International Relations and it was decisive. (…) It was a time where things were boiling and we were born out of this. Interestingly, a lot of similar collectives were created simultaneously without knowing about each other. And the reason for that I guess started with the PNDH-3 that brought up the discussions about the National Truth Commission. (Rafael, P4)

But the idea to create the group was originated after a visit to the 29th biennale of São Paulo in 2010. There, Rafael saw for the first time the work *Quem Matou Herzog*? (1975) in which artist Cildo Meireles stamped the question "who killed Herzog?" on banknotes before putting them back into circulation. In this moment was conceived both the idea for creating the collective and its first action, which will also be explored in detail in the following chapters, and in 2011 the collective was created and banknotes would start circulating in São Paulo with questions such as "Who tortured Dilma Rousseff?" In the manifesto, also released during their first days of existence, the CPQ stated that these notes reformulated the question posed by Cildo. This appropriation of Cildo's artistic-activist tactic, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8, brought his question to confront the present legacies of dictatorial violence:

> (…) after all, who were the agents of the military regime that committed such attacks against human rights? (…) The dictatorship is still present! What to do? Rescue, update, and reconfigure artistic manifestations against the dictatorship? (CPQ, 2011a).

As mentioned earlier, in my interview with CPQ's founding-member Rafael (P4) he stated that the importance of government initiatives in setting up a favourable context for the proliferation of discussions encouraged his interest in the transitional justice agenda. Furthermore, the collective itself was created, as its name suggests, as a response to the government's inability to identify and judge human rights perpetrators. The collective's first action, stamping banknotes, also re-formulated an artistic-activist intervention of 1975 aiming to question the persistence of impunity in the present. By replacing the question "Who killed [journalist and victim] Vladimir Herzog?" to "Who tortured [President] Dilma Rousseff?," the action pointed out to a violent past that still haunts the whole country, including the President herself, also a victim of dictatorial violence.

If the institutional mechanisms for transitional justice developed during the Brazilian memory's turn stimulated the interest of indirectly affected younger generations, it also provoked reactions from second and third generations related to those who were directly-affected. Interviews with Mariana (P2) and Leo Alves (P3), both members of collective *Filhos e Netos Por Memória, Verdade e Justiça* (Children and Grandchildren for Memory, Truth, and Justice, or FN-MVJ), showed that despite their proximity to the dictatorial past, the enthusiasm for organizing and making claims collectively also originated during this favourable context, but in close relation to relatives' historical efforts and to the development of public policies for reckoning with the dictatorial past. Leo (P3), one of its founding-members, helped connect the role of past activist tactics and new public policies to the group's origin (which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9).

As a grandson of socialist revolutionary Mário Alves, who was tortured and disappeared by the military regime in 1970, Leo (P3) grew up in a family directly affected by the military regime. Due to his grandfather's political activities, his mother and grandmother lived clandestinely for a long time in more than forty different places. After Mario Alves's disappearance they began their struggle to recover the truth and demand justice. Leo mentioned

his youth alongside his mother and grandmother, both former members of the group *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais* (GTNM) (1985), one of the country's first human rights collectives formed by victims and relatives. Although recognizing the influence of the GTNM, Leo (P3) also highlighted differences, such as their hierarchic organizational structure that was not reproduced by the FN-MVJ.

As opposed to the aforementioned participants, Leo's family activism had a large impact on the way he related to the dictatorial past. As a matter of fact, the dictatorial past was very present to him as can be observed in his description of a striking moment when he first realized how that past affected him:

> I was sixteen, [it was] a homage to the 25 years of my grandfather's death, (…) there was a booklet published by his former party PCB [Brazilian Communist Party] with photos, him and my grandmother getting married, and I focused on the description of his torture and on the dialogues with one of his torturers, and that hit me (…) that moment marked me. (Leo, P3)

Looking for a way to deal with these issues Leo sought psychological assistance. But it was only in 2013, when he entered the *Clínicas do Testemunho* (CT, Clinics of Testimony), that he would have the idea of creating the collective FN-MVJ. The project Clinics of Testimony was developed by mental health professionals with the support of the Amnesty Commission, under the Ministry of Justice, and aimed to provide psychologic assistance to those affected by State violence—although with a focus on the period established by the PNDH-3 (1946–1988). As stated by Leo, the project provoked a therapeutic emotional unlocking in him that led to a desire to meet people from his generation and to hear their stories. With the CT's support he reached out to others and invited them to start reuniting in a space provided by the clinic.

The influence of institutional mechanisms on the emergence of group FN-MVJ is easily noticed since the group was born within the CT. Group FN-MVJ was created in 2014 and aimed to reunite members of second and third generations of those affected by the military dictatorship. Adopting a non-hierarchical structure, the group started meeting weekly to define their claims and their own identity as a collective. With time, the group started to perform political actions, and to pressure the State into developing policies to address the claims for memory, truth, and justice. Accordingly, their first activity as a collective was the organization of a public hearing, in partnership with the Amnesty Commission and the CT, to debate the transgenerational effects of state violence.

As became clear, a number of second and third generation of activists for memory, truth, and justice, such as some of the FN-MVJ members, were already marked by dictatorial State violence. They have been dealing with this past through their family experiences for a long time, but it was only in the context of the National Truth Commission that they started to organize collectively to broadcast their demands. In this respect, it is possible to affirm that activists' relation to the dictatorial past affected the way they were influenced by political shifts. This can be observed, for instance, in the different ways public policies' development mobilized their political activism:

> The milestone for me, symbolically and affectively, in this agenda for memory, truth, and justice, was having witnessed the ceremony and burial of the political disappeared Bergson Gurjão Farias. Before that, to me, matters related to the military dictatorship were undervalued. Of course, I had a critical sensibility about that period, but (…) witnessing that ceremony was when the message began to sink in. (Alexandre, P1)

> So, my contact with what was the dictatorship, and with those who were affected directly and indirectly by the dictatorship, happened during my doctorate. (…) I saw the discussions around the National Truth Commission and thought that transitional

> justice was a topic that would allow me to debate about the State, not only during the dictatorship but how the Brazilian State was addressing the dictatorship's legacies. (Rafael, P4)

> I entered the project Witnessing Clinics in 2013 and it was very important for me to engage in this struggle. I turned to my therapist and said: 'now I want to meet people from my generation.' I had already overcome a very intense step, which was to recognize that I am also affected by the violence of 1964 (…) and I wanted to meet others from my generation, hear their stories, and now not only because of my grandfather's history, or of my mother's history (…) it's for me and my comrades, for me and the whole country. The whole society are children and grandchildren [of dictatorial victims]. (Leo P3)

> From the moment Dilma began [her government] it made me think about my family history (…). I felt like it was a duty to carry the legacy and not letting those stories die (…) after Dilma was re-elected [2014] we saw the rise of this revisionist discourse and, as a daughter and granddaughter it became a duty (…) we end up feeling responsible for carrying a legacy and not letting this history die. (Mariana, P2)

Alexandre (P1) and Rafael (P4), activists with no direct connection to the dictatorial past, highlighted the importance of public policies, such as the PNDH-3 and the National Truth Commission, in bringing their attention to a distant past and to connected issues in the present. Leo (P3) and Mariana (P2), on the oher hand, acknowledged the importance of such public policies in encouraging themselves to look into their family dramas and incorporate them into their political struggles in the present.

Activists' relation to the past affected not only the way public policies encouraged their political action, but also helped to shape their collective's initial mobilizations. Groups formed by non-directly affected members, such as *Aparecidos Políticos* and *Coletivo Político Quem* were created, at first, to address the dictatorial stumbles still present in the physical spaces of their cities and in Brazilian institutions. At the same time, group FN-MVJ was created to reunite and provide support to second and third generation of victims, while aiming to assist the victims of ongoing State violence. This can be observed by comparing the four activists' discourses when asked about when and why they decided to engage in this form of activism during that period.

5.2 How memory activism affected institutional initiatives?

Extensive debates in the field of social movements show that assessing the success of activist actions in provoking social and political changes is not a simple task (McAdam et al., 1996). Although it is important to consider this problem with respect to each group's stated goals, collectives are not homogeneous entities, and their success can also be a subjective matter—perceptions of success may differ according to the observer. Aware of such limitations, this thesis also draws on semi-structured interviews to examine movement participants' perceptions of their actions in relation to changes in social, cultural, and political arenas. The examples presented below describe how memory activists assess the impact of their actions on governmental institutions and mechanisms.

In 2015, collective *Aparecidos Políticos* finalized their project Cartographic Connections of Memory. Financed by the local Department of Culture, the project aimed to map physical traces of the military regime and the collectives' action over them in the city of Fortaleza (e.g., former torture centres, sites of conflict, buildings and streets named after dictators, and so on). After researching about and listening to the accounts of former prisoners and other witnesses of those places, the data collected was catalogued and used by the group

to develop their actions and to produce a map designed with the purpose of raising awareness about the presence of the dictatorial past in the city's physical landscape.

The project Cartographic Connections of Memory highlighting sites of memory and activist actions over them; it was discussed in high-circulation newspapers (Fortaleza tem 35 locais, 2015) and generated debates about the history of the places mentioned in the project and the forms of addressing them in the present. In addition to that, the map, plus videos, photos and printed material created during the project, were requested by public local schools and cultural institutions to serve as educational resources for discussing the history of the Brazilian dictatorship in class.

Besides its use for educational purposes, the success of this project can be perceived in how it influenced the development of public policies when local parliamentarians started using it to support their claims for renaming streets and public buildings celebrating the memory of perpetrators and figures related to State violence. Local parliamentarians used AP's cartography to pressure the government to apply the 28th recommendation prescribed in Part V of the National Truth Commission, which highlights the necessity of "promoting the renaming of public places, streets, buildings and public institutions (…) that allude to public or private agents who are clearly connected to serious violation practices" (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014c, vol. 1, part V, p. 974). In 2019 the governor of Ceará (the state where Fortaleza is located) approved the Law 16.832 preventing public locations from being named after anyone whose name is listed "in the National Truth Commission (…) as responsible for human rights violations" (Lei n.º 16.832, de 14.01.19, 2019). The impact of this cartographic work on public policies was mentioned by Alexandre in our interview:

> [our] cartography of memory had the greatest outcome when it comes to creating laws. (…) The parliamentarian Renato Rosendo cited us because we did research (…) listening to former political prisoners (…) and we did this map, and nowadays in Fortaleza there is a law that forbids naming public places after people associated with the dictatorship. Of course, it wasn't just because of us, but it was also because of us. (Alexandre, P1)

In this and other moments Alexandre recognized the contribution of AP's actions to larger and more visible changes. However, his expectations for their action's success lie more in the potential of temporary material and symbolic resignifications of institutionalized narratives within the context of the city. As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, these small disruptions within urban spaces have the power to ignite larger discussions and/or to serve as brief experiments of imagination that encourage claims for concrete political change.

In the case mentioned above, parliamentarians relied on an activist project to support their proposals for policy making. However, it can also happen that activists reach out for parliamentarians to convert their proposals into public policies. A valid example of this case consists in the proposal developed by *Coletivo Político Quem* (CPQ) to create a Truth Commission to assess State violence in the present (which came to life in 2015; see Image 15). As explained by Rafael (P4), founding-member of CPQ:

> We wanted to open a discussion about creating a truth commission to talk about State violence during the democratic period. When I was [working] in the local council I had a conversation with deputy Adriano Diogo (…) and he told me to present a project. So, *Coletivo Político Quem* wrote a project and the commission was created (…) but it lasted only for three months. But then we had the same dialogue with deputy Marcelo Freixo (…) and we presented the project to him (…) and he created this commission in Rio de Janeiro called Truth Commission Mães de Acari (…) because of the famous massacre of Acari. (…). This commission was created, had a

> final report, although they didn't mention the collective or other commissions […]. And I'm not mentioning this for nothing, but to tell you that, sometimes, political disputes are so intense that some names, or institutions in this case, are left out because of arguments, in this case probably between different movements. But, in any case, this was a successful experience. (Rafael, P4)

Image 15: Opening meeting of the Commission Mães de Maio at the Legislative Assembly of São Paulo, 2015. Retrieved from: https://www.al.sp.gov.br/noticia/?id=361845

According to Rafael (P4), the creation of the Commission Mães de Maio in 2015 was an example of the impact of CPQ activities on the development of governmental initiatives. In his opinion, it was a successful way of using both the collective's work and their individual positions within public institutions (Rafael being a former public agent at the Department of Human Rights in the São Paulo City Hall) to influence policy making. But he also stressed the limitations of this success as the Commission lasted only for three months, ending with the election of new parliamentarians. In addition to that, Rafael alluded to the unexpected contradictions within activists' conquests by pointing out that their efforts to create the commission for the second time (when they presented the proposal to politician Marcelo Freixo) were not properly recognized in the official reports, as the collective's name only figured in the commission's earlier reports.

Contemporary memory activism in Brazil also succeeded in impacting on governmental initiatives through concerted pressure with other movements not necessarily related to the activists' main goal. In Rio de Janeiro, in 2013, following the governor's announcement that the old police station and centre of torture known as DOPS would be turned into a memory site, activists started pressuring for speediness in the process. Leo (P3) and Mariana (P2), members of the yet-to-be created FN-MVJ, engaged with other activists and collectives in the campaign *OcupaDOPS* (Occupy DOPS), demanding that the old torture

centre DOPS[34] in Rio de Janeiro should be converted into a memory centre. Between 2013 and 2016 this campaign promoted multiple cultural events in front of the building (e.g., academic debates, music concerts, and artistic interventions) in order to occupy the site and raise public awareness about the importance of that building to Brazil's process of reckoning with its dictatorial past. At the same time, activists engaged in the campaign started to demand reunions with public agents to present their claims and proposals for repurposing the building, as Leo (P3) declared in our interview:

> Since 2013 there is this campaign and there was an institutional movement. At some point I went with other comrades to the local Department of Culture, (…) the head-chief was Eva Doris, and she was in the Communist Party in the past, and she received us and listened to our demand and it seemed that she would be able to do it, to link the building to the Culture Department, because it was linked to the Security Department. In any case, we went there. To act on the streets and to act within institutions, I really think that's the way. (Leo, P3)

The occupy movement was combined with activists' pressure within government's institutions to demand legal actions towards the building's conversion into a memory centre. Leo's statement about acting within institutions demonstrates the importance not only of working on different fronts—streets and institutions—to ensure concrete gains, but also of activists' sense of opportunity. Leo remarked that even though these discussions were happening during Sergio Cabral's conservative government, the fact the head of the Department of Culture had been a former member of the Communist Party could favour the government's opening up to the group's cause.

Despite small successes, such as turning the occupied site into a place for cultural activities, as suggested by Mariana (P2), the campaign *OcupaDOPS* ignited another campaign that started in 2017 called *Liberte Nosso Sagrado* (FreeOurSacred). The FreeOurSacred campaign aimed to recover historical objects (e.g., sculptures, musical instruments, and traditional dresses) used in African religious rituals that had been confiscated by the police since 1910, when the DOPS' building was built, in a time when the practice of African religions was a crime. According to the movement, more than 500 objects were locked in the building, and no one could have access to it since the building was deactivated.

The campaign FreeOurSacred demanded that the objects should be recovered from the building and transferred to a museum where they should be preserved and accessible to anyone interested. Following this emerging movement activists engaged in the *OcupaDOPS* started to support their claims and including them in the activities and debates organized in front of the building. In 2020 the local government determined that the objects should be transferred to the Museum of the Republic in Rio de Janeiro, representing a victory to the campaign FreeOurSacred but also to the campaign *OcupaDOPS* that supported their claims (Image 16). Activist Mariana (P2) commented on this success:

> This [OcupaDOPS] is an ongoing campaign. But the campaign FreeOurSacred is a great conquest. (…) The fact that we disputed this building, disputed this heritage, disputed this memory, somehow helped the FreeOurSacred to be a victorious campaign. (…) It's difficult to think about achieving the objective when the objective is to have the building returned. But this is a long-term struggle. (Mariana, P2)

Although the original claim of *OcupaDOPS* to convert the building into an official site of memory has not yet been achieved, activists engaged with it argued that the success of the FreeOurSacred campaign was a positive outcome. As Mariana (P2) stated, their earlier efforts

[34] DOPS is an acronym that stands for *Departamento de Ordem Política e Social* (Department of Social and Political Order). Police buildings across the country used to interrogate and torture political prisoners.

to dispute the use of the building are part of a long-term struggle, and that is the reason why the campaign *OcupaDOPS* is still active. However, their continuous work helped to pave the way for the successful campaign FreeOurSacred towards recovering historical objects from inside the building, and this can be considered to be a direct result of the memory activism practiced by *OcupaDOPS*.

Image 16: Members of the campaign Liberte Nosso Sagrado [FreeOurSacred] celebrate the recovery of historic objects related to Afro-Brazilian religions. Retrieved from: https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/nacional/2020/09/21/acervo-religioso-apreendido-ha-130-anos-e-transferido-para-museu-no-rio

Conclusion

The cases presented in this chapter suggest that the forms of interplays between government and activist action are connected to the ways these young activists, coming from different backgrounds, experienced the development of institutional mechanisms and how they identified opportunities to act within it in accordance with their goals. It is not difficult to observe how different activists' connections to the dictatorial past affected the way they engaged in the struggle for memory, truth, and justice during Brazil's turn to memory. My interviews with activists demonstrated that while activists not directly affected by dictatorship highlighted the importance of State-led initiatives in raising their interest about the legacies of dictatorship, directly affected activists emphasized the importance of such initiatives in encouraging them to look back into their family pasts.

These cases demonstrated that activists' initial engagement was developed in accordance not only with shifts in the political context but also with different affective connections to the past. In this sense, it is possible to affirm that intergenerational effects of the Brazilian dictatorial violence have an impact on post-dictatorial activism. This seems to echo the conclusions drawn by Jasper (2018), Eyerman (2019), and DellaPorta and Diani (2006), who call for the importance of thinking about collective action in connection to emotions in order to study activists' affective commitments and the cultural meanings that guide their actions. A more detailed analysis of the relationship between collective action and

activists' identity will be developed in Chapter 9, which analyses the potential of activism as a form of healing.

That said, the same differences of initial engagement with the political agenda of transitional justice cannot be said to influence the activists' predisposition to interact with the State; noting that all participants highlighted their non-partisan distance and the importance of direct actions, they all comprehended government institutions as spaces to be occupied. This was confirmed in all participant interviews, and a consensus seemed to emerge when it came to the importance of the State in developing and financing initiatives for truth, memory, and justice. In this sense the declaration of Mariana (P2), a member of FN-MVJ, is objective and speaks for all participants: "We believe initiatives on truth, memory, justice, and restitution have to come from the State. (…) We have a State structure, it makes no sense not using it" (Mariana, P2).

As a *carrier group* these activists had to broadcast their claims "about the shape of social reality, its causes, and the responsibilities for action such causes imply" (Alexander, 2004, p. 11). To do so, they made their tactical choices by calculating the multiple possibilities of the spaces and resources available. These activists' understandings of institutional work as part of their activist actions seemed to be representative of their sense of political opportunity according to the "configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilization" (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 58). Their institutional work, in this sense, came as a result of what Charles Tilly (2006) defines as interactions between their claim-making repertoire and the political opportunity structure.

The importance of State-led initiatives to activists are also evident in the fact that "half of the Coletivo Político Quem ended up working for the government" (Rafael, P4). The founding-member of CPQ Rafael (P4), for example, coordinated the Commission of Dead and Disappeared and worked at the Human Rights Department of São Paulo. Similarly, founding-member of group *Aparecidos Políticos*, Alexandre (P1), worked in the National Truth Commission, and then at the Amnesty Commissions. Both resigned from their public functions between 2014 and 2016 when the historical setting was looking less and less favourable.

Perhaps the favourable context prompted by the Brazilian turn to memory (Atencio, 2014) established a certain confidence and encouraged institutional participation as a way of stimulating political changes. However, considering the collectives' objectives and their actions' success, durable and systemic gains are hard to point out. What has been demonstrated so far in this chapter was that activists' efforts might, especially when combined with other institutional and non-institutional actors, contribute to the (sometimes unintended) articulation of new spaces for claim-making within political institutions.

CHAPTER 6: MEMORY ACTIVISM AND THE CITY

Cicero, the noted theoretician of Roman mnemotechnies, realized the importance of place to the construction of memory when he said: “Great is the force that lives in the interior of places” (Assmann, 2011, p. 317). By recognizing this force of memory and the binding power of places it is possible to argue, in consonance with the Roman poet, that streets, buildings, and other urban facilities are not empty physical objects but culturally charged devices carrying narratives that form the symbolic dimensions of the city. Each of these facilities influences our everyday lives and helps us localize and recognize ourselves within the space of city. At the same time, they are shaped physically and symbolically by our actions (the way we use and assign meanings to them). Observing this interaction between time and materiality, and considering the impossibility of dissociating subject and object, I understand urban spaces as active participants in the political struggles around collective memory.

The political struggles around collective memory consist in confrontations over the meanings of the past according to expectations about the future. They involve different social actors who develop strategies to achieve positions of authority capable of officializing their narratives. Such struggles thus become a matter of who has access to the means (the symbolic tools) to express experience, construct meaning and legitimize a discourse. In this regard the State holds a privileged position in the production of official memories, used to reinforce social cohesion within the context of national identity. The canonical narratives that constitute official history, as Assmann (2011) puts it, can be particularly problematic in dictatorial contexts since the public sphere tends to be dominated by simplified views of “good guys” and “bad guys,” with few chances of alternative perspectives. On the other hand, political openings encourage social activity in the public sphere and boost the production of alternative or counter-narratives by multiple political actors to enter the disputes around the construction of collective memory. Marginalized and silenced memories can afford to come to the surface in diverse forms.

In this respect Elizabeth Jelin (2003) calls attention to the fact that memory can be territorially inscribed on material objects or sites linked with previous events. According to Jelin, monuments, commemorative plaques, and other markers are produced by official and nonofficial actors to convey memory into matter. Moreover, she states that “initiatives of this sort can at times be countered by contesting actors’ attempts to erase the remnants of the past, as if by changing the form and function of a place the memory of what took place will also be erased” (Jelin, 2003, p. 56). It is, in fact, not very difficult to note that in distinct parts of the world examples of disputes over monuments and other material objects provoke collective recalling: efforts to name streets after some personality, to construct memorials and monuments, to turn existing places into sites of memory, or, on the contrary, to forge efforts against the construction of such places. In essence, such efforts are attempts to inscribe a mnemonical meaning into specific sites, to highlight what should be remembered and to silence what should be forgotten according to projections around the future.

In Brazil, disputes around dictatorial memory became more intense in the 2000s, particularly after 2007, with debates stimulated by State-led initiatives and by the effort of social actors (relatives, activists, human rights advocates, and so on). As demonstrated in Chapter 3 these dialogues took place in temporal conjunction with the expansion of the Works of the Amnesty Commission, the publication of the CEMDP report (2007), the Amnesty Caravans project (2008), the publication of the Third National Program for Human Rights (PNDH-3) in 2009, the multiple Truth Commissions developed locally and the National Truth Commission’s (NTC) final report published in 2014 by the Federal Government. Despite the limitations and contradictions pointed out in Chapter 3, it is impossible not to notice the

concomitant emergence of a wave of collective activism engaged with memory, truth, and justice during that time.

Most examples of such activism I analyse in Part 2 took place in urban contexts: in 2011 phrases such as “Who tortured Dilma Rousseff?” and “Who killed Alexandre Vannuchi Leme?” circulated around São Paulo, not only on the walls but also stamped on banknotes. This action, produced by *Coletivo Político Quem*, consisted in a reformulation of the work of artist Cildo Meireles called “Insertion into Ideological Discourses,” which was produced in 1975 when the artist stamped banknotes with the question “Who killed Herzog?” As in Meireles’s work CPQ used objects and the spaces of everyday life to promote the circulation of political messages questioning the persistence of impunity regarding dictatorial violence in the present. In 2012 the group *Levante Popular da Juventude* (LPJ, Popular Youth Rising) and the *Frente de Esculacho Popular* (FEP, Popular Esculacho Front) developed *escrachos*—public “naming and shaming” events—in different Brazilian cities. Inspired by the *escraches* from Argentina and *funas* from Chile, young activists took to the street—precisely to the surroundings of former perpetrators’ houses and workplaces—to expose State criminals and to denounce the human rights violations for which they were never judged. In 2013 phrases such as “to remember is to (re)exist” could be seen on the walls of Rio de Janeiro, produced by *Coletivo Sabô* (CS, Sabô Collective). By the end of that year the campaign *OcupaDops* was created with the aim of occupying a former torture centre and demanding its conversion into a memory centre. And in 2014, through the mediation of the *Clinicas do Testemunho* (CT, Testimony Clinics), the collective FN-MVJ emerged to gather together the children and grandchildren of dictatorial victims interested in denouncing State violence of the past and its continuities in the present. These examples aimed to intervene in the insistence of dictatorial authoritarianism by employing tactics that connect the aesthetic and the political over the sphere of human interaction within the space of the city.

Another example of mnemonic disputes over urban equipment and facilities and public spaces can be found in the actions around the name of the Monumental Bridge in Brasília. This bridge, as observed in the introduction to this thesis, was named the Monumental Bridge in a project designed by Oscar Niemeyer in 1967 and consists of a structure of 400 metres formed by three arcs. The bridge functions over Lake Paranoá as a connection between the central part of the city and the residential sector of South Peninsula. After several structural problems the bridge was inaugurated in 1976 during the government of Dictator Ernesto Geisel and named as Bridge Costa e Silva. Besides non-official changes—such as the one promoted by *Coletivo Transverso* (CT, Transverse Collective), which renamed it to Bridge Bezerra da Silva in 2012—the bridge kept the military name from its inauguration until 2015. In that year a request by deputy Ricardo Vale was approved by Brasilia’s governor and the bridge was renamed Honestino Guimarães, in memory of the student murdered by the military regime. In 2018, however, one month after the victory of Jair Bolsonaro (an open admirer of the dictatorship and its torturers) the local government changed it back to Costa e Silva.

To discuss memory activists’ use of urban spaces as mnemonic spaces means supporting their political goals. Chapter 6 focuses on two examples drawn from actions performed by the Fortaleza-based collective *Aparecidos Políticos* (AP, Political Appearances). First, I explore actions of *rebatismo popular* (popular rebaptism) in which public locations such as streets and buildings named after perpetrators were collectively renamed to celebrate the memory of victims. Second, I observe the action of *Ex-sem-voto* in which the collective produced an urban installation in Fortaleza combining photographs of victims with wooden objects placed in specific locations of the city.

The theoretical framework from which this chapter draws its analysis of memory disputes in public locations admits an expansion of the notions about memory and place by considering the sociocultural weight of their composition (Halbwachs, 1992; Ricoeur, 2007;

Jelin, 2003; Donohoe, 2012). This brings the problematics of power relationships and sociopolitical struggles over urban landscapes (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2016; Rose-Redwood et al., 2010) to the centre of this investigation and serves as a starting point to study the ways through which memory activism takes place in the city's urban landscape. By applying these analytical lenses Chapter 6 aims to operate a closer examination of memory activists' tactics for intervening on urban landscapes.

6.1 Memory, body, and place in AP's project *Ex-sem-voto* (2011)

Drawing on a phenomenological framework philosopher Janet Donohoe (2014) examines the relationship between memory and place, observing the body as essentially intertwined with the world. As Donohoe puts it, "any experience is already intersubjective just as it is always already bodily and always already implaced" (2014, p. 104). Likewise, memory is always intersubjective and implaced since it also requires mediation from the cultural interpretive framework and spatial references to be rationalized and expressed. Therefore, our corporeal relations to the material dimension that comprises our everyday lives are constantly influencing and being influenced by collective memory.

Interconnections between the body and the city as supports (and means) for disputing collective memory were explored by AP's *Ex-sem-voto* in Fortaleza in a unique way. Considering that urban facilities are not empty objects but instead culturally charged devices with meanings elaborated in a reciprocal relationship with their users' actions across time (Donohoe, 2014), urban interventions tend to create dialogues with this collectively constructed web of meanings in order to elaborate their narratives. Project *Ex-sem-voto* used the spaces of the city, and the ways social actors interact with them, as material and symbolic supports to develop deeper (bodily) forms of communicating and engaging citizens in their political demands.

In 2010, the collective *Aparecidos Políticos* (AP) installed 1 metre x 0.80 centimetre posters featuring the faces of victims of the dictatorship around city spaces connected to the dictatorial past; the photographs were taken from the CEMDP report (2007). Next to the images the collective hanged objects related to that city's local imagination—the *ex-voto,* pieces of wood representing human body parts commonly used in religious rituals to thank God's bestowed favours. This project comprised several actions and was named the *Ex-sem*-voto, itself a pun on the double meaning of the word "voto" as religious "devotion" and as electoral "voting," thus alluding to civilians' lack of voting power during the dictatorship.

The use of the *ex-votos* was justified by AP's members for its symbolic value to represent those who did not receive God's favours, and also could not exert their democratic rights to vote (Mourão, 2013). In this sense, the group subverted the religious function of the *ex-votos* to "celebrate" the grace never achieved by victims. While not mentioned by participants, this deviated use of objects originally taken from religious ceremonies to compose an urban installation that recalled past dictatorial violence the *ex-votos* enabled further meanings regarding the double-edged role of the Catholic church during the dictatorship – sometimes denouncing torture and sometimes collaborating with it. As exemplified earlier in Chapter 3, the famous report on dictatorial violence Brasil: Nunca Mais (1985) was organized by two members of the Catholic church. But, according to the National Truth Commission report, while some sectors of Protestants and Catholics churches engaged in social and political actions against the military regime and in defense of human rights, other sectors within the same church varied between silence, omission, and explicit collaboration with the regime "both in the reproduction of ideological propaganda supporting the state of exception and in the denouncing of members of its own [institutional] body." (CNV, Vol II, 2014c)

By hanging body parts next to photographs of victims of the dictatorship project, *Ex-sem-voto* aimed mainly to symbolize the violent methods of torture used by the dictatorship against political opponents, and by carefully choosing the actions' location (see Table 2) the installation explored the potential of each space in activating meanings and communicating them to passersby in an effective way. For example, the action celebrating Amaro Félix Pereira (Image 17) took place in front of former headquarters of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), alluding to Amaro Félix Pereira's political ideology, as he was a member of PCB's dissident cell, the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR). At the same time, the action celebrating Lígia Maria Nóbrega (Image 18) was performed in front of Fortaleza's Municipal Secretariat of Culture (Secultfor), a former Federal Police head office and torture centre, bringing attention to the violent events that took place within building—although Lígia was assassinated by the regime in Rio de Janeiro in 1972. While the first action highlighted the political reasoning behind dictatorial violence the second action highlighted the memory that institutionalized State terrorism embedded in current public buildings (the Municipal Secretariat of Culture or Secultfor).

Image 17: AP urban intervention: the *Ex-sem-voto* (2010). Retrieved from: www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br

Image 18: AP urban intervention: the *Ex-sem-voto* (2010). Retrieved from: www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br

Location in Fortaleza (CE)	**Details**	**Political Disappeared**
Avenida da Universidade.	Place known for holding protests and rallies.	Alfeu de Alcântara Monteiro (1964) – Lieutenant Colonel killed for standing against the dictatorship.
Close to the Municipal Culture Secretariat.	Former Federal Police head office and torture centre.	Lígia Maria Salgado Nóbrega (1972) – Image 18.
Close to a former DOPS in the city centre.	Former torture centre.	Mariano Joaquim da Silva (1971) – member of guerrilla group VAR-Palmares.
Close to the 10th Military Region.	Where 1817 revolutionary Bárbara de Alencar was arrested and tortured.	Frei Tito de Alencar (1971) – Dominican frier who committed suicide following his release from prison and torture.
Students' Central Directory of Federal University of Ceará.	Place known for holding students' protests and rallies.	Jana Moroni Barroso (1974).
In front of cultural institution Casa de Juvenal Galeno.	Former clandestine headquarters of the Communist Party.	Amaro Félix Pereira (1971/1972) – former leader of rural workers – Image 17.
Close to square Praça do Carmo.	Former Centre of Secondary Students of Ceará.	Custódio Saraiva Neto (1974).

In front of the Military Police Courts (*Corregedoria da Polícia Militar*).	Where a public agent accused of torture since the publication of *Brasil: Nunca mais* (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985) was still working – ironically, supervizing police misconduct.	Maria Lúcia Petit (1972).

Table 2: Locations of the action *Ex-Sem-Voto* (2010) by the *Aparecidos Políticos*. Elaboration based on information collected in interviews and from the collective's website: www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br.

Through a careful consideration of the urban places over which it would take place, the *Ex-sem-voto* managed to create what Jelin (2003, p. 56) calls "physical markers" to territorially inscribe their connections between past and present on a more immediate level. By taking place in urban public places during the daylight the action opened "wounds" within the "body" of the city, confronting unaware passers-by, and demanding ethical and political positionings. During our interview Alexandre [P1] explained AP's strategic choices regarding the locations where the actions would take place:

> We didn't want to put a poster on a random wall, we wanted to put it on a wall that was related to that memory, on a wall that alluded to a dictator, on a space that was a torture centre. So, we had and have this desire to appropriate the city in the sense of demanding rights. (…) Since the collective began, we work with this idea of occupying the city. (Alexandre, P1)

By creating a dialogue with the memories of each location AP's actions were able to disrupt, even though temporarily, the web of meanings of material marks and confront passers-by with the voices of underrepresented narratives. Memory activists' tactics, in this respect, produce breaks in the "central role and special weight" (Jelin, 2003, p. 44) of the State as the official carver of mnemonic anchors and establish ephemeral markers, or monuments, within the spaces of the city. Despite its ephemerality, as demonstrated in Chapter 5 these actions promoted by non-State actors, although being "farther away from the microphones of power" (Jelin, 2003, p. 53), depending on the opportunities available might have resonances for State actors. In this respect it is important to stress that two years later, the Secultfor inaugurated in its facilities the Memorial of Resistance aiming to preserve the memories of those who resisted the dictatorial regime.

In another action within the project *Ex-sem-voto*, this time celebrating the memory of Maria Lúcia Petit (a guerrilla fighter killed during military operations against the Araguaia Guerrillas), the collective chose a wall in front of the Military Police Court because, at that time, a former member of the military regime who was accused of torture was still directing the institution. Next to the victim's photograph AP wrote "Out judge inspector! For crimes during the dictatorship" (Image 19). In this specific action the collective sought to highlight the (tragic) irony of having a military staff accused of human rights violations in the past judging possible human rights violations committed by the military in the present. By doing so, it also promoted an *escracho,* a tactic popularized in the 1990s by Argentinean collective HIJOS, as mentioned by one of AP's members (Mourão, 2013, p. 73) indicating the already mentioned influence of memory activism in other Latin American countries to the collectives investigated in this research (Section 3.2, and Chapter 7).

Image 19: AP urban intervention: the *Ex-sem-voto* (2010). Retrieved from: www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br

By understanding the urban installations of project *Ex-sem-voto* as temporary monuments it is possible to expand on their potential to evoke the past in a critical and participatory manner. According to Janet Donohoe, monuments and memorials are places "deliberately constructed for purposes of remembering" (2014, p. 77), part of an effort to remember those who died, a practice that she relates to the concept of mourning and, more specifically, to "collective mourning." On the basic level mourning is part of a human need to make sense of traumatic events, but Donohoe examines the limits of mourning and the impossibility of it reaching beyond the present. According to the author, the act of mourning remains within the shared domain of the living, incapable of reaching the singularity of the dead. More than simply bringing the past into the present, these places of memory mediate their interaction according to existing demands. Therefore, as Donohoe states, "in spite of pretensions to immortality, or historical objectivity, monuments can only ever be experienced within a transitory present by a transitory individual, from within a certain historical, intersubjective perspective" (2014, p. 102). In conclusion, monuments are constructed for the living, not the dead.

Donohoe (2014) analyses monuments as carriers of collective memory, highlighting the bodily experiences stimulated by human interaction with such places. In studies of famous memorials—e.g., the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, or the United States' World War II Memorial, both in Washington DC—the author argues that, aware or not, we have our bodies engaged by places of memory like memorials and monuments, and the type of such engagement will determine what is communicated by the place. Considering the type of engagement produced by monuments, the *Ex-sem-voto* guerrilla-style's unexpected intervention in the everyday spaces of the city surprised and confronted passersby. As explained by AP's members, most of their actions, including the *Ex-sem-voto*, were performed during the daylight or early in the night to facilitate interaction with passers-by, sometimes using microphones or megaphones to call attention to, and explain, the action.

According to Donohoe (2014) monuments often represent a simplified version of history as they "do not accommodate multiple perspectives of public discourse, but offer instead an ideological and unified meaning, closing off opportunities for discussion." (Donohoe, 2014, p. 123). By contrast, successful monuments should take their position "in

between" testimony and archive, narcissism and ideology, self and Other, encouraging us to be aware of our own position in the in-between of the present. In this sense I argue that the urban interventions of the *Ex-sem-voto* in their openness to social interaction and conflict encourage critical approaches to the construction of collective memory.

6.2 Critical Toponymy as a Mnemonic Tactic

The problematics arising from a sociocultural approach to memory demand a disposition to refuse the simplicity of linear and absolute perspectives of time and space, for memory is neither static nor given but under constant reconstruction. Turning to Maurice Halbwachs (1992, p. 40) we can say that "the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present." As explained in Chapter 1 in the *Social Frameworks of Memory* (1992), Halbwachs observes that our recollections are subject to the group or society, highlighting the role of collective frameworks, or shared conventions, as instruments that provide the means for mnemonic reconstruction. The intelligibility of these shared conventions—which Halbwachs observes in language "and the whole system of social conventions attached to it" (1992, p. 173)—is the precondition for collective memory.

Paul Ricoeur (2007) develops this perspective by stating that collective memory is carried by narratives—which means, by an agreed form of arranged signs—since "no one undertakes to explain a course of events without making use of some express literary form of a narrative, rhetorical, or imaginative character" (2007, p. 137). According to Ricoeur, cities should be comprehended within their symbolic syntax according to which "each new building is inscribed in urban space like a narrative within a setting of intertextuality. (…) It is on the scale of urbanism that we best catch sight of the work of time in space" (2007, pp. 150–151). Explaining that cities give themselves as both to be seen and to be read, Ricoeur (2007, p. 85) states that "the circumscription of the narrative is thus placed in the service of the circumscription of the identity defining the community." This correspondence between narrated time and constructed space can be better observed in naming practices regarding the spaces of the city.

In the introduction to the edited book *Critical Toponymies: The Contested Politics of Place Naming* (2016, p. 3), Jani Vuolteenaho and Lawrence Berg remind us that the philosophical roots of the study of naming practices can be traced back to Antiquity with Plato and the Stoics' accounts of the role of names to communal life. Later, thinkers such as Ernesto Laclau and Pierre Bourdieu started to focus on the power-related aspects of naming in producing popular identities and centralized representations "at the expense of the lower classes and speakers of non-sanctioned languages and dialects." In this respect the authors move on to highlight the importance of Michel de Certeau's (2002) remarks on official nomenclatures as manifestations of power. According to de Certeau (2002, p. 104), place names form "constellations that hierarchize and semantically order the surface of the city." At the same time, de Certeau stresses the potential of passers-by in giving new meanings to these names, confronting their first definitions.

Elaborating on the genealogy of the "critical turn" in contemporary toponymy, Reuben Rose-Redwood, Derek Alderman and Maoz Azaryahu (2010) explain that by the mid-1980s the study of place naming went through a critical reformulation. According to the authors traditional approaches to toponymical research were normally limited to classifying and studying the origin of names. Around the 1980s connections between the naming of streets and struggles over social and political identities started taking centrality in place-naming studies. They end by suggesting a need for broadening toponymic analysis to consider the "political" in connection to other questions such as the commodification of place names and the potential

of people's refusal to use such names. I aim to contribute to such scholarship by observing street renaming as a tactic of memory activism in contemporary Brazil.

More than providing spatial orientation for the users of the cities, the naming of public places has the potential to aggregate facts and historic personalities into everyday life. As Azaryahu puts it, "In their commemorative capacity, street names communicate official representations of the ruling socio-political order" (2016, p. 53). This means that despite the familiar and practical aspect of place names, behind the process of choosing a fact or personality to be remembered collectively lies an ideological intention to remember or to forget, to praise or to deny certain events. Within this political framework, the process of naming (and re-naming) public places is an expression of power conditioned by the historical circumstances of a given period.

In Brazil, the naming of streets and other public places follows two general conditions: 1) that the person has passed away; 2) that the person has contributed with relevant work to the city, the country, or humanity. Certainly, the second condition leaves space for interpretation as notions of "relevant work" might be different according to the historical conditions available for the interpretation of such work. In the Brazilian post-dictatorship, victims, relatives and human rights advocates still struggle to rename streets named after figures related to dictatorial repression and in homage of those who resisted.

According to Reginaldo Benidito Dias (2012) these efforts began in the 1980s and 1990s and faced resistance and sometimes threats; nevertheless they paved the way for the development of future policies. For example, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, the Third National Plan of Human Rights (PNDH-3), published in 2009, set a range of guidelines for the Federal Brazilian Government to address the dictatorial period. One of the guidelines recommended the creation of national legislation to forbid public buildings and other places from being named after people who committed human rights violations, and to alter those already existing. However, despite all the efforts from social movements and recommendations from the Federal Government, place naming related to the dictatorial period in Brazil reflects ongoing memory conflicts.

Since the elements of urban landscapes allow pedestrians to assimilate images, memories and histories, they constitute a meaningful mechanism for the construction of collective memory. Naming places after historical personalities and events legitimizes specific understandings around the past. In this sense Alderman (2016, p. 181) is interested in street names as "memorial arenas" or as "potentially politicized memorials." While privileged sectors of society tend to decide what should be remembered and forgotten through street names, marginalized groups can develop strategies to confront such decisions and reformulate interpretations about the past.

This can be observed in attempts at renaming and marking places connected to the memory of the dictatorship promoted by the collective *Aparecidos Políticos* (AP) in the city of Fortaleza. The collective was created in 2010 after their members realized how many streets, neighbourhoods, and schools were named after dictators. The group proceeded to research and map, alongside historians and former political prisoners, sites connected to military repression and civilian resistance. This mapping process culminated in the project *Conexões Cartográficas da Memória* (Cartographic Connections of Memory), finalized in 2015 (Image 20), in which the collective marked sites of memory and interventions they have promoted in the city of Fortaleza. The map was used by the collective in workshops and distributed in different places including public schools to assist teachers in their teaching about the dictatorship. And as already demonstrated in Chapter 5, it was also used by a local councillor to approve local legislation against naming public places after people accused of human rights violations.

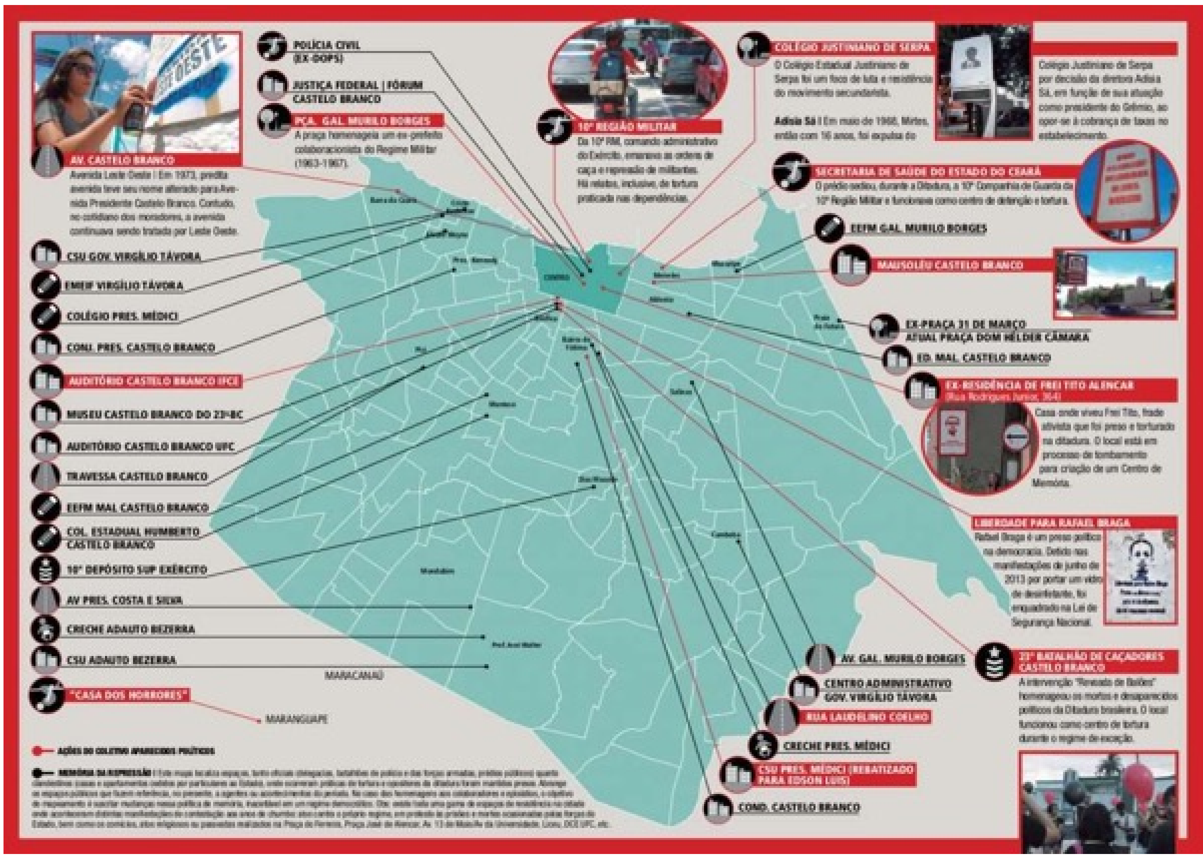


Image 20: AP's Project *Conexões Cartográficas da Memória* / Cartographic Connections of Memory (2015). Retrieved from: http://www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br/2015/07/lancamento-mapa-e-dvd-cartografia-da-ditadura-em-fortaleza/

This project of critical cartography resonates with historian John Brian Harley's previous deconstructive critiques of maps "as a political technology of imperialism and nation-building; cartographic secrecy, censorship, and silences" (Rose-Redwood, 2015, p. 2). The project also relies on mapping practices as performative political practices. Considering that the silences regarding the Brazilian dictatorship manifest in different power strategies, including official cartographic production, AP's cartography subverts this political technology to voice silenced or marginalized narratives (of victims, relatives, human rights specialists, and all those involved directly or indirectly in the project). Understanding maps not as inert objects but as socially productive practices (Blomley, 2014, p. 148), it is possible to understand cartography as resulting from the performative actions of State actors to legitimize spatial conceptions. In this sense, drawing on studies regarding naming practices by Rose-Redwood (2014), I understand AP's Cartographic Connections of Memory as a "counter-performance of subversion."

The map also includes AP's actions inscribing other "subversive tactics" within their cartographic performance. One of the places marked in the map corresponds to the Social Urban Centre President Médici (named after the dictator in place during the Leaden Years (1969–1974)) and stresses another action promoted by AP. This action consisted in renaming the building to Edson Luís, a student killed by the military in 1968, in Rio de Janeiro (Image 21).

Image 21: *Rebatismo Popular Centro Social Presidente Médici to Edson Luis* / Popular Rebaptism of Social Centre President Médici to Edson Luis (2011). Retrieved from: http://www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br/2011/03/69/

Referred to by AP as *rebatismo poular* (popular rebaptism), this action took place on 28 March 2011 (the date that also marked the death of Edson Luís); present were members of social movements and collectives engaged in the struggle for memory, truth, and justice. Complementary to the action, while Alexandre (P1) painted the building's façade other members distributed leaflets to passers-by with information explaining the collective's objectives, which also provided an opportunity for engaging with those passersby. At the same time another member of AP used a megaphone to read a manifesto prepared for the occasion:

> Even after Brazil's re-democratization, we still live with the legacies of the dictatorship, and the main proof is that not only the names of military coup-plotters persist in our streets, institutions, and even municipalities, but the [repressive] practices of that period perpetuate in the present. We understand that the name of murderers should not be on the walls of our city, as this reinforces the repressive culture of that period. For this reason, we suggest that the name should be replaced by the name of Edson Luís, a student murdered by the dictatorship on this same date.[35]

AP's renaming tactic comprised other elements besides painting the façade (the reading of a manifesto and the interpersonal interaction between activists and passers-by), which communicated their desire to approach debates regarding dictatorial past publicly, collectively and participatorily.

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[35] A video of this action is available at "O que resta da ditadura?" (2011).

By connecting the persistence of the military regime in the names of public locations with ongoing repressive practices the group understands place naming as “an expression of power” (Azaryahu, 2016, p. 56) that, within Brazil’s everyday life, legitimizes not only the State narratives about the past but also the violent practices of the present. And by renaming the building, they highlight the role of spatial inscriptions in making certain narratives obvious and self-evident and, therefore, the potential of non-official actors to disrupt such inscriptions and replace them with their own memories. As in the subversive appropriation of cartographic performances as a political technology for legitimating State narratives, AP’s practice of critical toponymy challenges the authority of official place naming by performing “popular rebaptism” as a tactic that allows participatory forms of reckoning with the dictatorial past.

As I argue throughout this thesis, the success of such non-official, temporary resignifications of symbolic and material anchors of memory (Jelin, 2003) should also include subjective perceptions that vary in terms of success. While this action was considered a success by AP, since after a while the local government rebuilt the façade omitting the name of President-Dictator Médici, it did not name it after the victim Edson Luís as suggested by the collective. This action’s outcomes illustrate the governments’ partial acknowledgements and conflictive narratives that characterized the period referred to here as Brazil’s “turn to memory.”

Another noteworthy example of the work of third-generation memory activists over the physical space of the city is AP’s renaming of the public square in front of the 23rd Military Headquarters. Known as a former site of torture during the dictatorship the military building is still active, and the atrocities that took place there were silenced following the democratic transition. To recall those who were abducted, tortured and killed in that building AP promoted the renaming of the square located in front of the building from Square of the 23rd Military Headquarters to *Praça do Desaparecido Político* (Square of the Political Disappeared).

During the renaming “ceremony” members of social movements and victims of the dictatorship took turns speaking about their memories of the dictatorship and the importance of such action. To materialize the renaming AP installed a female bust with its head covered by a white fabric (Image 22), representing the methods of torture used by the military regime. Besides the bust, the collective also installed a commemorative plaque that said:

> Next to this square, in that military headquarters, people were tortured during the military dictatorship. We chose this square in memory of all the political dead and disappeared of Latin American dictatorships. For the right to memory, truth, and justice. (Translated from Image 23).

Again, AP’s renaming tactic combined different elements in order to construct a collective experience between activists, victims, social movements and passersby, reinforcing their argument that public locations should be named collectively. Agreeing with Jelin (2003, p. 122) that a democratic order should imply “the recognition of plurality and conflict more than the hope for reconciliations, silences, or erasures by fiat,” I argue that, by occupying the public

Image 22: Installation of a bust representing the victims of the dictatorship during the renaming of the 23rd Military Headquarters Square to Square of the Political Disappeared (2011). Retrieved from: http://www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br/rebatismo-praca-preso-politico-desaparecido/

Image 23: Commemorative plaque installed during the renaming of the 23rd Military Headquarters Square to Square of the Political Disappeared (2011). Retrieved from: http://www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br/rebatismo-praca-preso-politico-desaparecido/

space to express different political views, the interventions also intervened in the power hierarchy that determines the authority to name public places. In short, such interventions indicated that citizens should have an active role in the production of a more democratic city. That argument dovetails with David Harvey's (2013) understandings about the claims for "the right to the city"—that is, the claims to "reinvent the city more after their hearts' desire" (2013, p. 25).

Conclusion

The political battles around collective memory emerge in accordance with the ideological clashes in a given time and place. Though the conflicts between multiple narratives of collective memory remain constant, and since physical spaces are also mnemonically charged, disputes over memory can take material places as a battleground. This reveals that memory and place, as discussed in this chapter, are not absolute self-contained concepts, for they depend on the social framework of a given moment. Furthermore, these two systems are connected by the intersubjectivity that conveys their functions and meanings.

If cities should be seen and read as they narrate the past in their buildings (Donohoe 2014; Ricoeur 2007; de Certeau, 2002), then they should be understood as the sum of additions and erasures (Azaryahu, 2014), as palimpsests containing different writings with which different social actors can engage. Their layers of memory represent the imprecise persistence of ghosts within the materiality of a present that aims to forge the future. As explained by Jelin (2003) within the city's narration of past events, the State holds a *strategic* priority as it is responsible for establishing commemorative dates, naming streets, and constructing monuments and memorials. Therefore, political conflicts over public locations reflect ongoing ideological struggles over understandings of the past and projects for the future.

In this sense, drawing on de Certeau's (2002) conceptual distinction between strategy and tactic, the examples of urban intervention analysed in this chapter can be understood as *tactical* procedures developed by non-State actors aiming to intervene in official strategies for legitimizing narratives such as mapping and place naming. Understanding such practices within a performance framework as suggested by Rose-Redwood (2014), I argue that they constitute subversive counter-performances since they confront State utterances that aim to legitimate sovereign authority.

At the same time, the actions of subversive counter-performance explored in this chapter appropriated official strategies not to delegitimize the State and its initiatives. This is because, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, contemporary memory activists in Brazil understood the State's importance to their goals towards memory, truth, and justice, besides establishing dialogues with government institutions and sometimes even becoming public agents themselves. Activists aimed to occupy the State (see Chapter 5) and expand State-led initiatives towards a collective reckoning with the dictatorial past. For this reason, these actions developed tactics that allowed dialogues with embedded mnemonic material in urban settings through participatorily embodied experiences. In this sense they highlighted the essential presence of disagreement and conflict within their projects for democracy.

David Harvey's ideas in *Rebel Cities* (2013) reinforce these actions' approach to the physical environment of the city as a reflection of social practices, as a space sensitive to the power of relationships and, therefore, as a place for conflict. For example: "Syntagma Square in Athens, Tahrir Square in Cairo, and the Plaza Catalunya in Barcelona were public spaces that became urban commons as people assembled there to express their political views and make demands" (Harvey, 2013, p. 73). In this sense, public spaces can become urban commons by the collective effort to create venues for political participation.

The actions of memory activism discussed in this chapter intervened over conveyed official narratives about the Brazilian dictatorial period by questioning the strategies behind the construction of such narratives and appropriating them as political practices to produce changes in the present. In this sense they consisted of a tactical use of processes normally used to legitimize sovereign authority by marginalized voices that generated counter-narratives to compete in the construction of shared conventions. Beyond that, the discussed actions also implied a reframing of the distribution of roles—who is authorized to have an active voice on both the production of space and the production of collective memory—and suggested a popular and participatory approach to the construction of the city and the texts inscribed on urban spaces.

CHAPTER 7: *ESCULACHOS* AS SOCIAL PERFORMANCE

In 2002, Professor Susana Kaiser (2002) published the article "Escraches: demonstrations, communication and political memory in post-dictatorial Argentina." Drawing on extensive empirical data the author analysed this "new form of public protest developed in Argentina during the 1990s and into the 21st century by children of people 'disappeared' during the dictatorship" (Kaiser, 2002, p. 499). Ten years later, analogous demonstrations started to happen in Brazil under the name *escrachos*, or *esculachos*. Chapter 7 explores the Brazilian version of the Argentinean *escrache.* Drawing on data collected in collaboration with Brazilian memory activists it observes the first *esculacho* performed by the *Frente de Esculacho Popular* (FEP, Popular *Esculacho* Front). Analysing the *esculacho* as social performance I observe how its dramaturgical elements sought to connect with, but also suggest forms for overcoming, dictatorial legacies in Brazil.

The word *escrache* originated within the popular dialect spoken around the La Plata River, mainly in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, and it refers to the action of exposing someone to social shame. In this sense, *escrachar* means to uncover, to point out, to put someone or something in evidence. This was the main intention of the group HIJOS when they inaugurated this new modality of direct action in the 1990s in Argentina. The 1990s in Argentina was marked by a "cultural scenario of impunity" (Kaiser, 2002) that resulted from the governmental initiatives represented first by the Full Stop Law (1986) and the Due Obedience Law (1987) signed by President Raul Alfonsin, followed by President Carlos Menem's pardon of the military leaders sentenced in the 1985 Trial of the Juntas. The group HIJOS (*Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*, Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence) was created in 1996 in a context where impunity was normalized, and the affected society obliged to co-exist with unpunished perpetrators. To denounce this situation, sons and daughters of the 30,000 people who disappeared during the last Argentinean dictatorship (1976–1983), following the steps of the prominent and experienced human rights organization *Madres y Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (Mothers and Grandmothers of May Plaza), intensified and rejuvenated the struggle for memory, truth, and justice. As stated in their slogan, "if there is no justice there will be *escrache"*; with that conviction the group started to elaborate social responses to Argentina's post-dictatorial deficits in formal justice.

In Chile, by the end of the 1990s, although former dictator Augusto Pinochet was arrested in the UK, the process for holding other perpetrators accountable for the 3,000 deaths and 40,000 victims of torture was insufficient. Seeking to take justice in their own hands, and inspired by the *escraches* in Argentina, university students of Santiago, in Chile—many of whom were also children of desaparecidos—created *La Comisión Funa* (The Funa Commission) and began to stage demonstrations against accused perpetrators. The first demonstration took place on 1 October 1999, in front of the private hospital *La Clinica Idisa,* against cardiologist Alejandro Forero who was alleged to have participated in State kidnappings and assassinations during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990). Instead of *escraches* the Chilean version was named *funas*—taken from the *Mapuche* language *Mapudungun*, where it means "putrefied." Their slogan, therefore, adapted from the Argentinean HIJOS, was: "if there is no justice there will be *funas*."

Both *HIJOS* and *La Comisión Funa* were born within a post-dictatorial context marked by scandalous evidence of Argentina and Chile's legal inability to judge former perpetrators. The groups also used similar methods to perform the action: first, they identified the houses or workplaces of former agents who directly or indirectly participated in military repression

against civilians and, second, relying on artistic means (music, dance, and visual signs printed in banners or painted on the walls), they tried to involve local communities in their social condemnation. From the impossibility of official justice, the *escraches* and *funas* emerged in order to exceed the traditional politics of party organizations and to produce temporary experiences of popular justice through public shaming. In a certain way, the *escraches* and *funas* created a different form of thinking and practising justice.

In Brazil, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, by the end of 2011 Law 12.528 determined the creation of the first National Truth Commission (NTC), prompting discussions about the extent of its legal power to judge the crimes committed by State agents during the dictatorship. Amid criticisms from military sectors and governmental efforts to guarantee that the NTC wasn't going to be a "witch-hunt," young people came forth to defend the importance of legal accounts of past human rights violations. Backed by previous generations, and inspired by the *escraches* and *funas*, groups such as *Frente de Esculacho Popular* (FEP, Popular Esculacho Front) and *Levante Popular da Juventude* (LPJ, Popular Youth Rising) developed a Brazilian version of this tactic which they called *esculacho* (or, *escracho)*, a term related to Brazilian slang that can be translated as reprehension, but that is also commonly used to describe police abuse during "checks." Adopting the slogan "if there is no justice, there will be popular *esculacho*," these collectives demanded punishment for those who directly collaborated with State crimes, representing an attempt to overcome the culture of impunity that marked the Brazilian transition to democracy.

In this "migrating" process, the Argentinean strategies of *escrache* were adapted by young activists in accordance with the Brazilian context—and their expectations for transforming it. This adaptation affected not only the tactic's *raison d'etre* and objectives but also its music, slogans, signs, participants' gestures, and even its relation to public space, all of which reflected the country's geographic and generational distinctiveness. I believe this can be best noticed from a cultural point of view, where the resources and strategies involved in the staging of the *esculachos* can be analysed as socially inscribed codes interacting with larger plots within the politics of dictatorial memory.

In order to understand the dynamics between these codes and plots, Chapter 7 relies on Jeffrey Alexander's (2004; 2006) theories on cultural trauma and social performance. Alexander (2004) focuses on the way members of affected groups broadcast their symbolic representations of past, present and future. These representations can be seen as *claims* "about the shape of social reality, its causes, and the responsibilities for action such causes imply" (2004, p. 11). The collective agents involved in broadcasting these representations are the *carrier groups*. In the end, the trauma process can be likened to a social performance, since it has a speaker (the carrier group), an audience (the public), and a situation (the historical, cultural, and institutional environment within which the speech act occurs) (Alexander, 2004).

According to Alexander's conceptual framework "social actors, embedded in collective representations and working through symbolic and material means, implicitly orient towards others as if they were actors on a stage seeking identification with their experiences and understandings from their audiences" (Alexander, 2006, p. 2). In this sense, every social performance is affected by: 1) the systems of collective representation—shared narratives and specific scripts that are called during the performance; 2) the means of symbolic production available; 3) the choices of the *mise-en-scène*; 4) the distribution of power in a society; 5) Observers/audience; and 6) the actors. Such elements of performance assist this chapter's aim to elaborate a cultural analysis of the key factors that shaped this tactic of memory activism in 2012 Brazil.

I thus draw on the Brazilian political circumstances of 2012 presented in Chapter 3 and in the introduction to Part 2 that were marked by the country's first National Truth Commission and by heated discussions between public agents, the military and social movements. Then I

describe the *esculacho* organized by the *Frente de Esculacho Popular* against forensic doctor Harry Shibata (accused of falsifying documents in order to conceal torture and hide bodies) on April 7 2012. I rely on interviews with memory activists and written documents produced by them besides photographic and audio-visual registers of the action. The material and symbolic resources mobilized by them is highlighted and examined with the support of Alexander's (2004; 2006) theory of cultural trauma and social performance. By taking the *esculachos* as speech acts transmitting a representation of Brazilian post-dictatorial trauma, I analyse the ethical and political imperatives with which they entered into dialogue. This allows for a better comprehension of how the dramaturgical elements contribute to trespassing regimes of discourse that structure the discussions on transitional justice and political action. I argue that such transgressions communicated new forms of moral responsibility and of social participation.

7.1 The origins of Brazilian *esculachos*

> On a Monday night, after a long day of work, I turned on the TV only to realize that Cabo Anselmo was being interviewed on a live talk show. All my life I have heard about him and how he betrayed his partner while she was pregnant with his baby, helping the military to find and kill both in the famous episode of the Massacre of Chácara São Bento. Suddenly, that guy was inside my house, talking on the TV. […] I grabbed some eggs in the fridge and called a friend […]. We drove to the TV headquarters, I hid the eggs in my coat, approached the security staff and asked if the night's guest was still there. He said "yes, are you his daughter?," I said "no, he killed the only child he could have had when he betrayed his partner." Suddenly I saw a car leaving the building with him inside. I started throwing eggs on the car, and when someone opened the window to talk, I started cursing and screaming "You should be in prison!" The security staff came in my direction but I jumped into my friend's car and we drove away. After that I sent an email to the people I knew were as touched by the past dictatorship as I was and suggested for us to do what in Argentina they call *escraches* and in Chile *funas*. (Paula, P5, founding member of *Frente de Esculacho Popular*)

The *Frente de Esculacho Popular* (FEP) was created in 2011 in São Paulo after one of its members witnessed a live TV interview with the most famous double agent of the Brazilian dictatorship. Emotions of revolt provoked by his presence as a guest on a TV talk show activated their moral outrage and lead them to drive to the network's set to protest. After the episode, they rationalized their anger and decided to create a collective organizing "what in Argentina they call *escrache* and in Chile *funas*." The process described by Paula (P5) illustrates the relationships between "cognition, emotion and morality" in political actions. As analysed by James Jasper (2016; 2018), anger (and fear) consists of a reflex emotion responding to immediate unexpected circumstances, but although it tends to subside quickly it can serve as a starting point to more cognitive and elaborated responses.

Adapting the Spanish slogan to Portuguese, FEP declared "if there is no justice there will be popular *esculacho*," and on April 7, 2012, the group published its manifesto and announced its first action: "On this Saturday, April 7, on the Forensic Doctor's Day, we combat oblivion and pay our respects with a floral wreath to our comrades who fell" (FEP, 2012). Drawing on information collected from official reports such as *Brasil: Nunca mais* (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985) and the *Dossiê de mortos e desaparecidos políticos* (CEMPD, 2007) (analysed in Chapter 3), the manifesto highlighted the number of people affected by the dictatorship, and described the proceedings through which the doctors falsified coronial reports, taught policemen how to kill without leaving marks, and helped hide bodies in order to hamper family searches. The manifesto ended by describing the steps to connect past and present struggles and, as their "deceased comrades dreamed," to end the cycle of

inequality and oppression of the poor. After naming the doctors accused in these reports, the manifesto explains why none of them were ever condemned despite several legal attempts at doing so.

As the manifesto intimates, the connection between "paying respect" to those who died and "fighting against" oblivion seems to be present in different actions of memory activism in Brazil. This dual goal needs to be highlighted as it points to the importance of celebrating and remembering the memory of the dead and disappeared. The importance given to the dead and disappeared of the past supports the group's next argument, namely that we should care about the dead and disappeared of the present too. As the manifesto goes: "it is as if the screams of those dead and disappeared came back to be heard. Torture is an institutional practice of the State nowadays." Following the criticisms of the impunity supported by the Amnesty Law (1979) the manifesto acknowledged the importance of the National Truth Commission. According to the text: "The [National] Truth Commission, just like juridical processes, is a necessary combatant in the realm of institutional struggle to expose, investigate and punish those […] who collaborated with the regime." This support of institutional struggle is followed by a celebration of popular organization and participative struggle: "But we believe that only with the self-organization of situations and spaces of popular power and militant memory we will be able to sew the fractures of social memory" (FEP, 2012).

This part of the text celebrating the power of the streets is followed by statements about the importance of recalling the political horizons of those who resisted the dictatorship. According to the text this will only happen if they interrogate not only the memory of their deaths but also the meaning of their struggle. In this sense, the group calls for a recovery of the history that has been "kidnapped and disappeared along with the bodies of our comrades." The political influence of the ideals of those who stood against the military regime is clear and the value given to it by the group unquestionable. This example of "combative youth" is opposed in the text to the "caricature of the alienated and consumerist youth who is thrown upon us by the industrial culture." As the text goes:

> We are militants of life. We believe that this is how we can interrogate and dispute the meaning of the youth we want. A youth's combative identity that represented that generation, a living memory within the militancy. This hidden identity of a generation that sought, beyond a bourgeoise democracy, an anti-capitalist revolutionary perspective.

The manifesto ends by describing the steps to connect past and present struggles and, as their deceased comrades dreamed, to end the cycle of inequality and oppression of the poor. After naming more recent criminal acts conducted by the Brazilian police, and the recent document signed by the military confronting the government about the NTC, the manifesto finishes by saying: "We demand that Harry Shibata be subpoenaed to testify at the NTC, judged and punished by his crimes! (…) We won't forget, won't forgive, won't reconcile. If there is no justice there will be a popular *esculacho*!"

As explained by the group's founding-member, Paula (P5), FEP's recruiting process was cautious and selective, limited to a small group of reliable people of a similar age (20 to 30 years old), middle to upper class, and sharing ideological positionings. Paula herself comes from a politically engaged family that suffered during the military regime—her grandfather Hermínio Sacchetta, for example, was a journalist arrested in 1969. She reached out to her friends who also had ties to the dictatorship, and therefore most FEP members belonged to the third generation of people affected by the military regime. Nevertheless, they enjoyed ties to previous generations through their own family members or friends of the family.

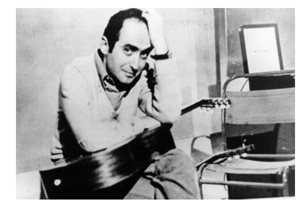
As shared during our interviews, the presence of the first generation was essential to the collective's activities. The carrier group comprising FEP's actions had strong inter-

generational ties that were highlighted during our interviews. When asked about the risks involved in protesting past criminals "protected" by the Brazilian silence and impunity, Paula (P5) described the collective's approach to security. According to her, besides recruiting new members through a very restrictive process, they opted to only discuss the actions in person, during the meetings, and to have their meetings in safe places. Interestingly, Paula then mentioned that FEP received the support of an older generation of activists of the *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais-São Paulo* (GTNM-SP):

> I was always paranoid about security. We held our meetings in the GTNM's headquarters. We asked the 'old fellas' that we knew, so we had a key and used their space. We had a fear of speaking by SMS or email. (…) But there was this fear of having meetings outside that space. So, to invite someone new was like 'oh I have a reliable friend who is a lawyer, and we need a lawyer with us in case something happens.' (Paula, P5)

In addition to participating in the *esculachos*, members of traditional human rights NGO GTNM/SP, for example, lent the keys to their headquarters so FEP members could safely hold their meetings. The support of more experienced activists, victims' relatives, and well-established NGOs provided archive material and first-person accounts on dictatorial violence and on the struggle for memory, truth, and justice that helped FEP's elaboration and legitimization of their actions.

Vladimir Herzog:
morto sob tortura



Harry Shibata
declarou-o suicida
sem ter visto o corpo

Image 24 (left): Letter left in the neighbours' mailboxes and pasted around the neighbour before and during the esculacho: "Alert neighbour! In your neighbourhood lives Harry Shibata, the forensic coroner of the military dictatorship. He signed numerous necroscopic reports falsely certifying deaths incompatible with the real reasons behind the political militants' deaths, ignoring torture injuries."

Image 25 (centre): Letter left in the neighbours' mailboxes and pasted around the neighbourhood before and during the *esculacho*: "Alert neighbour! At Zapara St., 81, lives Harry Shibata, coroner of the dictatorial repression. You're wrong if you think he might have remorse about the past. Shibata himself said he would do it again: 'I think all Police who get bandits to get a confession or something like that, they club him, hang him (…) I think this is one of the means you have to get information.' (Interview in the [magazine] *Caros Amigos*, 2007)."

Image 26 (right): Letter left in the neighbours' mailboxes and pasted around the neighbourhood before and during the *esculacho*: "Vladimir Herzog: Harry Shibata declared him a suicide victim without seeing the body."

7.2 *Esculachos* as social performances

With regards to social performance, in order to communicate their narratives actors must mobilize symbolic and material resources in a way that can be decoded by their audience. To understand how these resources were put into practice in actions such as the *esculachos* the actors of the performance will also coincide with what Alexander calls the *carriers* of cultural trauma. Understanding cultural trauma as a social construction, Alexander defines *carrier groups* as "the collective agents of the trauma process" (2004, p. 11). In Alexander's connection of trauma process to a speech act, the *speaker* (actors or carrier groups) makes use of a particular historical, cultural, and institutional *situation* (background representations, scripts, means of symbolic production and political opportunities regarding distribution of power) to communicate the trauma.

To dramatize their claims FEP's *esculachos* made use of different means of symbolic production. For example, after choosing the target from a list of people already formally denounced, some members of the group went to Shibata's neighbourhood the night before to proceed with the "pre-*esculacho*," a preparation of the stage for the next day's performance. They spent the night pasting up signs and tagging the walls and streets with information about and accusations against Shibata. On the next day, alongside other groups and participants they headed to the target's house to promote their public act of shaming.

During the action protesters also held up banners, flags, and signs that varied in size, graphic style, and technical refinement according to the group or participant behind their production (Images 24, 25, and 26). While large flags exhibited concise messages in big letters such as "Shibata, Coroner of the dictatorship," smaller signs displayed parts of official reports' descriptions of Shibata's crimes. In a contrasting way, the colourful banners produced by collective *Cordão da Mentira* (CM, Lie Parade) exhibited hand-painted depictions of victims' faces. Inspired by carnivalesque traditions, these banners added a joyful aesthetics to the protest (Image 27).

Image 27: Parade during the *esculacho* promoted by the FEP, on April 7, 2012, against Harry Shibata. As could be seen in videos, other movements' members such as Cordão da Mentira and the LPJ also participated in the action. Still retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzhOOQc8c3Y.

The mournful character of the *esculacho* was, however, still very present in other elements of the protest. At some point of the action, for example, a floral wreath was brought to the target's door (Image 28). Produced specifically for the event, this wreath was surrounded by pictures of dictatorial victims—especially those whose death or disappearances were connected to Shibata's actions. Most pictures of victims used in the wreath and other elements of the protest were collected from reports such as *Brasil: Nunca mais* (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985) and the CEMDP's *Dossiê* (2007). As in other forms of post-dictatorial activism, these reports functioned as the main source of historical information and visual record. Displayed in black and white signs during the event, they embodied the atrocities of dictatorships and influenced the symbolic realm of Brazil's politics of memory by framing their suffering as the result of a State violence never fully addressed—as if the "normal" (sometimes smiley) appearance of these black-and-white faces, when evoked during these actions, acquired an obscurity about what they don't show. Within the *esculachos,* the photos implied the violent abnormality that is absent in the image, impacting for what is not shown, namely, the crimes committed by the accused.

However, it is important to observe that the production and availability of such reports to younger generations was only made possible due to previous generational efforts. As already demonstrated by Brazilian historians (Gallo, 2012; De Almeida Teles, 2010) most data included in these reports had been collected mostly by relatives who compiled them in dossiers during their struggle for truth and justice. In this sense, the political battle of relatives to cope with their loss expanded the field of possibilities for the next generations' actions. Within the performance these photos represented not only the silenced atrocities but also the activist effort of previous generations.

Besides the use of graphic elements, the *esculachos* mise-en-scene utilized physical and verbal gestures to broadcast their meanings and resonate their emotions internally and externally. In this matter music had an essential role that was explored by protesters' songs and slogans. Accompanied by percussive instruments they adapted and produced new songs in accordance with Brazilian popular rhythms such as samba, carnival marches, and funk. During the actions in Argentina and Chile, the rhythm of the *murgas* was much more present, accompanying chants such as the famous: "ole ole, ole ola, just like with the Nazis it will happen to you, wherever you go we will come after you!" In this regard, the Brazilian appropriation consisted in an almost literal translation: "ole ole, ole ola, the dictatorship will have to pay, wherever you go we will come after you!" Another common chant during Brazilian *esculachos* incited participants to jump by singing, "jump, jump, jump, who is against the dictatorship (…) jump, get off the ground who is against repression!"

While the lyrics' content aimed to explicitly outline the carrier group's ideological positioning and demands regarding post-dictatorial transition, by jumping around actors sought to disturb the neighbourhood and mobilize participants. Internally, this collective gesturing functioned as a form of levelling participants around the same issue, besides fostering a sense of belonging in a cohesive way that celebrated collective identity. Externally, they interfered with the quotidian pace of the public space, as an energetic way of proclaiming presence and calling attention to their claims. The presence of younger generations with their signs, pictures, chants and jumping, subverted traditional notions of political protest and justice, and rejuvenated the Brazilian movement for memory, truth, and justice.

But, while most participants were part of a third generation (between 20 and 30 years old), the protest participants also included former prisoners and victims' relatives, and members of the first and second generations affected by the dictatorship. They joined the protest by holding banners, flags, giving their testimonies on the PA systems and via megaphones, and talking to the journalists covering the event. By doing so, they enriched the protest with their political experience and historical accounts based on their own lives.

Image 28: Floral wreath delivered to Harry Shibata during the FEP's esculacho in April 7, 2012. The pictures are from victims whose death certificates were forged by Shibata. Image shared by Paula (P5).

The presence of veterans and their personal accounts during the *esculacho* attested to the intergenerational exchanges essential to this action. An example of the support of previous generations can be noticed during the speech of José Luiz Del Roio, an Italian-Brazilian politician and former member of the anti-dictatorial resistance, responsible for transferring

important historical documents to Italy during the dictatorship. These documents would later become the *Archivio Storico del Movimento Operario Brasiliano* (Historical Archive of the Brazilian Labour Movement):

> Our comrades who died [during the dictatorship] were fighting for hope. I think you represent a lot of this as you connect with that hope in what you're doing. Unfortunately, we weren't many, neither are you. But the movement opposing the dictatorship grew and reached thousands around the country until the regime fell. This movement will grow and will transform in thousands, and not only in São Paulo, but in the whole country! (Del Roio, 2012).

In a similar manner, US performance theorist Diana Taylor (2002) observed the intergenerational links within the Argentinean post-dictatorial activism that connects HIJOS's actions with those of the *Madres* and *Abuelas*. Taylor analyses the links between forms of activism—provisionally called the "DNA of performance" (Taylor, 2002, p. 154)—according to each group's performance strategies. Regarding the *escraches* Taylor conceives the following definition:

> (…) guerrilla performances practiced by Argentina's children of the disappeared (…). Instead of the circular, ritualistic movement around the square that we have come to identify with the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, H.I.J.O.S. organizes carnivalesque protests that lead participants directly to a perpetrator's home or office, or to a clandestine centre. (Taylor, 2002, p. 151)

According to Taylor, although HIJOS acknowledged their debts to the Mothers of May Plaza, their performances reflected political and generation changes. For example, the group could afford to be more confrontational since "they entered the public arena more than a decade after the fall of the military" (Taylor, 2002), or because "They never needed to prove, as the Madres once did, that their loved ones were missing" (Taylor, 2002, p. 164). But, as she demonstrates by observing the performative use of photographs of disappeared, some representational strategies can be taken on by others, as long as they "catch on."

The *esculachos* caught on in Brazil nurtured by activists' perceptions of opportunities in an environment permeated by memory conflicts. As described earlier, some elements were adapted to the Brazilian context (e.g., the music, chants and slogans) while others were created for the Brazilian version (e.g., the floral wreath). Given that going into specific geographical differences would require further studies it suffices to say that the *esculachos* adapted to the country's *situation*, or, "the historical, cultural, and institutional environment within which the speech act occurs" (Alexander, 2004, p. 12). The components involved in the performance of the Brazilian *esculachos* suggest that they were adapted to the Brazilian post-dictatorial trauma and the forms developed for reckoning with it. This means that our authoritarian legacies, our silences, our dead and "disappeared," but also, the families and relatives' struggle, the human rights activists and political advocates of the ideals of those who stood against the dictatorship, are all part of the situation that influenced the *esculachos*. Despite their differences both Brazilian and Argentinean versions of such actions held a transgressive force that tended to disconcert the arrangements of their post-dictatorial democracy.

Social movements studies (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; McAdam, 1996) have already demonstrated that repertoires of political action can be adapted and innovated across national boundaries and historical periods. I believe the analysis of Brazilian *esculachos* might contribute to a geographic expansion of Taylor's (2002) concerns. In a way, their emergence in connection to previous Argentinean and Chilean experiences attests to the influence of "transnational repertoires of organization, strategy, and collective action" (Tarrow in McAdam 1996, p. 53). As demonstrated, the Argentinean *escraches* developed in the late 1990s "caught

on" within the Brazilian struggle for truth, memory, and justice around ten years later in relation to the sets of repertoires and political opportunities during the country's "turn to memory."

7.3 The Transgressive logic of the *esculachos*

Drawing on Jeffrey Alexander (2004; 2012) my previous description of the "speeches, rituals, marches, meetings, (…) and storytelling of all kinds" to which the carrier group producing the *esculachos* tied their scripts aimed to provide an overview of the resources mobilized by them in order to emplace their claims within the Brazilian conflicts over memory. Such an approach allowed for further enquiries about each elements' origin and functions within the performance process. I shall now proceed to analyse the meanings communicated by the *esculachos* in relation to dominant discourses of memory in Brazil. I argue next that by demanding new forms of moral responsibility and of social participation regarding the Brazilian dictatorial past the *esculachos* performed popular transitional justice, or "transitional justice from below" (McEvoy & McGregor, 2008).

Understanding the process of cultural trauma as performative speech acts (Alexander et al., 2006), the *esculachos* trespassed against conventional concepts of "official justice." They were born as an affirmative response of younger generations to the negation of "official justice," as can be noticed in their slogan "if there is no [official] justice, there will be popular *esculacho*." By acknowledging the lack of justice, they were acting within the ideology of the judicial system. However, by staging actions of punishment outside the judicial system, they were also denying submission to this ideology.

It is precisely in this apparent contradiction between the groups' slogan and their action, between speaking within the territory of ideology and acting outside it, that lies the possibilities for the *esculachos*' speech to expand the discursive territory on justice. As a participant of the *escraches* in Argentina has stated: **"**it doesn't make sense to position ourselves with respect to the enemy: when the enemy says 'white,' we, to fight against it, say 'black.' This allows the enemy to define the terrain" (Whitener, 2009, p. 116). What these performances suggest, therefore, is that transitional justice (and more specifically its legal processes) should be the product of popular construction, and that instead of adapting their struggle to "top-down legalistic limitations" (McEvoy & McGregor, 2008, p. 8), they should carry out the practice and adapt to the consequences that were produced. In opposition to working along established processes, the *escraches* can be understood as some sort of "hypothesis-in-practice" (Whitener, 2009, p. 124).

In a discussion with Maoists about popular justice, Foucault criticized the court format as part of the ideology of the judicial system. This is why, to him "revolution can only take place via the radical elimination of the judicial apparatus, and anything which could reintroduce (…) its ideology (…)" (Foucault, 1980, p. 16). If the evolution of the court system as a State apparatus turned it into an instrument that represses the possibility of popular justice, its model must be eliminated as such, says the philosopher. His Maoist interlocutor disagrees and states that, during the proletariat dictatorship, the contradictions within the masses must be moderated by their representative—in the case of China, by the Red Army.

I believe the *esculacho* and its counterparts in Argentina and Chile have something to offer to this discussion. They were born as an affirmative response to the negation of "official" justice, as can be noticed in their slogan "if there is no justice, there will be *escrache*." In this sense, they are acting within the ideology of the judicial system—which they criticize but acknowledge at the same time. However, by staging actions of punishment outside the judicial system, they are denying submission to this ideology.

In this "state of unknowing" the *esculachos* move from the deficient logic of justice and punishment, and traditional forms of political protest, to new ideas of popular and

participatory judicial processes. To do so, the *esculachos* happened in the daylight when participants could talk to residents and workers in the targeted neighbourhood, and discuss the crimes committed by the accused. By abruptly and loudly irrupting in the public space the *esculachos* disturbed the peace of residential neighbourhoods and demanded immediate attention to their signs, gestures, and chants. In this sense, the action's publicness not only established an issue for discussion; it also asked for an ethical self-positioning of participants, opponents and bystanders in relation to the existence of injustice, and the overall disputes around dictatorial memory. Thus, the limitations of Brazilian transitional justice were brought to the arena of everyday life, reminding passive spectators of their political and ethical implications in the Brazilian culture of human rights violations.

The exposure of a single unpunished criminal to society was significant: it individualized broad accusations against the military as an institution and collectivized and popularized the judging procedures. In this sense, FEP's *esculachos* aimed less for the punishment of one criminal than for the public evidencing of impunity. While FEP members and collaborators demanded justice from the NTC against former perpetrators they also produced new forms of justice. In a carnivalesque inversion, in the Bakhtinian sense, participants opposed an official culture of impunity with unofficial forms of popular justice:

> What justice do we want? Well, in a country with the third biggest incarcerated population in the world, and that arrests black, poor, peripheral people, I do want to see Harry Shibata arrested. But, on the other hand, I wouldn't even like to see custody exist. So, we had this discussion that what we were doing was about disputing the narrative. […] A neighbour of Shibata—I get goose bumps only by recalling this—she got out of her house in our direction and said 'thank you! I always knew that I lived next to this assassin, and I always wanted to spit in his face but I was never able to do anything. You are cleaning my soul today.' (Paula, P5)

FEP's *esculachos* exercized in the present the ability to imagine and produce the future through social participation. This is particularly relevant in Latin American societies fragmented by right-wing dictatorships in the mid-20th century, for these dictatorships were meant to pave the way for neoliberalism while their repressive apparatus contributed to further the countries' fragmentation. In this sense, *esculachos* produced an opportunity for social bonding, by investing in the popular capacity to produce truths and judge for themselves about what happened to their country.

Free from legal dogmas and ignoring the divisions between actors and spectators, the *esculacho* invoked previous artistic attempts to encourage participation through aesthetic experience, such as those exemplified in Bishop (2006). As with Bakhtin's accounts of carnivalesque rituals in the Middle Ages, the *esculacho* is also "situated within the limits of art and life. In fact, it is life itself presented with representational characteristic elements" (Bakhtin, 1987, p. 6). The *esculacho* echoes the 1921 Dada mock trial of author Maurice Barrès, in which the audience was invited to sit on the jury and, in the 1970s, Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed that called for the liberation of the spectator who "no longer delegates power to the characters either to think or to act in his place" (Boal, 2008, p. 135). The *esculacho* thus constructed a situation that disrupted "the distribution of social parts" (Ranciére, 2010, p. 142) regarding processes of reckoning with past human rights violations. If, according to Boal (2008) theatre is a rehearsal for revolution, the *esculacho* rehearsed the role of a popular and participative construction of transitional justice.

Consequently, the *esculachos*' insubordination to the legal system divided opinions even among human rights advocates. Common debates revolved around the right to privacy and the right to protest. Some even argued that these methods inherited authoritarian practices for they made individuals feel watched and unsafe in their own neighbourhoods. The

difference, according to Taylor (2002), is "that their tactics serve to identify individuals responsible for gross crimes against humanity. And the performative interruption, no matter how unwelcome, does not engage in violence or threaten the criminal's life" (Taylor, 2002, p. 163). In addition to that, the *esculachos* only target those who have already been accused of human rights violations in official reports and legal actions. Therefore, effective discussions around their legality should begin by observing the motto that guides these actions: "if there is no justice, there will be popular *esculacho*."

Finally, as demonstrated by my and other researchers' interviews with memory activists (see Brito, 2017), the *esculachos* are more than a means towards justice. In fact, most of them explicitly acknowledged that they are "demanding the impossible" (Whitener, 2009). If the *esculachos* create a new revolutionary subjectivity, they do so by giving up waiting for revolution itself and investing instead in temporary guerrilla operations whose language dwells in the future. Perhaps, this new revolutionary subjectivity can only be realized *in* struggle.

It is possible to affirm that on an individual level, the *esculacho* has been regarded as a means for self-transformation through political participation, which, according to proponents, is different from the feeling of taking part in a traditional party rally. On a broader level, the *esculacho* is also praised for the ability to bring the past to the present, since "the repressors of yesterday are the same of today (…). It's not finished, you or I could meet this guy on the street" (Whitener, 2009 p. 83). From a tactical perspective, the *esculacho* has the ability to create small disturbances that are part of something larger involving multiple struggles, as stated by a participant of *HIJOS*: "The *escrache* follows a logic that is not that of a 'new politics' nor of a revolutionary politics that wants to seize power (…). In the *escrache,* there is an affirmation, a positivity (…)" (Whitener, 2009, p. 120).

Conclusion

As explained earlier, the *escraches / funas / esculachos* are post-dictatorial tactics of memory activism developed by second and third generations within the movement for memory, truth, and justice in Latin America. By combining traditional forms of action (picketing and marches) with new ones (street art and art performances) they produced innovations within Brazil's post-dictatorial movement's repertoire, adding a rather festive tone to the ritualistic mourning of their predecessors. Its success first in Argentina and Chile during the 1990s led to it being imported and adapted in Brazil during the favourable political circumstances of 2012. The Brazilian *esculachos*, therefore, emerged from an intergenerational and international connection within Latin American repertoires of post-dictatorial activism, attentive to the political opportunities, and tuned to the cultural system and aesthetic tendencies of their time and place.

Drawing on Jeffrey Alexander's (2004; 2006) theoretical horizon this chapter examined the *esculachos* under a juxtaposed understanding of cultural trauma and social performances. This perspective considered that the transmission of traumatic memory from victim to witness involves the shared and participatory act of telling and listening associated with live performance. Through symbolic operations these practices allowed the audience to take part in the pain of others and assimilate their representations of its causes. By analysing the dramaturgical elements involved in the *esculacho*'s performance it is possible to demonstrate their role, within the Brazilian conflicts of memory, in communicating claims "about the shape of social reality, its causes, and the responsibilities for action such causes imply" (Alexander, 2004, p. 11).

First, the Brazilian *esculachos* emerged in connection to the discussions around the NTC, within the government of President Dilma Rousseff, herself a former prisoner of the military regime, and were invested with discourses favouring the government's initiative (but

expanding its limitations). For this reason, FEP's *esculacho* aimed to pressure the government to install the NTC and to demand that those who directly collaborated with State crimes "be summoned to testify by the NTC, and also be judged and punished" (FEP, 2012). *Esculachos* came onto the public stage in a critical moment, confronting the military sector and defending Dilma's government in this matter but, within the larger plot of Brazilian politics of memory, they were also denouncing the impunity of State agents who committed gross human rights violations.

Second, by exploring how activists inscribed their values while assigning meaning to the collective experience I observed the symbolic forms articulated during the FEP's *esculacho* to resonate internally and externally (of the collective). In this respect I highlighted how they combined elements from the DNA of Argentina and Chile's performances (Taylor, 2002) and adapted them to the country's aesthetic trends. For example, while the Argentinean *escraches* were animated by the theatrical universe of the *murgas* (including, obviously, its music and dancing style), FEP's *esculachos* were commonly accompanied by *sambas* and carnival marches. An observation of the graphic material (signs, flags, banners and the wreath of flowers) also assisted in understanding their use of "official" reports published by the Brazilian Federal Government and "non-official" publications such as the book *Brasil: Nunca mais* (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985). In addition, I analysed the role of the wreath of flowers with victims' photographs in performing a funeral to the victims—a ritual denied to many relatives of the *desaparecidos*. I also observed the gestures (jumping and chanting) involved in the action as part of their tactics that aimed to disturb the neighbourhood and mobilize protesters. Externally, the *esculachos* interfered with the common pace of the public space and called attention to their action, as a vehement way of proclaiming presence. Internally, these collective practices also functioned as a form of levelling participants together and fostering a sense of belonging in a cohesive way of celebrating collective identity. In their attempt to produce meaning to participants, antagonists, and observers, *esculachos* can also be understood as aesthetic-political efforts to "fashion meaningful accounts of themselves and the issues at hand in order to motivate and legitimate their efforts" (McAdam, 1996, p. 339).

Third, by focusing on the *esculacho* as a social performance, I analysed the transgressive potential of its discourse within the limitations of Brazilian transitional justice. Although primarily a direct action, I demonstrated that the *esculacho* can be understood as a performative speech act and argued that it trespassed against common discourses of transitional justice in favour of a perspective "from below" (McEvoy & McGregor, 2008). The transgressive performance of the *esculachos,* therefore, opened up space for rethinking the judicial limits of transitional justice precisely by infringing them.

In this Chapter I have aimed for an analysis of the Brazilian *esculachos* as social performances in relation to the country's cultural trauma. However, as demonstrated earlier, such tactics originated in Argentina before "migrating" to other countries in the Southern Cone. Social movements' studies (Strang & Meyer, 1993; McAdam & Rucht, 1993; Soule, 2004) have already demonstrated that tactics of political action, or, "repertoires," can be adapted and innovated across national boundaries and historical periods. I believe that a look into the structural and cultural bases of this tactical diffusion could shed light on the Latin American webs of dictatorial traumas and networks of resistance and recovery.

For now, it is possible to affirm that by invoking the past, the language of the Brazilian *esculachos* enacted a temporary disturbance in the present, while inspiring reverberation in the future. They can be related to what Alberto Melucci (1996) called the "disenchanted prophets" that signal changes in the logic and process that govern our complex societies. Through symbolic operations these practices enabled a temporary subversion of the power relationships legitimizing authorities—such as the legal system that has secured impunity for State agents of the dictatorship. Furthermore, the way the *esculachos* performed the drama of impunity

announced that not only are the repressors of yesterday the same today, but so too are the repressive structures, and the bystanders. By forcing the public into a moral crossroad and demanding a political positioning regarding such circumstances the *esculachos* suggested that transitional justice from below requires a participative process of what Paulo Freire (1981) conceives as *conscientização:* the construction of a critical conscience regarding historical processes.

CHAPTER 8: THE ROLE OF AESTHETIC AGENCY

> *I try to be careful when I talk about it [our influences] because even the very idea of 'art collective' has already been thought by previous generations, it's only other incarnations, other modes, other political contexts too. […] In Brazil we have the classics of visual arts Cildo Meireles, Artur Barrio, Paulo Bruscky with the postal art, Helio Oiticica with the parangolés and the relational art, the experiences of Lygia Clark and Lygia Pape too. And there are several artists who were also political victims of persecution […] Marighella himself was a poet. (…) So, we feel a little like there is a historical debt with the people that struggled so we could be in this situation. Of course, today we are in a kind of an exception period, but we still have a little bit of democracy,* (Alexandre, P1)

This chapter aims to analyse the cultural dimension of memory transmission in the context of Brazilian contemporary memory activism. Considering the nexus between collective memory and political activism (Rigney, 2020; Gutman & Wustenberg, 2021), this research is concerned with what has been called "memory activism," or how actors struggle to produce or change interpretations about the past. However, Chapter 8 will focus on "memory in activism," more specifically on how memory activism draws on symbolic resources connected to past forms of artistic resistance against the dictatorship to broadcast their claims in the post-dictatorship period.

As seen in Chapter 2, during the Brazilian dictatorship, especially during the *leaden years* (1968–1974), many students, workers and politicians engaged in urban and rural guerrilla groups aiming to create webs of popular resistance against the dictatorial State apparatus. One of the most famous guerrilla fighters was former politician, writer, and poet Carlos Marighella. In 1969, months before being killed by the military regime, he wrote his *Minimanual do guerrilheiro urbano* (Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla) where he states that the "primary task of the urban guerrilla is to distract, to wear down, to demoralize the military regime" (Marighella, 2003, p. 4). Therefore, the guerrillas' systematic and unconventional attacks aimed "to help in the creation of a totally new and revolutionary social and political structure." In connection with such discourses artists and cultural critics also developed unconventional and creative tactics to denounce torture and confront censorship during the dictatorial regime. Art critic Frederico Morais explored this in 1970 through the concept of "guerrilla art" (see Section 2.2):

The theoretical framework used in this chapter draws primarily on contemporary authors whose works connect with both memory studies and social movement studies such as Ann Rigney (2018; 2020; 2021), and Assmann and Assmann (2010). These works will be connected to the theory of cultural trauma according to which carrier groups make use "of the particularities of the historical situation, the symbolic resources at hand, and the opportunities provided by institutional structures" to broadcast their representations about the dictatorial past (Alexander, 2012, p. 16). This framework constantly reports back to the approaches to memory conflicts developed by sociologist Elizabeth Jelin (2003). This supports my approach to memory "as a signifying practice and as a cornerstone of group identity" (Eyerman, 2004, p. 166) through the mediation of "the cultural interpretive framework (…) and the availability of symbolic tools" (Jelin, 2003, p. 40).

My perspective on the uses of memory by younger generations of activists also benefits from the concept of "postmemory" developed by Marianne Hirsch (2012). According to the author postmemorial work "strives to *reactivate* and *re-embody* more distant political and cultural memorial structures" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 33). This term will be useful in exploring affective links to the past found in the visual elements used by memory activists. In addition to

this framework, I also include insights from art history (Calirman, 2012; Shtromberg, 2016; Morais, 1970) to explore the influence of memories of past artistic and political resistance in Brazil's contemporary memory activism. The combination of a cultural approach to memory with a focused investigation on artistic expressions allows for an interpretative framework to better understand activists' mobilization of symbolic resources in the production of their tactics.

In short, Chapter 8 explores aesthetic and political traces of anti-dictatorial resistance in the actions of memory activism developed by the collectives *Aparecidos Políticos* (AP) and *Coletivo Político Quem* (CQP) between 2011 and 2012. By drawing on data collected alongside activists collaborating with my research I examine the processes involved in the appropriations of past aesthetic and political practices and how they can be combined with the contemporary tendencies and aims of memory activists. Accordingly, I analyse the visual records of their actions alongside their own accounts provided in interviews to explore the presence of past forms of resistance within the intersections between individual motivations, political circumstances, and the symbolic resources used by memory activists.

8.1 From the land to the body: street art and memory activism in AP's first actions

In Chapter 1 I explained that contemporary projects of memory activism in Brazil were also influenced by global movements known as "alter-globalization" responding to (but speaking from within) the tendencies and technologies of neoliberal capitalism (Graber, 2007; Pleyers, 2010) and by the creative tactics of activist art that prospered in this context (Lippard, 1984; Sholette, 2017). The emergence of collective projects of art activism in Brazil in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as suggested by André Mesquita (2008, p. 220), was marked by hybridisms in an oppositional culture with references coming from other countries. Although all collectives analysed in this thesis can be related to this wave of global "poetic insurgencies," these relations are better observed in this chapter as it focuses on the aesthetic agency of memory activist practices.

Because *Aparecidos Políticos* (AP) is an art-activist collective, and they define themselves as such, their tactical choices are strongly informed by aesthetic discourses. Drawing on my interviews and on the works produced by the collective—such as the *Ex-sem-voto*—it is possible to demonstrate how foreign artistic principles such as participatory art (Bishop, 2006), relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002), and situationism (Knabb, 2006), and those currents present in Brazilian artistic movements during the 1960s and 1970s, were mobilized in the present by AP's memory activism. I argue here that the mobilization of such discourses can be understood in relation to the political and cultural constraints and opportunities presented during the Brazilian turn to memory.

As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the collective *Aparecidos Políticos (AP)* was created in 2010 after witnessing the funeral of student Bergson Gurjão 37 years after being killed by the military regime. Upon realizing that the ceremony was being held next to an auditorium named after the first military President-dictator, Castelo Branco, the group proceeded to a critical examination of urban landscapes in the city of Fortaleza only to find a concerning number of streets, institutions, neighbourhoods, schools and even child educational centres named after dictators. In search of ways to explore the relationship between the body, the city and Brazilian dictatorial remnants, AP developed a project called the *Ex-sem-voto*. I demonstrate below how this project drew on past artistic tendencies and elements from local traditions with contemporary practices of creative activism to "project their trauma claim to the audience-public persuasively" (Alexander, 2012, p. 16).

As explained in Chapter 6, the project *Ex-sem-voto* started to be elaborated by the collective in the context of the Second Biennale of Dance in which some members of AP were

participating in the category Urban Interventions. This project consisted of pasting victims' photographs and summarized biographic information on specific urban spaces connected to the dictatorial period. Next to the images, AP members hung wooden objects taken from the religious imaginary of that region known as *ex-votos*, which represented body parts and alluded to the practice of torture commonly employed by the State during the military regime. As declared by those who experienced or witnessed such practices, mutilating bodies was part of the process of destroying victims' humanity from inside to obtain information (Cajá, P10, but also Salgado, 2020, and Rousseff, 2001). While photographs of victims materialized victims' humanity, the *ex-votos* alluded to the techniques used by State agents for eliminating it, in other words, to de-humanize them.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, most pictures and basic information about the victims and the circumstances of their disappearances were organized and published in reports, such as in the *Dossiê ditadura* (Dictatorship Dossier, 1995) and *Direito à memória e à verdade* (Right to Memory and Truth, 2007), by the effort of victims' relatives and with some government support. Contemporary actions of memory activism such as AP's *Ex-sem-voto* engaged with these publications to collect information and visual material for their actions. This engagement with official reports by young memory activists, which has already been observed in other actions throughout this thesis, illustrates the role of previous efforts made by relatives and their intergenerational impact on actions such as the *Ex-sem-voto.* At the same time, this engagement also illustrates how objects of memory (photographs in this case), or the "repository of memory (a set of mnemonic products)" can be re-worked by younger memory activists to elaborate their "repertoire of memory (as a set of mnemonic practices)" (Zamponi, 2015, p. 176), according to contemporary aesthetic trends (street art in this case). More specifically, the AP drew on the PDF versions of the reports and took print screens of the victims' faces. Then they printed several A4 size pages to achieve a street poster dimension, and pasted the prints on walls using contact glue, a technique called *lambe-lambe* frequently employed in urban advertising and street art.

Most photographs included in the CEMDP report were black and white common profile (3 x 4) pictures in which victims naturally, sometimes smiling, stare at the camera. But a long way separates the inscriptive flat two-dimensionality of these black and white profile pictures from the embodied affective depth of their use as symbols of State violence. Drawing on a semiotic approach, Marianne Hirsch (2012) speaks of the role that photographic images (especially family photographs) play as media of "postmemory." Understanding postmemory as a generational structure of transmission mediated by cultural forms of expression, postmemorial works such as photographs "become screens—spaces of projection and approximation, and of protection" (2012, p. 38). While on the one hand viewers are protected by their frame and two-dimensionality, on the other they are open to narrative elaboration and to possibilities of materializing past atrocities in the present.

Photographs can imprison reality in an inscriptive and archival sense, but they can also be used to enlarge and even question reality. The works of photographers, commonly praised for their ability to preserve memory, can effectively be used to dispute memory. It will depend on how and by whom these images will be displayed, and on how and by whom they will be received. As Barthes (1997) reminds us, behind the idea that photographic images are literal lies the power of their aesthetic framing. And this is also true of political performance, as "politics is signifying, but if it appears to *be* symbolic action, it is bound to fail" (Alexander, 2010, p. 12). Inversely, the political power of photographic images in the *Ex-sem-voto* lies in the connotative possibilities set by the artistic form through which it was displayed (as part of a street art action). In other words, the photographic "innocence" and two-dimensionality enabled the construction of powerful narratives in its dialogue with the other elements involved in the action—such as the hand painted phrases and the location where it was placed.

I asked Alexandre [P1] for deeper clarifications about the photographic images chosen for the *Ex-sem-voto.* While talking about the importance of photographs he recalled the moment he read the CEMDP (2007) report in 2010, some months after he attended the funeral ceremony of student Bergson Gurjão Farias, described in Section 3.1 as the starting point for the creation of AP. While reading the report, he felt that the photographs had the power to communicate the narratives that informed their denunciation by humanizing the victims and creating an affective engagement with the viewer:

> There is this thing in the photograph of these faces. Something about the person's gaze. You stare at that black and white image and think about the person, then you read about what happened to them. Photographic records have the materiality that we want to communicate. (…) There is something about the black and white that I think relates to the disappearances and I think moves us affectively towards seeing that these people are still disappeared. So, it has something to do with the record of that person and our desire to say 'look, even after 30, 40 years, this person is still disappeared (…) we are searching.' Although we all know these people are gone, there is a 'search' within these images. (Alexandre, P1)

The search within these black and white images, corresponds to the embedded absence of the disappeared victim, already suggested by the chronological distance of black and white pictures and already anchored in the descriptions about "what happened to them" (P1). Alexandre's (P1) account for the use of photographs in the *Ex-sem-voto* reveals the impact of his own experience reading for the first time the CEMDP report and its influence on the action's aesthetic. This influence exemplifies "how past contention can affect later generations of activism, in particular by providing central points of orientation" (Daphi & Zimmerman, 2021, p. 109). In other words, it seems reasonable to suggest that this action, the first one performed by AP, was inspired by the way its members first engaged with the victims' dramas through reports and dossiers that, consequently, informed their ways of displaying information by allowing for the juxtaposition of profile pictures and summarized biographic records (see images 29 and 30).

In Ann Rigney's (2020) studies about mediations of outrage the author analyses how individual victims give a face to the memory of protest. According to Rigney, victims' memorability "is observed in the intensity and frequency with which their lives have been recalled in songs and poetry and (…) in photographs" (2020, p. 720). In the case presented here, following the end of the military regime victims' photographs began to circulate mainly in posters and reports produced by relatives themselves. This means that victims' photographs "survived" generations because of their relatives' efforts, and went through processes of reproduction (mechanical and digital) according to the social and political circumstances of their time, until being used in 2011 by collective AP's memory activism to influence ways of seeing and understanding past atrocities.

The reproduction of certain visual forms due to their ability to trigger emotional responses can be seen in other contexts. For example, in a study about how images of victims become global icons Assmann and Assmann explore the case of Iranian protester Neda Agha-Soltan whose assassination in 2009 by the militias was captured in video and circulated around the globe until she became a symbol of human rights. Assmann and Assmann draw on the work of art historian Aby Warburg to understand the mnemonic power of Neda's image. More specifically they turn to Warburg's concept of "pathos formula" (Pathosmorfel) to discern the dual structure of the symbol: *pathos* (passionate energy) and *formula* (the visual packaging). In this sense, pathos formula is understood as a "visual form that condenses a high amount of passionate energy" (Assmann & Assmann, 2010, p. 233).

ALFEU DE ALCÂNTARA MONTEIRO (1922-1964)

Número do processo: 056/96 e 284/96
Filiação: João Alcântara Monteiro e Natalina Schenini Monteiro
Data e local de nascimento: 31/03/1922, Itaqui (RS)
Organização política ou atividade: oficial da Aeronáutica
Data e local da morte: 04/04/1964, Porto Alegre (RS)
Relator: Nilmário Miranda
Deferido em: 27/08/1996 por unanimidade
Data da publicação no DOU: 29/08/1996

O tenente-coronel Alfeu de Alcântara Monteiro foi morto no quartel geral da 5ª Zona Aérea, em Canoas (RS), no dia 04/04/1964. Segundo o jornal *Folha da Tarde*, de 06/04/1964, a nota oficial sobre a morte do tenente-coronel aviador informava "*a lamentável ocorrência acontecida no Quartel general deu-se devido à indisciplina do tenente-coronel, que não acatou a voz de prisão que lhe foi dada pelo seu novo Comandante*". Teria ocorrido troca de tiros, sendo que "*os ferimentos recebidos pelo excelentíssimo brigadeiro comandante são de natureza leve, encontrando-se hospitalizado, em pleno exercício de seu comando, o mesmo não acontecendo, entretanto, com o tenente-coronel Alfeu, cujo falecimento lamenta informar*".

Alfeu de Alcântara Monteiro ingressou na Escola Militar do Realengo, no Rio de Janeiro, em 1941, e no ano seguinte passou para a Escola da Aeronáutica, onde se formou aspirante em 1942. Serviu em Fortaleza, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Natal e Canoas. Tenente-aviador desde 1946, fez o curso de Estado-Maior da Aeronáutica em 1958, incorporando-se a esse colegiado no ano seguinte.

Com folha de serviços repleta de elogios, o coronel Alfeu era nacionalista e defensor dos direitos e garantias constitucionais, engajando-se na linha de frente do movimento pela legalidade que o governador gaúcho Leonel Brizola e o comandante do III Exército, general Machado Lopes, encabeçaram em Porto Alegre contra a intervenção militar que tentou impedir a posse do vice-presidente João Goulart após a renúncia de Jânio Quadros, em setembro de 1961. Alfeu tornou-se, na prática, comandante da Base Aérea de Canoas, naqueles dias, após acordo que ensejou a saída, daquela unidade, dos oficiais favoráveis à quebra da normalidade constitucional, amplamente rejeitada pela baixa oficialidade, sargentos e praças. Ele foi um dos responsáveis por impedir que os caças daquela base decolassem para bombardear o Palácio Piratini, sede da resistência legalista, desobedecendo ordens expressas que foram emitidas por autoridades militares superiores.

Quanto ao episódio de sua morte, o coronel médico Medeiros (chamado dessa forma pelo jornal citado), da Aeronáutica, relatou, anos mais tarde,

Image 29: Profile of Colonel Alfeu de Alcantara Monteiro. Retrieved from CEMDP report, BRASIL (2007).

Image 30: AP urban intervention: the *Ex-sem-voto* (2010). Retrieved from: www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br

Such capacity to condense and transmit emotions depends on the formal acceptance and reproducibility of the image, as well as on the meanings and narratives ascribed to it. The reproduction of Neda's image across different countries and platforms (including street posters) transformed it from documentary evidence into a universal icon of human rights. In a similar attempt, photographs of victims of the Brazilian dictatorship displayed next to their biographic information—as reproduced in reports and dossiers—were appropriated and transformed by AP. In this sense, "the power of such images of victims lies in this resurrection, not of the dead person but of her memory, which returns with the universal claim to human rights in public acts of performed cosmopolitanism" (Assmann & Assmann, 2010, p. 239).

The different victims mentioned in AP's action varied from a military officer who stood against the military coup and died in 1964 in Rio Grande do Sul, Lieutenant Alfeu de Alcântara Monteiro (Image 30), to a member of the *Ligas Camponesas* (LC, Peasant Leagues) and of the *Partido Comunista Revolucionário* (PCR, Communist Revolutionary Party), Amaro Félix Pereira, killed in 1972 in Pernambuco, and a guerrilla fighter who was killed when she was two months pregnant in 1972, in Rio de Janeiro, Lígia Maria Nóbrega. Specific information about these victims' identities such as age, gender, race, class, and political positionings, were not explored in this action. By doing so, the collective reduced individual biographies to the category of victims of State violence in order to achieve a concrete objective—raising awareness about their demands for memory, truth and justice.

While the CEMDP (2007) report provided one to two pages of victims' biographies, including details such as conflicting versions about their death—as is the case with colonel Alfeu (Image 29)—the *Ex-sem-voto* provided only victims' faces, names, dates and circumstances of death. Because narratives are framing structures that "voice and silence what can be seen and said and by whom" (Eyerman, 2019, p. 162), the action required not only simplification in order to communicate its demands in a public space, but also careful examination about what to include and what to exclude in its narrative. Considering the generational distance and lack of affiliative ties with the victims represented in the action, I asked Alexandre (P1) how the collective made these choices while ensuring the accuracy of the information they provide:

> We knew it was a responsibility putting the pictures of those people up on the wall. Other people could deface them, or even a relative could feel uncomfortable as they would see their [loved ones'] images again. (…) It's part of public relational art to relate to the subjects involved in your work. To create bonds not only as a temporary support or an illustrative thing. Our strategy to value this bond is to constantly work with organizations of victim's relatives, or relatives of former political prisoners. (Alexandre, P1)

AP's sense of responsibility and respect for victims and relatives led them to seek contact and support from them. This contact with previous generations, as stated throughout Part 2 of this thesis, served to legitimize and shape actions along the lines defined by the movement for memory, truth, and justice across time. At the same time, such connection was not of a normative nature, allowing the collective to maintain creative freedom and independence in achieving tactical innovation within Brazil's movement for memory, truth, and justice. This can be observed in the journey of victims' photographs across time towards becoming symbols of collective trauma: first, during the dictatorship, as part of relatives' search for their loved ones; second, during democracy, as part of large reports of victims and other works resulting mainly from relatives' efforts; and third, during the Brazilian turn to memory when they were printed by younger generations of activists affected by these narratives of the past and who pasted them up to protest against impunity.

It is important to acknowledge that while young activists' use of victims' photographs for producing graffiti and urban installations such as the *Ex-sem-voto* constituted tactical innovation within Brazil's movement for memory, truth, and justice, there are examples of similar tactics being used in other countries long before AP's action. In Argentina, for example, the use of victims photographs as material for artistic memory activism was used in the early 1980s when enlarged photographs of those "disappeared" during that country's dictatorship between 1976 and 1983 were affixed around Buenos Aires' Plaza de Mayo (Camnitzer, 2007, p. 74). Similarly, and around the same time in Plaza de Mayo, silhouettes of human bodies were painted on the walls in events known as *siluetazos* which gained popularity and was reproduced throughout the years, and also being carried out by art collectives such as Grupo de Arte Callejero, a group recalled by AP as one of their main influences from Latin America. As stated by the group regarding the use of silhouettes in one of their performances, "human silhouettes evoke the body as a battlefield (…) object of the powers and subject of rebellions" (Bossi & GAC, 2009, p. 259).

In AP's *Ex-sem-voto,* although the graphic elements may provide some information about victims' identity (at least about their gender, age, and race), these were not deeply explored. As observed earlier in Chapter 3, the objective of Brazil's official reports was to constitute a legitimate account of victims' experiences and the role of the dictatorial State in them, not leaving much space for exploring victims' individualities. The *Ex-sem-voto* continued this practice by reuniting different individuals, with different political objectives and social positionings, under the tag of "political disappeared." By denouncing different peoples' disappearances by the State, the *Ex-sem-voto* called attention not to the biographies of victims themselves but to what they shared in common—they were all victims of State violence. Such a tactical choice seems to communicate that in order to speak about specific cases of torture and assassination committed by the military dictatorship with biographical detail and historical depth it is first necessary to obtain a general acknowledgement that there existed cases of torture and assassination committed by the military dictatorship in the first place. This general acknowledgement has yet to come alongside a "meaningful State apology" (Schneider, 2014). Thus, the choice to equate all victims can be understood not as a shortcoming but as a coherent decision aiming to achieve a concrete goal.

The AP's "simplified" and objective messages seem to have appealed to spectators' empathy while demanding their moral positioning. The action communicated a clear message: the military dictatorship tortured and killed many people in Brazil, these crimes still resonate in our everyday lives and therefore all citizens should engage in the struggle to punish the perpetrators. To enhance the impact of these messages AP drew on art (and anti-art) histories and discourses with the aim of producing a brief disruption to the everyday experience of passers-by and of generating what Ranciére (2010) calls a "dissensus" within the distribution of social parts.

Discussions around the possibilities of intervening over urban public spaces were always present in the elaboration of AP's actions since its foundation. I utilize the term "urban intervention" as an umbrella expression frequently mentioned by AP; the term comprises practices that involve performance, body art, street art, and culture jamming, but aims to highlight the action's ability to problematize and dialogue with its social surroundings (Mesquita, 2008). As most of AP's members were art students with expertise in art history and artistic procedures (such as painting, performance and graffiti) their choices for such procedures were grounded in different artistic discourses. For example, during interviews AP acknowledged the influence of international movements such as the 1950s and 1960s French Situationist International, and perspectives around relational aesthetics developed in the late 1990s by French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud. At the same time their discourses connected these international movements with national artists and movements of the 1970s:

> We were inspired by the research group we participated in while studying visual arts. We studied the so-called public relational art that comes from the context of Hélio Oiticica, of the 1960s and 1970s artists, that [explored] the work when placed in the city. Not only the support but the work itself becomes part of it. Not only the text you write on the wall, but that wall is also related. (Alexandre, P1)

Relational art was defined by Bourriaud (2002, p. 113) as a “set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.” It assumes that the contemporary artwork, historically connected to 20th century movements such as Dadaism, Surrealism, and Situationism, is “spreading out of its material form” (2002, p. 21) and therefore it focuses on artworks’ potential to produce, represent or prompt inter-human relations.

Although Bourriaud’s theoretical contributions discussed certain 1990s art productions from a global perspective, Alexandre (P1) mentioned them in relation to Brazilian artists and works from the 1960s and 1970s. This is because such attempts to bring art closer to everyday life, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, were explored by Brazilian artists in particular ways during the dictatorship. From visual arts to dramaturgy, there was a cultural trend towards stimulating participation and activating critical consciousness (Calirman, 2012; Morais, 1970). Thus, it makes sense that the AP participant mentioned Hélio Oiticica whose disruptive works aimed for “total participatory creation” (Bishop, 2006, p. 108).

As seen in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2) the works developed by Oiticica and the Brazilian *avant-garde* during that time explored the possibilities of going beyond traditional spaces for circulating artworks (e.g., galleries and museums) and traditional forms of producing them in relation to their social environment. There was a desire to experiment with how collective propositions might instigate spectators’ engagement. This desire can also be found in AP’s urban interventions and their efforts to engage passers-by.

Not only this desire, but also specific art discourses that animated left-wing cultural production during the “leaden years” can be found in AP’s activities. Besides the aesthetic discourses of *neo-concretistas*, such as Helio Oiticica focusing on a dematerialization of art towards corporeal experiences (Oiticica, 2006), the efforts to balance a national-popular view about present social and political issues and the influence of foreign artistic tendencies can also be observed in AP’s *Ex-sem-voto* project. Drawing on (but not only) foreign tendencies, procedures and discourses about art and activism the AP collective performed actions, using wooden objects taken from local culture, to confront the silences regarding Brazilian dictatorial violence.

Connections between the artistic tendencies of the 1960s and 1970s and contemporary creative activism, exemplified here by AP’s actions, can also be seen in the use of photographs taken out of their contexts. As explored earlier in the work *Guevara, Vivo ou Morto* (1967) by Claudio Tozzi, the artist uses a photograph of Che Guevara, taken out of newspapers, and combines it with other elements to produce a powerful composition. As explained in Chapter 2, by taking the photograph out of its original context Tozzi performed a *detournement*. Drawing on the “extremist innovations” (Debord & Wolman, 2006 [1956], p. 14) suggested by the tactic of *detournement* but less interested in its parodic effects, AP used photographs taken out of the CEMDP report and placed them in urban spaces to establish dialogues between past dictatorial violence and its legacies in the present.

Following the project *Ex-sem-voto* AP produced another round of actions but with some different elements that, as I argue, attested to the collective’s internal learning process. In this sense, as stated by Alexandre (P1) himself, the use of wooden pieces in this urban intervention took a lot of effort and at the same time attracted unwanted attention since it had to be nailed to the wall. For this reason, after the first round of actions, the collective decided to stop using

the *ex-votos*. Instead, AP partnered with a performance-focused collective and used real bodies. While victims' pictures and the hand painting were being registered on the wall performers called passers-by attention by re-enacting scenes of torture. This slightly modified action started to be performed in 2011 during the *I Jornada Para Não Esquecer Jamais* (1st Journey to Never Forgetting) organized by institutions and associations in Fortaleza engaged with the struggle for memory, truth and justice (Images 31 and 32).

> While the Ex-sem-voto had a rustic look, there was an element that gave a lot of work [the wooden pieces], that is why we didn't repeat it. (…) So, there was this part of experimenting and making attempts, including and excluding elements. After that we removed the wooden pieces and there was just the picture and the graffiti and the work of Coletivo Curto-Circuito that partnered with us and did the performance. (Alexandre, P1)

The performance element replaced the wooden objects with real bodies, thereby contributing to the action's attempt to bridge art and life, and past and present. Instead of relying on the socially shared dimension of the wooden objects they used bodies that are "inherently social in their material composition" (Serafini, 2018, p. 12). The presence of live bodies simulating torture practices (agonizing with plastic bags on their heads or tied to a chair semi-naked, Images 31 and 32) inadvertently took the viewers from the standard role as part of an audience to a place as witnesses. This shift in the viewer's status asked for an ethical response from passers-by regarding ongoing and past atrocities committed by the State.

Despite changing some visual elements the new action kept the hand-painted phrases, maintaining the rustic aesthetic of the *Ex-sem-voto*. Instead of aiming for a more elaborate typography, the letters were hand painted due both to practicality (it is less labour intensive) and as an allusion to the forms of graffiti produced in the 1960s and 1970s when graffiti became a popular communication medium for anti-dictatorial resistance (Chaffee, 1993) (see images 33 and 34). At that time, as any form of political expression in public spaces could be framed as a subversive act, the production of politically engaged graffiti had to be cautiously planned and rapidly done as it could cost graffitists their lives. For this reason, the message had to be concise and clearly written in capital letters and was normally supervised by other people/members of political groups. According to Cajá (P10) this propaganda work during the dictatorship had to be done quickly (although normally with paint and brushes rather than aerosol) and sometimes involved armed backup.

Image 31: AP urban intervention at I Jornada Para Não Esquecer Jamais (2011). Retrieved from: www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br.

Although resembling anti-dictatorial forms of graffiti, AP's two rounds of action differed from their older counterparts in other aspects, including the issue of anonymity. Due to military repression against political dissenters during the dictatorship authors of these older forms of graffiti could not have their identities disclosed. Similarly to the other actions discussed in Part 2, collective AP, on the contrary, chose to do the actions during the day and in the first round signed them as an "official" activist art collective. According to Alexandre (P1), even though

Image 32: AP urban intervention at I Jornada Para Não Esquecer Jamais (2011). Retrieved from: www.aparecidospoliticos.com.br

Image 33: The 100,000 demonstration (Passeata dos Cem Mil) in Rio de Janeiro, June 1968. The graffiti reads "down with the dictatorship" (1968). Photo published in the newspaper *Manchete* and later in the book *1968, a Paixão de Uma Utopia* (Reis & Moraes, 1998).

Image 34: Photo of a protest against the military dictatorship in Rio de Janeiro, April 1968. Published at *Correio da Manhã*. The graffiti reads: "Dictatorship [is a] murderer." Retrieved from: Arquivo Nacional (National Archive): https://www.gov.br/memoriasreveladas/pt-br/centrais-de-conteudo/imagens-e-documentos-do-periodo-de-1964-1985/imagens-correio-da-manha/22137283_501841150171831_6407830922706136663_o.jpg/view

there was still a risk of police violence, a daylight action performed by students—mainly white and middle-class—was relatively safe. Another difference was the amount of time available to perform the actions. Whereas during the dictatorship time was crucial to street art production, AP not only did not hurry the action but incorporated other elements into the process that required more time—the wooden pieces in the first round and the performance in the second round. AP's urban interventions can be justified by the democratic right to perform political protest in public spaces, guaranteed in the Brazilian Constitution (Lei nº 5.250, de 9 de fevereiro de 1967), but also by race and class privilege.

Collective AP was inspired by past attempts to explore "structural spaces that are free both to the participation and to the creative invention of spectators" (Oiticica, 2006 [1966] p.108), but accommodated them to their goals and the sociopolitical circumstances of the present. Thus, the deconstruction of the distance between the artwork and the spectator serving a clear political goal, as seen in the Brazilian 1970s *avant-garde,* shaped the language of AP's urban intervention. The aesthetics of the *Ex-sem-voto* can be situated in a place between the *avant-gardist* guerrilla art and the participatory potential of contemporary activist art.

Despite their ephemerality AP's urban interventions were always recorded in photographs and videos and circulated in different media platforms. They were primarily uploaded to their website and social medias, but also exhibited in galleries and artistic events, and even used in academic research and publications funded by the government as part of their memory initiatives, such as the 6th issue of the journal *Revista Anistia Política e Justiça de*

Transição (Journal of Political Amnesty and Transitional Justice) (2011), and the book *Lampejos* (Flashes) (Mourão et al., 2016), both published by the Ministry of Justice. While the potential for a shared lived experience between passers-by and the urban intervention is lost in such reproductions, the circulation of their visual record in other environments might reach more people in different spaces and time.

8.2 Banknotes and Bundles of Waste: the actions of *Coletivo Político Quem*

Another noteworthy example of memory activism during Brazilian memory's turn corresponds to the projects developed by the group *Coletivo Político Quem* (CPQ), translated as the *Political Collective Who*. As described in Chapter 5 the collective was created in the city of São Paulo in 2011 by students at the University of São Paulo (the largest Brazilian public university) to raise awareness about the legacies of Brazil's most recent dictatorship. The group's main strategies consisted of organizing debates and producing artistic-political interventions in academic contexts. Drawing on an interview with one of its founding members Rafael (P4), and on the visual and textual documentation of the collective's activities, I analyse two projects produced between 2011 and 2012 named here as "Banknotes" and "Bundles of Waste."

First, it is important to highlight the significance of the academic environment to the collective's activities. As already mentioned, all memory activists who contributed to this thesis were (between 2010 and 2014) university students engaged with contemporary student movement in public institutions—student movements being one of the most persecuted movements during the dictatorship. But in the case of CPQ all its members were academics who were also undertaking postgraduate study in Brazil's most distinguished university, and therefore their activities were elaborated in strong connection with—and sometimes inside—their academic environment. In our interview Rafael (P4) acknowledged this influence in the group's strategic choices:

> I used to joke that if you study at the University of São Paulo and you do something, you get national repercussions. (…) And everyone was doing a masters or doctorate there, so why not? Organizing debates with highly qualified academics at zero cost was very easy—and it had to be because we didn't have any money. (…) This was also political strategy, presenting to professors, for example Marilena Chauí, and she loved it because young people were engaging with this cause, so this helped our collective to gain a certain recognition. (Rafael, P4)

Influenced by the political circumstances during Brazil's memory's turn (especially by the debates around the PNDH-3) and by its effects on academic discussion, in 2010 Rafael (P4) began his doctoral research project on transitional justice and human rights. In this context of growing interest about the dictatorial past, he went to the 29th Biennale of Arts in São Paulo and saw for the first time the stamped banknotes developed by artist Cildo Meireles in his project *Inserções em circuitos ideológicos: projeto cédula* (Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Banknote Project, 1970–1975). As explained in Chapter 2, this work was developed by Meireles following the assassination of journalist Vladimir Herzog (committed and denied) by the military regime in 1975 and consisted of banknotes stamped with the question "Who killed Herzog?" that were then put back into circulation.[36]

Almost forty years later, this work produced by Meireles in 1975 still has impacts on younger generations and inspires them to reproduce the practice in the present. After seeing Meireles' artwork, Rafael (P4) had the idea for an activist project intended to stir debates about

[36] As already described in Chapter 2, footnote 25, Vladimir Herzog (Vlado) was the director of the department of journalism at TV Cultura in São Paulo who was tortured to death by the military.

Brazil's dictatorial legacies. This is illustrative of the influence of artworks as "objectified carriers of the past" (Zamponi, 2018, p. 7) on contemporary memory activism. As I have been arguing in this thesis, the lack of a meaningful answers to pressing questions about past atrocities, such as Meireles's "Who killed Herzog?," is responsible for conserving the work's urgency across time, and the changes in political circumstances such as those observed during the Brazilian turn to memory (2007–2014) are responsible for enabling opportunities in which younger generations can elaborate responses to the older works:

> I saw Cildo's work and at that moment it started ringing in my head 'we have Dilma, it could be her name stamped there.' It was during that time, when that 'broth was boiling' around the creation of the NTC, it was during Dilma's government, she was our president, and then I saw this exhibition and thought 'I could redo this.' So, the idea of creating the stamps precedes the idea of creating the collective. (Rafael, P4)

Rafael's [P4] idea to reproduce Meireles' banknotes was welcomed by other students engaged or sympathetic to the movement for memory, truth, and justice, and eager to create artistic and activist interventions. While discussing the question "who killed Vladimir Herzog?" the group had the idea to name the collective as *Political Collective Who*. By doing so they aimed to question the complexity of subjects implicated in past atrocities (not only those who tortured but also those who financed such activities) and the complexity of subjects who can fight against violent legacies in the present, implying that this could involve anyone, thus confronting the limits of representative forms of political participation.

Michael Rothberg (2019, p. 202) suggests that we should "enlarge our understanding of the actors involved in injustices beyond the most often invoked figures of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders." In this sense, the collective's name might enable some consideration around implicated subjects and expand debates around collective responsibility. However, CPQ used the pronoun "who" mostly to address the "political, economic forces, corporations, and ideological interests supporting the dictatorship."[37] In this sense, more than inviting critical reflection about all forms of implicated subjects, the provocative name had a clear political goal that involved questioning the interests behind the production of narratives about the past and encouraging other voices to participate in those narratives. This can be observed in the manifesto published by the collective in July 2011 in which the group clarifies their goals by exploring puns with the word "who" as a name and as a pronoun (which function in the same way in both Portuguese and English):

> *Who* wants to combat the dictatorship and what is left of it must have courage to question the myth of Brazilian democracy. (…) If the civil-military dictatorship came to guarantee the failure of an attempt to restructure the production regime over new basis, the succeeding democracy is nothing more than this objective's realization. *Who* are those who never left the power and negotiated among themselves the reconciliation? *Who* tortured, who killed, *who* hid corpses? *Who* is interested in the consolidation of this type of democratic regime? (CPQ, 2011)

As can be observed in the intentional confusion caused by using a pronoun as a proper noun, the collective called attention to matters of implication both in combatting the dictatorship and in negotiating reconciliation. But instead of aiming for self-criticism, the name highlighted the lack of accountability that makes it impossible to recognize authorship. Instead of exploring collective responsibility and considerations about implicated subjects, as one could expect from the collective's name, their linguistic experiment referred to the absence of any form of liability in post-dictatorial Brazil.

[37] CPQ's interview in *Brasil de Fato* on 23 November 2011. Shared by the collective to this research.

It is also worth noting that the political discourse observed in CPQ's manifesto understands that the military coup was supported by specific actors against social efforts to restructure relations of production in favour of the working class, reverberating across the lines of those who resisted the military regime in the past. This can be observed in CPQ's mention in the manifesto of sociologist and exiled professor Florestan Fernandes's perspective on Brazilian post-dictatorial bourgeoisie democracy as the last refuge of the dictatorship. As exemplified by the manifesto, despite the collective's lack of partisan commitment, the narratives communicated by them were strongly rooted in the political culture shared by the anti-dictatorial resistance of the 1960s and 1970s (explored in Chapter 2). Such influences will be analysed in the examples below.

Thirty-six years after Meireles stamped banknotes with the question "Who killed Herzog?" (Image 35), CPQ stamped banknotes questioning "Who tortured Dilma Rousseff?" These banknotes were initially circulated in events and parties at the University of São Paulo—mainly within the Faculty of Arts and Communication. In their introductory text, CPQ stated that these notes aimed to reformulate the question posed by Meireles, and by appropriating and reworking his artistic-activist tactic they could bring similar questions to confront present legacies of dictatorial violence: "After all, *who* were the agents of the military regime that committed such attacks against human rights? (…) The dictatorship is still present! What to do? Rescue, update, and reconfigure artistic manifestations against the dictatorship?" (CPQ, 2011). Besides producing the banknotes CPQ also elaborated and shared on their webpage a guide on how to develop stamps (CPQ, 2011). The idea reflected Meireles's approach to participatory art in the sense that "when the object of art becomes a practice, it becomes something over which you have no control or ownership" (Calirman, 2012, p. 142). By encouraging people to create their own stamps the collective aimed at pluralizing the range of questions confronting the legacies of the dictatorship. This strategy seemed to reiterate the narratives presented in the objectives of other actions explored in Part 2 of this thesis: that the dictatorship affected and still affects the whole of Brazilian society and therefore it should be processed collectively through participatory means.

Even though CPQ explored participatory strategies in dialogue with public spaces through their banknotes, the importance of institutional spaces was frequently highlighted in their discourses and practices. As demonstrated in earlier chapters of the thesis, CPQ (and other collectives) emerged and ended in interaction with government initiatives while criticizing and aiming for improving such initiatives. In our interview Rafael (P4) stated that while it is fundamental to be in the streets, and the idea of the banknotes was about accessing such spaces, it is also necessary to occupy institutional spaces. Rafael recalled Meireles's exhibition at the Biennale to exemplify the importance of institutional spaces of art:

> If Cildo had not done that and that wasn't exhibited in the Biennale maybe CPQ would not exist, and probably I would not have created with this artistic side. So, this idea only happened because the example already existed and was exhibited in an institutional space, so you have the importance of the intervention being realized and then being placed in an institutional space so people can know it. The stamp allowed the collective to exist, art allowed the collective to exist. (Rafael, P4)

In an interview published in the online newspaper *Brasil de Fato* the collective confirmed that they initiated stamping the question "Who Tortured Dilma Rousseff" on R$2 bills (Image 36); on the R$20 note they questioned the death of Frei Tito, and on the R$50 they asked about the death of student leader Vannucchi Leme. They also noted that they could not

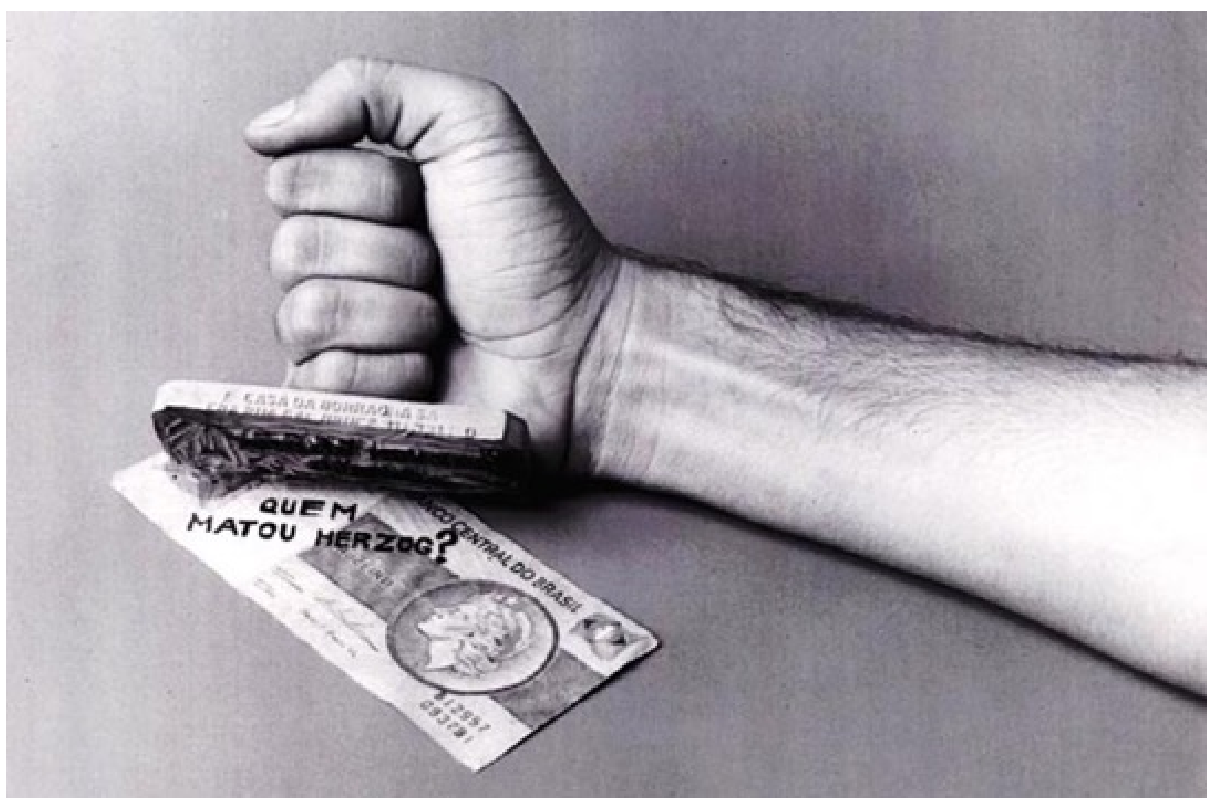


Image 35: Cildo Meireles, "Quem Matou Herzog?" (1975). Under military censorship Cildo stamped banknotes with the question "Who killed Herzog?" Herzog was a journalist killed by the regime that same year. Retrieved from Calirman (2012)

count how many banknotes were produced and in how many cities, but the goal was to amplify the "web of stampers." CPQ's choice to reproduce this artistic procedure can be justified by a simplicity that allowed social engagement in the production and circulation of dissent, multiplying the questions, the spaces that it could reach and the potential impact it can have on the viewer due to the unannounced encounter with past atrocities.

Image 36: Coletivo Político Quem, "Quem Torturou Dilma Rousseff?" (2011). Image shared by Rafael (P4)

The simplicity of the process of producing the stamped banknotes is easily explained by the popularity and low-cost of stamps and their easy-to-use, almost mechanical, application. And by the simplicity in the process of circulation for the banknotes I mean their centrality in

our societies and the common use of banknotes themselves as support to different types of message—religious citations, jokes, and drawings are not difficult to find on Brazilian banknotes, though they are normally produced with pen. But the way they can have impacts on the viewer requires here a more detailed examination.

In her studies about Meireles's money-based artworks, Shtromberg (2016) analyses currency as a social system. Her analytical perspective is informed by the ideas of German philosopher Georg Simmel (2005) in his influential work *Philosophy of Money*, originally published in 1900. According to Simmel money has a social nature in the sense that it is a means, a material object that gains value in its relation to "the most profound currents of individual life and history" (Simmel, 2005, p. 53). In this sense, economic transactions also constitute a place for the development of relationships between people.

The success of urban guerrilla tactics depends on "taking the enemy by surprise" but also on the mobility, speed, and the elimination of tracks that would provide information to the enemy. As it was illegal to "disseminate via any media, press, radio, or television, the news (...) about torture in Brazil" (Fernandez, 1973 in Shtromberg, 2016, p. 33), Meireles invested in an unconventional mode of communication that could not be controlled or tracked by the regime, thus protecting the artist from violent consequences. The guerrilla tactic employed by Meireles responded to the opportunities and possibilities of its time. Almost forty years later it was reconfigured by CPQ according to the opportunities and possibilities of their time.

While taking advantage of currency as a site for social exchanges, the surprise element of the banknotes project confronted viewers with unpleasant questions. The questions elaborated by CPQ, however, focused on the authorship of violent crimes such as torture and assassination, even though their manifesto called for extending the questioning to "who negotiated reconciliation?" and "who never left power?" I asked CPQ's founding member Rafael (P4) about their tactical choices in order to inquire about the efficacy of such symbolic actions:

> (…) a professor once asked if I thought people would pay attention to these interventions in a society that banalized the image. I understood his question (…) And I don't see this as a problem. I only see a problem if we limit ourselves to a certain cultural elite that would be able to understand certain interventions. So, I wanted to leave the academic discourse and take this to other fronts. (…) The idea was to provoke. At least to cause discomfort or a quick questioning—it must be quick (…) For a passer-by or someone who received the banknote, we can't be sophisticated. (…) We didn't explore abstraction. (…) There is a political dispute to be made so we can't get too crazy. (Rafael, P4)

The influence of Meireles's artwork on CPQ's action can be understood regarding its ability to be easily produced, circulated, and apprehended by the viewer in the present. Although evoking similar questions to Meireles's original modified banknotes, the impact of CPQ's banknotes corresponded less to their ability to denounce dictatorial crimes than it did to denounce the ongoing silence about them. And the CPQ members were conscious about the impact of such simple but strong questions in the public sphere considering the political disputes surrounding the National Truth Commission. Although acknowledging the limitations of such types of symbolic interventions the collective could still see in it a potential for provocation, causing discomfort, or a quick questioning of the public's own positions regarding past atrocities.

Quite distinct from Meireles's experience the CPQ did not find it necessary to hide their identity. Although they did not sign the banknotes, the collective declared authorship on their webpage and in interviews with newspapers. Moreover, as part of their action, they also posted around 5,000 signs on the walls around São Paulo's central areas asking, "Who tortured Dilma Rousseff?" In these signs the collective included directions to their social media (Facebook, Orkut, Blog, and Twitter) thereby displaying the collective's authorship while still preserving

certain individual anonymity. In this case anonymity was not a vital necessity but rather part of a rhetorical tactic within the collective's political discourse.

The collective's goal with the banknotes and the wall signs was to complicate the debates about the dictatorial past and take them into other spaces outside academic and journalistic circles in the year preceding the National Truth Commission. As stated in their online page, the collective aimed to expand "the debate about transitional justice mechanisms (…) and about the civil-military dictatorship and what it bequeathed us gains another form and reaches the largest number of people possible."[38] CPQ openly updated past forms of cultural resistance according to their political demands in the present.

In the same year of 2011 CPQ produced another action also inspired by a conceptualist artist from the dictatorial period. Artur Barrio was part of what art critic Frederico Morais called the guerrilla artists of the 1970s. As shown in Chapter 2 he was known mainly for his work *Situações* (*Situations*) which was first exhibited in 1969 at the Salão da Bússola in the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro (MAM/RJ). This work consisted in bundles of waste stained with blood containing mainly meat and animal bones hanging from the ceiling and scattered on the floor, while viewers were encouraged to interact by writing on them or adding their own garbage (Calirman, 2012). These "sculptures" were placed in public places around Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte and were reproduced in other artistic events.

In 1970, during the already-mentioned exhibition Do Corpo à Terra (From the Body to the Earth), a site-specific exhibition curated by Frederico Morais in a park in Belo Horizonte, the bundles were placed in remote areas of the park creating tension and confusion in the viewer who could perceive them as a representation of police violence and their methods for "disappearing," or as a real consequence of it. As described by Calirman (2012) this confusion escalated when police and firemen came to investigate the bundles and by the end of the day they were destroyed, and the bones were taken to be analysed in a laboratory.

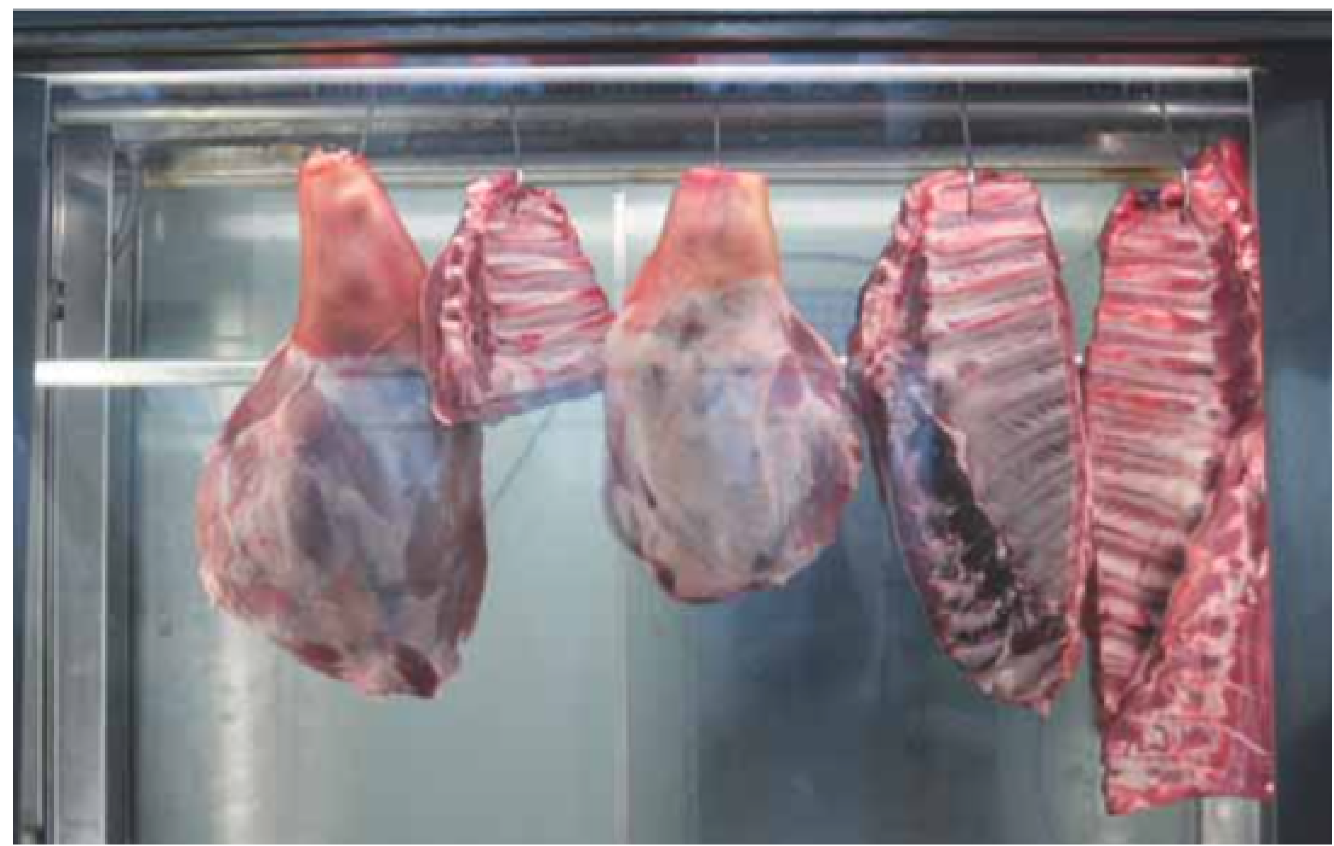
In a similar manner to Meireles's *Insertions* questioning Herzog death, Barrio's *Situations* demanded positionings from the viewer. It "violated the notion of a detached bystander," but the *Situations* did not refer to one single victim; rather the work emphasized the victim's anonymity and materialized the unseen atrocities committed by the dictatorial regime. A similar potential for physical and symbolic engagement with passers-by was explored in 2011 by CPQ in an action that was part of an event organized by them at their university that aimed to discuss the role of art during the dictatorship:

> One of the debates we promoted at the theatre of the University of São Paulo aimed at discussing art, so we did an intervention there. We got blue plastic bags in a reference to the Perus' grave, we got bones from local butchers and filled these bags with them and did this intervention in the theatre. On the way to the theatre there were some stairs so people had to go through them to get into the theatre. [Rafael, P4] (Images 37, 38 and 39)

Conclusion

The main findings included in Chapter 8 can be summarized in this way. First, past artistic practices have the potential to influence political struggles in the present. More specifically, memories of past anti-dictatorial artistic and political resistance (or, art guerrilla actions) animated memory activism in the present. Second, the ability to produce an impact

[38] Second text entitled "O projeto: "Quem Torturou? Quem Matou?" in the groups's blog explaining their goals (CPQ, 2011).



Images 37, 38, 39: Elements of CPQ intervention at USP theatre. Retrieved from Mourão et al. (2016).

relational approaches of 1960s and 1970s Brazilian "anti-dictatorial art" were updated to serve the goals of post-dictatorial memory activism: disseminating, collectivizing and popularizing debates about transitional justice.

According to cultural trauma theory the meanings of an event are defined through the "symbolic rendering" around it. Drawing on the work of Jeffrey Alexander (2012) these meanings will depend on how activists utilize the political potential of such practices within current social and political circumstances. The cases presented in this chapter tell us that participatory carrier groups broadcast their claims according to historical circumstances and political opportunities, but also according to the symbolic resources at hand. In Section 1—more specifically in Chapter 3—I have analysed the politics of memory and the main government initiatives during the Brazilian turn to memory. In Part 2 of the thesis I have been exploring the material and symbolic resources used by memory activists during this same period.

Within the memory-activism nexus (Rigney, 2018), as I have explained earlier, this research deals more closely with what is termed as *memory activism* (how actors struggle to produce cultural memory and to steer future remembrance). However, in this Chapter I turned my focus to examples of artistic and political *memory in activism* (how the cultural memory of earlier struggles informs memory activism in the present). Although researchers attempting to bridge the gap between social movement studies and memory have already been studying how activists struggle to construct cultural memory and how these memories influence activists' strategic choices in the present, I believe that the role of aesthetic agency still needs further investigation. For this reason, I have included insights from art history and semiotics in my analysis of the data collected in my ethnographic research of memory activists.

The projects analysed in this chapter were informed by the memory of past artistic and political movements and by the circumstances and opportunities of their time (2011–2012). By analysing their artistic procedures and activists' accounts about them it was possible to distinguish conversations between three sources of influence: (1) the victims and relatives' movement for memory, truth, and justice (2) government initiatives (e.g., the CEMDP report published in 2007), and (3) the artistic and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., neo-concretism, situationism, and anti-dictatorial graffiti). These influences were understood in relation to activists' social and political positions but, most importantly in this chapter, to their perception of these factors as memory platforms through which they could circulate their present goals within post-dictatorial memory conflicts.

Jeffrey Alexander (2012, p. 12) states that "insofar as meaning making work takes place in the aesthetic realm, it will be channelled by specific genres and narratives that aim to produce imaginative identification and emotional catharsis." AP's and CPQ's appropriations of past artistic practices to broadcast their message demonstrated how past forms of "guerrilla art" produced during the dictatorship can still be effective in producing imaginative identification by young memory activists in the present. Both collectives were inspired by a combination of art discourses that had social participation and political activation as their aesthetic horizon while elaborating projects for broadcasting their narratives about the past, present, and future. By recalling past dictatorial violence and past artistic and political forms of anti-dictatorial resistance these actions seem to suggest that processing the first can benefit from the latter.

If, as James Jasper (2014) says, "like artists, protesters push the boundaries of what can be thought, articulated, and felt," then the symbolic efficacy of such actions can perhaps be discussed in relation to their ability to produce small disruptions in the "micropolitics of reading, viewing and reacting with repeated small movements gradually acquiring larger-scale consequences" (Rigney, 2021, pp. 17–18). Ann Rigney calls attention to the role of aesthetic styles and genres "to disrupt habits of memory and create new sites of memorability." In this sense, the actions analysed here can be understood in terms of "hopeful prefigurations of future

iterations" (Rigney, 2018, p. 377), as sites for reorienting perceptual space and the social distribution of roles in the construction of alternative modes of recalling that, instead of focusing on grief, open up spaces of positive hope for a better future.

CHAPTER 9: MEMORY ACTIVISM AND COLLECTIVE HEALING

"We are all heirs of history, we are all children and grandchildren of resistance."
FN-MVJ

As I have been arguing throughout this thesis, by suppressing the memory of dictatorial violence Brazil's post-dictatorial democracy also limited possibilities for avoiding its repetition. The impacts of human rights violations are still active not only within the subjectivities and bodies of those directly affected and their descendants, but also within society in the broader sense. At the same time, victims' efforts to confront this silenced violence question the structures of our democratic institutions founded over the paradigm of reconciliation through forgetting. If authoritarian legacies are experienced individually and collectively as silenced traumas transmitted through successive generations, the creation of spaces to give voice to such traumas in connection to ongoing socio-political struggles might function as a path towards reparation. The potential of interplays between individual traumas and ongoing memory conflicts regarding the Brazilian dictatorship (1964–1985) is discussed next.

In 2013 the Amnesty Commission (CA), under the Ministry of Justice, granted financial support to therapeutic institutions aiming to create webs of psychologic assistance for those directly or indirectly affected by State violence between 1946 and 1988.[39] The pilot project *Clínicas do Testemunho* (CT, Clinics of Testimony), reached mainly four Brazilian southern states (Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina)[40] and after two editions had its activities interrupted following the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016. Despite its brevity the CT initiative managed to encourage the testimony of several victims and relatives while developing politically engaged therapeutic means of processing that testimony. Thus the CT not only expanded the governments' notions about psychological reparation, they also confronted notions commonly centred on financial redress, while managing to mobilize second and third generation of people affected by the dictatorship that would create the collective *Filhos e Netos por Memória Verdade e Justiça* (FN-MVJ, Children and Grandchildren for Memory, Truth, and Justice).

I have demonstrated in Chapter 5 how the collective FN-MVJ began in 2014 after founding members, such as Leo, participated in the therapy sessions of the project *Clinicas do Testemunho* (CT). I have explained how the origins of collective FN-MVJ are connected to initiatives from the Federal Government that enabled the CT. Based on data collected from interviews with two of its members, Mariana and Leo, and on the data collected from the collective's website and social media, I now explore the trajectory of collective FN-MVJ including its creation, organization, and actions. In this section I draw on theoretical approaches to the role of witnessing and the social construction of the category of "victim" (Vital, 2015; Magaldi, 2022), and on transgenerational acts of mnemonic transfer (Schwab, 2010; Hirsch, 2012). I argue that by creating a space to explore individual traumas in connection to present social and political struggles, especially the movement for memory, truth, and justice, the CT influenced the memory activism of second and third generation dictatorial victims.

[39] This follows the timeframe investigated by the National Truth Commission (NTC).

[40] But according to Vital (2015, p . 41) "a team integrated to the CT exists in Recife, subsidized by the Government of Pernambuco."

9.1 Psychological reparation during the Brazilian turn to memory

Forms of psychological assistance to people affected by the dictatorship were already being experimented by autonomous organizations engaged with the struggle for memory, truth, and justice, such as *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais* (GTNM), relying on financial support of international agents (e.g., the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture) during the 1990s. While demanding efforts from the State to recover the truth and promote justice about the crimes committed by the dictatorship (1964–1985), these groups also created a therapeutic apparatus to assist dictatorial victims. In the 2000s, although maintaining their independence, they started to have dialogues with the government and demand investment in psychological forms of reparation. As the CT coordinator and member of GTNM stated, these dialogues were consonant with the country's investments in forms of reckoning with the past in the 2000s, and with the group's understanding that the State has the responsibility to repair the atrocities committed by its agents (Vital, 2015, p. 41).

The genealogy of the CT in 2013, as noted by Magaldi (2022, p. 167), corresponded to the new forms of articulation between social movements and the government, but also to international institutions' recommendations made during the "fertile" period that began in 2007. This could be observed in the approximation between government and social movements articulated by the director of the Human Rights Special Secretariat Paulo Vanucchi (a former political prisoner during the dictatorship) and the President of the Amnesty Commission Paulo Abrão, as well as in the recommendations made by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights regarding the Gomes Lund case in 2010, which stated that "the [Brazilian] State has the obligation to provide free medical and psychological treatment to victims' relatives" (CIDH, 2010).

In this context, in 2012 the Federal Government, through the Amnesty Commission and the Ministry of Justice, published a call to projects of psychological attention to people affected by State violence between 1946 and 1988 (the time scope set by the National Truth Commission, see Chapter 3). As mentioned above, four institutions were selected in three different states. In Rio de Janeiro, the clinical team of *Instituto Projetos Terapêuticos* (Institute for Therapeutic Projects) linked to *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais* (GTNM) was selected and proceeded to the creation of a centre for psychological support to victims of State violence and their relatives.

By considering the impossibility of dissociating the clinical work from political circumstances the project adopted a "clinical-political" approach (Kolker in Vital, 2015, p. 59), associating the processing of traumatic experiences to socio-political struggles that characterized their therapeutic sessions and also to their partnerships with schools, universities, and social movements. By doing so they created spaces for the elaboration and exchange of traumatic experiences aiming to connect individual and social trauma, and to re-establish social ties that were fragmented by the military regime.

Walter Benjamin once said that the art of narrating was dying as the forces of production evolve and with them the invention of the romance and the diffusion of information. According to him during the First World War "soldiers came back from the battlefield in silence (…) poor in communicable experiences" (1987, p. 198). Such poverty was related not to the quality of the experiences themselves but to the means available for communicating them; the lack of appropriate spaces for narrating the pain might condemn it to silence.

Like Benjamin's returning soldiers, victims of State violence during the Brazilian dictatorship were also led to silence their experiences by the lack of appropriate spaces and incentives, and by post-dictatorial investment in what I have been referring to as reconciliation through forgetting. As noted by Filho (in Vital et al., 2015), this happens as if the means of torture used by the State agents in the past were extended to the present through the denial of

spaces for victims to reckon with their suffering within outlets of mass communication, public institutions, and the common spaces of the quotidian. This lack of means to narrate violent experiences also affects future generations that grow up not being able to name the traumatic presence of their families' past.

In contrast, the production and dissemination of testimonies have the power to enable subjective repositioning and to provide individuals with the possibility of naming and processing their experience. This is also important at the societal level; as witnesses of dehumanizing practices perpetrated by the military regime, dictatorial victims and their accounts can contribute, even more when appropriately publicized, to a general understanding of the individual and collective consequences of State violence in the past and in the present. In other words, if a society wishes to re-position itself regarding its own dictatorial history, it is important to provide all victims of State violence with the means to produce narratives about their experiences, and society with the means to apprehend them.

When the State recognizes its harm and chooses to repair it the status of victims also changes. From the passive objects of State policies, victims become active witnesses and participating agents in the development of such policies. As noted by Abrão and Torelly (2010), State reparations, including psychological forms of reparations, give voice to those affected by the dictatorship and, as a consequence, might reverberate and contribute to the struggle for memory, truth, and justice. The emergence of the collective FN-MVJ can be understood as such a consequence of State investments in psychological reparation.

9.2 From the social construction of the victim to the collectivization of pain

On their webpage collective FN-MVJ defines itself as an autonomous supra-partisan group that was born out of the project *Clinicas do Testemunho* (CT) comprising a "second and third generation of [people] affected by the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship" (FN-MVJ, 2017). The role of the CT in reuniting generations affected by the military regime was also highlighted in my interviews with members of FN-MVJ. After attending the therapeutic sessions of CT in 2013 they felt a desire to meet other people participating in this same project; this led one of the CT members, Tania Kolker, to start facilitating these meetings. On 5 December 2014 the collective officially announced its creation during a public hearing held at the State Truth Commission of Rio de Janeiro (CEV-RJ) (see Image 40). On that occasion the group held discussions and presented a performance about the transgenerational effects of the State violence committed during the military regime.

To explain the trajectory of memory activist group FN-MVJ I will refer to the history that founding member Leo Alves shared during our interview. By addressing Leo's history it is possible to understand how the recognition of one's own transgenerational trauma in connection to the world (in a non-melancholic way) can lead to political engagement against the repetition of such traumas. Leo, born in 1978, a musician and researcher, is the grandson of Mario Alves, a journalist member of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) who was tortured and killed by the military regime in January 1970. As described in Chapter 2 following the 1964 coup against the so-called yet invisible "communist threat," the military regime developed a bipartisan system (MDB vs ARENA) to determine the illegality of all the other political parties in Brazil. A large section of the PCB opposed armed struggle and insisted on institutional forms of resisting the dictatorship, but some members—such as Mario Alves and Carlos Marighella—did not agree with the party's orientations and resigned (or were expelled), from then to conduct more combative forms of resistance. Mario Alves helped create the *Partido Comunista Brasileiro Revolucionário* (PCBR, Brazilian Revolutionary Communist Party) with this goal in mind but was arrested by the military dictatorship, submitted to the worst forms of torture including impalement, which led to his death.

Image 40: 5 December 2014. Public Hearing and Founding of group FN-MVJ. Retrieved from: https://filhosenetos.wordpress.com/2018/08/05/historico-filhos-e-netos-3a-parte/

Following Alves's assassination, his family initiated their crusade to obtain information about his mortal remains and demand justice from the State, but his body was never found. As already explored in Chapter 4 (Persisting Absences), the State's omission of information about victims' mortal remains left relatives "tied to a loss that never becomes real" (Schwab, 2010, p. 3). Victims' relatives were commonly left on their own with no support from the State to elaborate initiatives to uncover and publicize the truth about the violence that affected their lives. Thus, the role of preserving and telling victims' stories, which demanded a constant search for symbolic and material resources, was frequently understood by relatives as a duty. Lucinha Alves, Mario Alves's daughter and Leo's mother, stated in 2015 during another CEV public hearing that: "to me, she (her mother) died because of the long burden of losing her partner-in-struggle. (…) I must know what happened to my father. My mom died; I was left to tell this story" (CEV, 2015, p. 425).

Leo grew up in this environment as part of a family not only directly affected by but also actively committed to the struggle for memory, truth, and justice. Attending related events and meetings such as those promoted by the GTNM he was influenced by a family frame that was open about its history; but due to his young age he could not fully comprehend (or be told) the details involving his grandfather's torture and death. This started to change as Leo entered adolescence and was able to access and understand such details.

When asked about moments that marked his engagement with the traumatic legacies of the dictatorship Leo mentioned the impact of a booklet celebrating his grandfather's history on the 25th anniversary of his death. The booklet, produced by his former party the PCB, combined family and archive documents and contained pictures and descriptions of the torture methods applied on him:

> I was sixteen, [it was] a homage to the 25 years of my grandfather's death, (…) there was a booklet published by his former party PCB [Brazilian Communist Party] with photos, him and my grandmother getting married, and I focused on the description of his torture and on the dialogues with one of his torturers, and that hit me (…) that moment marked me. (Leo, P3)

Perhaps his contact with such an object of memory, produced outside the mediation of his family in the context of a political party, enabled a deeper comprehension of his family history, his country's history, and the connections between them. Gabriele Schwab (2010) refers to these private-public connections by dialoguing with Jacques Derrida's notions of the archive as a mark of the institutional passage from the private to the public, as well as with Marianne Hirsch's approach to *postmemory*, affirming that the process of trauma is mediated through private individual histories, and recognizing that some artefacts have the power to connect private and public history. Leo's individual family silences (inherent even in politically engaged families such as Leo's) and the already mentioned State silence seem to have been momentarily broken by the PCB's booklet while giving shape to the interdependence of the private and the public.

This striking moment, which marked Leo when he was teenager around 1995, also needs to be understood in relation to the politics of memory during that time. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, during the 1990s Brazilian government policies for compensating dictatorial victims were limited to economic redressing as the country invested in a form a reconciliation by forgetting. While this contributed to legitimate the category of victims in the post-dictatorship, it also restricted this same category to passive agents of State redress policies. Thus, given the available signifiers to identify those affected by dictatorial State violence, this moment represented Leo's comprehension of his grandfather's (and his family's) condition of victimhood within the limits imposed on this category by the political circumstances of that time.

The limitations of this category—of "victim of the dictatorship"—might in some circumstances also empty the political meanings of the victims' struggles. As observed by Figueiredo and Aydos (2013), the historical and political circumstances of the social construction of dictatorial victims in Brazil varied across time in parallel with the expansion of the victims' voice in public spaces—this started to be elaborated in the 1980s and was re-signified in the 1990s to incorporate a politicized connotation. But it was only in the 2000s, with the distancing of the traumatic event and the State's investment in policies such as the National Truth Commission (NTC), that this category would start to incorporate the perspective of "heroes" or "resistors" and become an expression of political empowerment.

The expressions of empowerment encouraged by the NTC can be observed in reference to Leo's account of his experience in two hearings he attended in 2013 during the Commission's investigation of his grandfather's case—one was his mother's and the other the military officer accused of torturing Mário Alves, Major Jacarandá.[41] As already observed in Chapter 5, Leo could be face to face with this figure known as his grandfather's torture and even question him outside the hearing. It is not difficult to understand Leo's appreciation for the NTC.

This trajectory of the category of victim of the dictatorship finds parallel in Leo's history from the striking moment described earlier and his engagement in memory activism. Although he was able to understand the meaning of growing up in a family directly affected

[41] The State Truth Commission of Rio de Janeiro (part of the National Truth Commission) heard, in 2013, different people in the context of investigations about Mario Alves's case. Besides his daughter Lucia Alves, and former political prisoners who were arrested and tortured in the premises of the DOI-Codi, in Rio de Janeiro, was Major Jacarandá, the only person accused of torture who agreed to testify at the commission. Videos of the hearing are available at CNV (2014b).

by the dictatorship, it was in the context of the NTC and his grandfather's hearing, and after participating in the therapeutic sessions of the Clinicas do Testemunho (CT), in 2013, that he started to incorporate the notion of militant and memory activist to his recognition of the transgenerational effects of dictatorial trauma. By being able to testify, Leo could elaborate new understandings of himself, and of his family's and his country's history, as he declared in our interview:

> I used to say, 'I grew up in the democratic period, so I don't think I was as affected as my mother.' But there was always this thing stuck in my chest, which is almost something that has no name, something unheard, that is difficult to give a language to. So, psychoanalysis helps a lot in unblocking this silencing, giving expression to what has been blocked by, I don't know, maybe the parents didn't want to talk or hear, or maybe the State didn't want to hear, didn't construct memory, did not provide a place to speak. (…) So, I said 'I want to meet these people from my generation, I want to know about these similar stories, and this time not only for my grandfather's history, not for my mother's history, (…) it is for myself too, for me and for my comrades, for me and for the whole country.' Society [as a whole] is children and grandchildren [of victims of the dictatorship]. (Leo, P3)

If, as explained in Chapter 3, the lack of social inscription of the identity and history of dictatorial victims helped maintain State violence as an ongoing threat, the possibility of testifying, of enunciating, can be understood not only as a step towards recovering from the psychological effects of torture, but also as a form of politicization of victims through the recognition of their active role within the intersections of their own history and that of the country. According to Tania Kolker (in Vital et al., 2015, p. 64), we can understand the testimony as a performative act "in which the utterance describes what has happened but also triggers new processes of subjectivation, producing a new field of visibilities and 'sayabilities.'" By publicly denouncing their perpetrators victims can contextualize their sufferings, understand that they are not isolated in this history and leave the private dimension that characterizes ideas of fragility to occupy places of resistance. In this sense collectivizing the pain can also mean politicizing it.

9.3 From the collectivization of pain to memory activism

As explained earlier Leo's desire to engage actively in the struggle for memory, truth, and justice was influenced by historical and political conditions during the 2000s in Brazil, more specifically during the period referred here as the country's turn to memory (2007–2014). In this sense, the beginning of the National Truth Commission (CNV) in 2012 contributed to his recognition of himself as a victim who has an active role within the country's process of reckoning with its past. This recognition marked the beginning of his engagement with memory activism.

Drawing on the typology for comparative research on memory activists developed by Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021, p. 7), it is possible to affirm that changes in Brazil's political circumstances led the role of victim, which "is often the basis for symbolic or material redress-claims," to be replaced by that of the "resistors and heroes." This shift, which began to take place around the 2000s influenced the perception of different generations of memory activists about their positioning within the dictatorial past and its legacies in the present.

After participating in the CT Leo not only recognized himself as an heir of these "resistors and heroes"; he also recognized his own role in collectivizing the struggle to process ongoing legacies of the dictatorial past. As other participants have stated, they agreed to participate in the CT because they saw it as a new project that could be developed with their help. Instead of agreeing to be the object of a public policy they could be active actors within

this collective effort. The clinic-political space of the CT in this sense served as a point of departure for the development of a collective of children and grandchildren for memory, truth, and justice, aka FN-MVJ.

FN-MVJ began its activities in 2014, maintaining a partnership with the CT and serving as a space for exchanging and discussing the transgenerational effects of the dictatorship, but also developing actions committed to the agenda for memory, truth, and justice, and to addressing State violence from the past and the present (FN-MVJ, 2017). By adopting a political approach that assumes the interconnections between past and present the group frequently sides with movements of victims of ongoing forms of State violence, especially those originating in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. FN-MVJ activities involve researching and promoting discussions about the transgenerational effects of State violence, as well as producing political actions (from street protests to writing public letters) that aim to render visible the ways legacies of the dictatorship materialize in the present.

Since 2014 the group meets weekly and their meetings are guided by topics suggested by themselves and coordinated by a different member each time. The group's members make sure that everyone has a chance to speak, to coordinate sessions, and to participate actively in the decisions about its general agenda and specific priorities in a horizontal manner.

The images below (Images 41, 42, 43 and 44) illustrate the types of connection between past and present observed in the group's activities. The collective engaged with other social movements and campaigns such as OcupaDOPS (OccupyDOPS[42]) protesting what they recognized as ongoing forms of State oppression. The connections include the placement of contemporary *desaparecidos* such as Amarildo Dias de Souza, *desaparecido* in 2013 by the military police, in the sign (Image 42) next to that showing Rubens Paiva, *desaparecido* by the

Image 41: Demonstration in the International Airport of Rio de Janeiro during the Olympic Games of 2016. The action aimed to denounce past and present human rights violations promoted by the State. Retrieved from: https://filhosenetos.wordpress.com/2018/08/05/historico-filhos-e-netos-3a-parte/

[42] *OcupaDops*, translated as OccupyDops, was a campaign to transform the former building of *Delegacia de Ordem Política e Social* (Police Stations of Social and Political Order, or DOPS) in Rio de Janeiro into a site of memory.

Image 42: Poster announcing activities happening in the context of the Semana da Anistia [Amnesty Week] in 2017. The poster parallels the history of politician Rubens Paiva, assassinated by the dictatorship in 1971, and bricklayer Amarildo Dias de Souza, assassinated by the Military Police in 2013. These posters were shared on the FN-MVJ webpage and other social media. Retrieved from:
https://filhosenetos.wordpress.com/2018/08/05/historico-filhos-e-netos-3a-parte/

Image 43: March 2017. Production of banners and signs during the demonstration to "de-celebrate" the April 1964 Coup. Retrieved from: https://filhosenetos.wordpress.com/2018/08/05/historico-filhos-e-netos-3a-parte/

Image 44: March 2017 Action to de-commemorate the Coup of April 1st. Retrieved from: https://filhosenetos.wordpress.com/2018/08/05/historico-filhos-e-netos-3a-parte/

dictatorship in 1971. Another juxtaposition involves making connections between contemporary coups such as the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and the *golpe* (coup) of 1964, evident in the banner produced for the demonstration against the pension reforms proposed by President Michel Temer in 2017 (Image 44).

The temporal dynamics noted in the group's internal and external activities reflect the political approach to trauma processing proposed by the CT, which sees the private trauma connected to the social trauma, and "the affirmation of pain and absence [connected] to the affirmation of a political action mobilized, sensitive, and aware; present [connected] to the past and the future" (Filho in Vital, 2015, p. 25). The space for narrating the silences and fractures provided by the CT was expanded by FN-MVJ to embrace other forms by which victims of State violence can actively take part in their own history. This attempt to create bridges between transgenerational trauma and the social and political reality around them can be observed in a more complex way in the artistic production of some members of the group.

When asked about the influence of personal trauma in his music production, Leo is careful to highlight agency and to not fall into a deterministic perspective: "transgenerational effects are things that stay, that cross generations and their art; [but] it doesn't mean that someone's art *is* a result of that." However, the presence of the dictatorial past is explicit in some of his works, such as the piece *Tortura nunca mais* (Torture Never Again) released as the fourth track in the album *Data*, which draws in an experimental way on the audio material collected from the public hearing of his grandfather's case (Alves Vieira, 2021). The piece combines testimonies of former political prisoners with torturer Major Valter Jacarandá, highlighting moments in which Jacarandá acknowledges the systematic practice of torture by State agents during the dictatorship.

Leo’s account of his compositions frequently emphasized notions of “fragments” and “collective production.” While talking about another of his pieces called *Estilhaços* (Shrapnel) he explained how he composes using a guided improvisation in which several musicians contribute with any sound source to a collective construction, thereby creating music by exchanging and adding fragmented elements. This fragmented language can be understood in relation to what Schwab (2010, p. 54) calls “haunting language”: “Language itself becomes haunted, and haunted language uses a gap inside speech to point to silenced history. Haunted language refers to what is unspeakable though ellipsis, indirection and detour, or fragmentation and deformation.” In a sense, the fragmented language of Leo’s sound pieces alludes to his attempt to “force the ghosts of violent histories into the open” (Schwab, 2010, p. 55). At the same time, their collective execution alludes to the potential of “collectivizing and politicizing” (Coimbra, 2002, p. 184) this “exorcism.”

When asked about the relevance of such artistic works to the struggle for memory, truth, and justice, Leo is again careful not to fall into a deterministic, pamphleteer approach. Leo’s position recalls French philosopher Jacques Ranciére’s perspective on the art/politics relationship, according to which art is not political necessarily for the messages it carries, but for how it affects the “distribution of the sensible which can be disrupted by other rhythms, other functioning dynamics” (Leo, P3). Perhaps the aesthetics of Leo’s pieces allude to the political potential of collective effort in processing, putting together, what has been fragmented by State violence.

Image 45: Mariana Bertoche (P2), fourth stage of artwork *Rota Transbordada* (2015) during activities promoted by movement *OcupaDOPS* in Rio de Janeiro, 2015. (Lydia B., 2019).

Artistic production as a form of giving language to silences and fragmented identities can also be observed in the artworks produced by Mariana (P2), another member of FN-MVJ. In her work *Rota Transbordada: Uma Cartografia Afetiva* (Overflow Routes: An Affective Cartography), produced in April 2015, and mentioned earlier in this thesis, the artist uses red threads to mark the ground in front of the police building known as DOPS-GB in Rio de

Janeiro. Divided into four temporal stages, the red fabric used to mark the ground gets thicker in each stage until its final performance on April 8 during a demonstration of the movement OcupaDOPS (OccupyDOPS) in which cultural activities, such as a samba performance, took place on top of her work (Image 45):

> This moved me because in a certain way my work involves activating these spaces and memories so being there with the OcupaDOPS movement was essential so that this overflow could be directed towards the collective, to these cultural-political activities, and not restricted to my own private history. (Mariana, P2)

In Mariana's accounts of the social and political dimensions of her work, as exemplified in the quotation above, it is possible to discern a concern with connecting her private history to the effects of dictatorial experience within the whole country. By gradually widening the red fabric the artist alludes to the overflow of private memory towards the collective. As in Leo's artworks, and as in the activities developed by group FN-MVJ, in Mariana's cartography the individual processing of traumatic experiences takes place in dialogue with the broader social and political circumstances and, even more in this specific public performance, with the public space.

Conclusion

Since its creation, FN-MVJ and its members have invested in forms of memory activism aiming to collectivize their individual traumas. It can be said that they moved from silenced individual trauma to being carrier agents of cultural trauma, or memory activists. However, their activities were interrupted in 2018 following the assassination of Marielle Franco[43] and, later that year, the Presidential election of Jair Bolsonaro. These were highlighted by both my interviewees as events that affected them individually and collectively. By the time of our interview in 2019 the interviewees mentioned that the collective was going through a recovery process, holding weekly meetings again (although through Zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic), and planning new activities. This ongoing recovery highlights yet another aspect of victims' memory activism in Brazil—processing dictatorial traumas normally happens in parallel with processing new traumas that are somehow related to the initial trauma produced by the dictatorship.

The analysis of group FN-MVJ presented in this thesis, from its conception in the context of the Clinics of Testominy (CT) to its projects of memory activism, demonstrates the potential of "clinical-political" spaces of witnessing for members of a third generation of people affected by the dictatorship. By being able to narrate their own history in relation to ongoing political struggles—particularly the struggle for memory, truth, and justice, and against impunity about the crimes committed by the State—the group managed to confront the passive condition of victimhood produced by the post-dictatorial silence of State violence by participating actively in ongoing struggles. In a sense the trajectory of group FN-MVJ illustrates the possibility of transforming the pain of victims of different generations into an instrument of political struggle.

I have demonstrated in this Chapter that the construction of the category of victim takes place in relation to existing political circumstances, and changes in these circumstances might enable its resignification. The post-dictatorial Brazilian government's investments in memory

[43] Marielle Franco was an Afro-Brazilian, gay, single mother, and councillor of the city of Rio de Janeiro and activist of human rights critical of police violence against poor communities. Due to her activism, she was murdered in 2018 and ongoing investigations point to the local militias. For more information in English see Ruhfus (2019).

policies in the 2000s encouraged victims from different generations to voice their experiences regarding the State violence promoted by the military regime. Particularly influenced by the CT and the hearings with former prisoners and torturers promoted by the National Truth Commission (2012–2014), a sense of political duty was incorporated into the status of victim.

This shift in the status of victim was essential to the creation of FN-MVJ and the forms of memory activism developed by the group. This is reflected in the group's engagement with contemporary movements against State violence, but also in the way they connect present and past in their collective actions and individual artworks. This could be observed in their participation in contemporary protests such as those against pension reform in 2017 and how they connected the coup of 1964 to the impeachment of 2016. In addition, although in a more encrypted manner, the artistic projects developed by Leo (P3) and Mariana (P4), both members of FN-MVJ, function as attempts to break the transgenerational consequences of silence by collectivizing their own pain.

The analysis provided above stressed the potential of publicizing and politicizing the traumatic experience of State violence in order to process it and avoid its repetition. By publicizing their history victims can see their pain reflected in the histories narrated by other victims. Victims can realise that their suffering is not a consequence of an isolated event but a result of an institutionalized practice of the State that persists in the present and that contributed to victims' repositioning from being passive objects of State policies to being participants in their elaboration of such policies. Finally, the case analysed in this chapter demonstrates the importance of government support to initiatives interested in exploring the potential of transforming individual pain into an instrument of politicized citizenship.

CHAPTER 10: FROM PARALYZING FEAR TO MOBILIZING RAGE

> *It is really a destabilizing force, the escalation of fascism and the revisionism of these stories. (...) There is a layer of a paralysing fear when we sometimes think the collective is over and having the impression that there is nothing we can do to make a difference. But there is another layer which is a wrath, a mobilizing rage, which is precisely the opposite (...). Mariana (P2).*

The year of 2018 was a destabilizing period for those engaged in the movement for memory, truth, and justice in Brazil. On March 14, councillor and human rights activist Marielle Franco was killed in Rio de after she denounced criminal partnerships between the militias and the State. On April 7, the prominent figure within the Brazilian left and main candidate in the upcoming elections, former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (a.k.a. Lula), was imprisoned for the alleged crimes of passive corruption and money laundering. And on October 28, the ardent defender of Brazilian dictatorship, Jair Bolsonaro, won the presidential elections.

Bolsonaro's election was a "slap in the face," as expressed by Mariana Bertoche (P2). Initially surfing the wave of anti-governmental protests in 2013, his calls for a (re)turn to an original (although imaginary) State of order gathered increasing momentum in the leadup to the 2018 Presidential election. After his election, governmental reckoning with dictatorial memory started to take a reverse direction. Projects created to support memory policies such as the *Comissão Especial de Mortos e Desaparecidos* (CEMPD, Special Commission of Dead and Disappeared) and the *Comissão de Anistia* (CA, Amnesty Commission), had key members replaced by advocates of the Armed Forces, while parliamentary declarations in favour of the dictatorship proliferated, such as the one by deputy (and Jair Bolsonaro's son) Eduardo Bolsonaro suggesting the violent Institutional Act Number 5 (AI-5) had been a response to left-wing protests (Mazui, 2019b).

This chapter examines the ways that the resurgence of right-wing populism, embodied in the success of pro-dictatorship figure Bolsonaro, affected Brazilian activists working toward memory, truth, and justice. While in Chapters 5 to 9 I have focused on key actions and events that took place between 2010–2017 I now turn to the period preceding and succeeding Jair Bolsonaro's presidential victory (2016–2021). Drawing upon semi-structured interviews I consider activists' individual and collective accounts regarding this period. I demonstrate how the rise of dictatorial nostalgia in the public sphere and governmental stances affected the third generation's memory activism. I argue that the shift from the moderately affirmative government of Dilma Rousseff to the extreme historical revisionism (and indeed, denialism) of Jair Bolsonaro configured new structures of political opportunity. The limits of transitional justice were now erased with the impossibility of any transitional justice at all, and the dictatorial legacies embedded in Brazilian institutions now proliferated within and outside the government. In tandem with feelings of disappointment and fear, activists within the movement for memory, truth, and justice in Brazil sought to innovate their repertoire of actions in order to maintain their general claims while considering the urgency of new demands.

In Section 10.1, drawing on the theoretical framework developed by Svetlana Boym (2001), this Chapter considers the rise of dictatorial nostalgia in the public sphere by observing political and news media discourses during the period between the 2013 protests and the 2016 impeachment of Dilma Rousseff. Returning to the period of the Brazilian "turn to memory" (2007–2012), I highlight the resistance of sectors of the Armed Forces against the National Truth Commission (NTC), and clarify how narratives celebrating the dictatorship "survived" the NTC. I then focus on governmental initiatives regarding dictatorial memory during the governments of Michel Temer (2016–2018) and Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2022). In 10.2 the

chapter explores some of the tactics of memory activism that were developed in reaction to this context. By drawing on interviews with artists and activists, I identify some of the challenges imposed by the new political, social and sanitary (considering COVID-19) context under Bolsonaro's government and consider responses from memory activists. My aim here is to understand the ways that memory activism has been shaped by such a dramatic change from "memory's turn" to a boom of dictatorial nostalgia.

As I indicated earlier in this thesis, the ways the past is instrumentalized for political ends correspond to changes in economic, political and social contexts. The labours of memory (Jelin, 2003) depend on the organization and selection of what is to be recalled and what is to be forgotten. The criteria for such organizing and selecting, including and excluding, frequently change with the advent of new social actors and their ethical and political commitments. In Chapter 3 I described the silences over which Brazilian post-dictatorial democracy was constructed. The concerted and slow transition to democracy, put forward by the military themselves, set the standards for the type of memory policies and transitional justice to be implemented during subsequent democratic governments. Following the work of Bauer (2014), Schneider (2011a; 2013) and Atencio (2014) (among others), my research explored how the main Government initiatives to provide a better understanding of the dictatorship period have been constrained by the institutional and political legacies of the dictatorship itself. As shown in Chapters 4 and 5, such legacies have been denounced and fought against by victims of the dictatorship, their relatives, and other advocates struggling for the right to memory, truth, and justice, with the emergence of several activist collectives between 2010 and 2014 during the country's first National Truth Commission. At the same time, there was a continuous counter-movement against what Bauer (2020) has characterized as the military "memory community"[44] or those who advocate for a version of Brazilian history that celebrates the military and minimises the State violence of the dictatorship era. While dictatorship victims' narratives received more political attention and visibility during the Brazilian turn to memory (2007–2014), this visibility began to attenuate from 2013 onwards, following the ascension of a conservative-authoritarian discourse and new forms of dictatorial nostalgia buttressed by the military memory community.

As described in Chapter 2, former guerrilla-member Dilma Rousseff, Lula's chief of staff, won the presidential elections of 2010 to be the first woman assigned to the position. Dilma's financial policies, however, did not produce the expected results and the country's economic growth experienced a deceleration over the next years. In 2013, the criticisms against Dilma's government increased and hit the streets in the form of social upheavals.

10.1 Chaotic protests and (un)usual signs of dictatorial nostalgia:

Presidential elections in Brazil's post-dictatorship era have been marked by sharp political polarization and old forms of negotiation. Apart from Sarney (PDS, former ARENA) and Collor (PRN), the country has been governed only by two parties since 1985: the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT, Labour Party), broadly (although not uniformly) representing the left-wing, progressive positions, and the *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* (PSDB, Brazilian Social Democrat Party), representing the right-wing and conservative political positions. Despite their political differences, in terms of dealing with dictatorial legacies both parties have been relying on "the old tradition of conciliation that marks the political culture of our country," as stated by historian Carlos Fico in his *História do Brasil contemporâneo: da Morte de Vargas aos dias atuais* (History of Contemporary Brazil: From the Death of Vargas

[44] As Bauer says, "Even though identities are conceived in permanent interaction and negotiation, and modify across time, it is possible to affirm that 'memory communities' exist in which a certain report about the past has more or less stability" (Bauer, 2020, p. 176).

to the Present Day) (2015). This has placed limits on discussions about the role of the military in the dictatorship era, including ongoing reluctance to engage with the language of human rights (see Martins Filho, 2021b; Benetti 2020; Batista 2008).

The Presidential elections of 2010 appeared to promise a wholesale shift toward more explicit discussions of State violence during the dictatorship. Disputes between Presidential candidates Dilma Rousseff (PTB) and José Serra (PSDB) included discussions of their respective relationships to the dictatorship: Serra's moderate resistance as a middle-class student leader was opposed to Dilma's combative resistance as a member of guerrilla groups. Dilma's victory ignited criticisms from those who would characterize her as a former "terrorist" supposedly benefiting from government's restitutions (Bauer, 2020). With the beginning of the National Truth Commission two years after Rousseff's victory in the polls, disputes around the dictatorial past started to emerge more frequently in the public sphere. While young activists developed tactics to enhance public discussions about the military regime and its human rights violations (see Chapters 5 to 9), members of the military memory community sought to obstruct them. The rhetoric of these opposing discourses can be observed in Congressional declarations during 2012 and 2013:

> This 'Commission of scoundrels' is only good to mock the Armed Forces who always stood by democracy. (Deputy Jair Bolsonaro, PP-RJ, October 10, 2012)
>
> This Commission is part of a Marxist process that is being continued in our country and aims to dismantle the structures of resistance against Marxism since 1964. (Deputy Arolde de Oliveira, PSD-RS, November 7, 2012).
>
> Stop persecuting the military with this so-called Truth Commission. What is this Commission Mrs. President? Your Truth Commission is a big lie! (Deputy Jair Bolsonaro, PP-RJ, April 23, 2013).

In 2013, opposition against the National Truth Commission started to capitalize on the constant attacks on the government. It is estimated that more than one million Brazilians took to the streets during June 2013. Initially aiming to oppose rises in public transport fares, the protests that began in São Paulo on June 6, led by the *Movimento Passe Livre* (MPL, Free Fare Movement[45]), expanded to encompass other cities and to include more diverse and sometimes conflicting political demands.

The expansion of the 2013 protests can be explained first by the relevance of the Free Fare Movement, which found adherents across the country; second, by the weakening of Dilma Rousseff's administration and the criticisms of her economic models and of upcoming major sports' events such as the FIFA Confederations Cup (2013), the FIFA World Cup (2014), and the Olympic Games (2016); and third, by the intense police repression of the first protests, sparkling subsequent reactions in the streets. In her study of the protests between 2013 and 2016 in Brazil, Maria da Glória Gohn (2017) identifies three key moments: (1) June 2013 and the arrival of new political actors; (2) 2014 and the emergence of counter currents; (3) 2015 and the return of the multitude to the streets. She also builds on the work of political scientist André Singer (2013), who divides the first moment (June 2013) into three phases, lasting roughly one week each: the first phase refers to São Paulo's main protests, from June 6 to 13; the second beginning on June 17, when the MPL gathered 75,000 people in São Paulo, and was supported by protests in other cities; and the third phase, from June 21 to the end of the month, when the movement split and generated protests with other demands (e.g., reduction of road

[45] The Free Fare Movement is an autonomous movement founded in São Paulo the early 2000s (MPL, 2021). l

tolls, opposition to the *Programa Mais Médicos*).[46] The fragmentation of MPL's original demands gave way to a plurality of political claims that ranged from "Eco-socialists to Fascist impulses, passing through different grades of reformism and liberalism" (Singer, 2013, p. 32).

As a wider background context for these protests, Singer (2013) identifies possible economic causes, such as an increase in the cost of living for the middle classes, to explain the rise of political centrism (rather than leftism) that formed the majority of the third phase of the 2013 protests. Gohn (2017, p. 111) highlights the exhaustion of partisan politics and the crisis of institutional legitimacy to explain the emergence of "new groups and movements with other repertoires, languages and performances, conservative or liberal." More recently, Rocha (2019) identified the role of organized (and sometimes financed) actors of the right and far-right in the pluralization of the 2013 protests. For its part, the project *Grafias de Junho* (June Spellings) mapped the messages contained on banners, posters, and graffiti during the protests of June 2013. [47] Exploring the graphic production of that time, the head of the project Roberto Andrés affirms that one of the most phrases used was, "Sorry for the inconvenience, we are renovating the country," demonstrating some kind of optimism for wholesale political and social reform. Despite heavy (sometimes misogynist) criticism of Dilma and her government, claims for military intervention and for a new dictatorship were practically inexistent.

Taken collectively, these studies support the broad claim that MPL's original and ostensibly left-wing demand to block a rise in public transport fares shifted into a volatile coalition of political actors with a broad-reaching opposition to the left-wing government of Dilma Rousseff. During this time, some explicitly left-wing actors did manage to strengthen their networks through parallel protests such as the *Marcha da Maconha* (Legalize Marijuana Protests) and the *Marcha das Vadias* (Slut Walk Protests), as well as protests against mass public expenditures, such as those against the FIFA Confederation Cup (2013) and the FIFA World Cup (2014). However, the more enduring impact of the June 2013 protests was the consolidation of an anti-corruption rhetoric that, in a similar manner to 1964, was mobilized by liberal groups to endorse radically anti-democratic solutions and even military intervention. In São Paulo, in July 2013, a protest organized through social media called for the "March of the Family with God, in Defence of Life, Freedom, Nation, Democracy, and against Communism," making a clear reference to the "March of Family with God for Freedom" from 1964 (Image 46). Like their predecessors, these protestors also demanded a military intervention since, according to its organizers, the country was experiencing a communist threat (Marcha 'Em Defesa da Liberdade,' 2013) This anti-corruption discourse increased in 2014 during the World Cup and during the elections, especially as the Labour Party became embroiled in high profile scandals. During the opening of the FIFA World Cup in São Paulo, the President was booed and, as Lissovsky and Aguiar (2015, p. 36) observes, "the people did not limit themselves to the usual catcalls, but the jeers assumed an uncommonly sexual character ('Oy, Dilma, go take it up your ass!' and 'Oy, Dilma, go fuck yourself!')."

In 2014, the National Truth Commission delivered a final report with 29 key recommendations. However, instead of contributing to a new public conversation about addressing the legacies of the dictatorship, the release of the report coincided with the beginning of the parliamentary coup against Dilma Rousseff (a.k.a the 2016 Impeachment), within which pro-dictatorship rhetoric acquired new political traction:

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[46] *Programa Mais Médicos* (More Doctors Program) was a government initiative launched by Dilma Rousseff's administration in July 2013 aiming to cater for the lack of doctors in lower-class and country-side areas. The importation of Cuban doctors generated reactions especially within liberal movements and right-wing sectors of the Congress.

[47] The *Project Grafias de Junho* was developed by Roberto Andrés as a part of his doctorate at Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism in the University of São Paulo (USP) (Grafias de Junho, 2013).

> You should be ashamed because it was either you crying or the whole Brazilian nation, because Brazil was sunk in communism. Is it difficult to understand this? The truth is what tortures these nostalgic Maoists, these nostalgic Bolsheviks, these nostalgic Marxists. (Deputy Jair Bolsonaro, December 11, 2014).

A former military official, expelled from the army for insubordination and being undisciplined (Martins Filho, 2021a) Jair Bolsonaro had long been known for his polemical speeches. In 2009 in a criticism against the research group looking for mortal remains in the Araguaia region, he placed a banner in the congress that read "only dogs look for bones" (Congresso em foco, 2019); in 2013 Bolsonaro tried to stop a parliamentary investigation in a former torture centre, creating a turmoil and punching one of the deputies (Mendonça, 2013); and in 2014, during the works of the NTC he spat on the sculpture of deputy Rubens Paiva, a Congressmen victim of the dictatorship (Avelino, 2018). Also, in 2014, during the parliamentary session to recall the 1964 coup and the atrocities of the military regime, Jair Bolsonaro, alongside supporters, hung a long banner in the Parliament room in which could be read: "Congratulations military of 31 March 1964. Thanks to you Brazil is not Cuba" (Image 47).

Image 46: Protest in São Paulo (Masp), July 11, 2013. The larger banner says "March of Families Against Communism" and the smaller white one says "Help [us] Armed Forces." Retrieved from: https://www.terra.com.br/noticias/brasil/politica/sp-marcha-em-defesa-da-liberdade-pede-volta-dos-militares-ao-poder,e5d130a67cacf310VgnVCM4000009bcceb0aRCRD.html

Bolsonaro's celebrations of the last dictatorship and its perpetrators started to gain more visibility amongst those discontented with traditional parties and politicians leading to claims for a military intervention as a plausible solution to end systematic corruption within governmental institutions. Throughout 2015, public demonstrations took place in several cities against Dilma Rousseff, accusing the President of several kinds of misconduct, from poor expenditure of public funds to being part of an international plot to install communism in the country. Led primarily by groups such as Movimento Brasil Livre (MBL, Free Brazil Move-

A8 poder ★★★ QUARTA-FEIRA, 2 DE ABRIL DE 2014 FOLHA DE S.PAULO

Deputados federais e outras pessoas presentes em sessão ontem na Câmara protestam contra cartaz em defesa do golpe militar de 1964 e da ditadura

Deputado elogia golpe e tumultua sessão na Câmara sobre ditadura

Jair Bolsonaro foi impedido de falar; presentes deram as costas a ele e cerimônia foi encerrada

Duas mulheres se agrediram no plenário e tiveram que ser separadas por deputado do Solidariedade

DE BRASÍLIA

A sessão solene realizada ontem pela Câmara dos Deputados para lembrar os 50 anos do golpe militar de 1964 foi marcada por confusão e teve de ser interrompida por dois momentos.

O primeiro foi após duas mulheres terem se agredido dentro do plenário. A confu- [...] principal defensor, no Congresso, da ditadura militar, estendeu uma faixa nas galerias do plenário com os dizeres: "Parabéns militares 31/ março/64. Graças a vocês o Brasil não é Cuba".

Deputados e pessoas contrárias ao golpe vaiaram Bolsonaro. Neste momento, Ivone Luzardo, ligada à Associação das Mulheres de Militares, teve o cartaz que erguia arrancado das suas mãos por uma assessora parlamentar.

As duas mulheres se agrediram e precisaram ser separadas pelo deputado Domingos Dutra (SDD-MA).

Idealizadora da solenida- [...] discursar. "Pouco adiantarão atos de repúdio ao golpe militar de 1964 se não vierem acompanhados de ações concretas no sentido de fazer justiça às vítimas da ditadura", disse. Outros quatro deputados também discursaram.

Em seguida, Bolsonaro subiu à tribuna para falar. No entanto, ele foi impedido pela maioria dos presentes. Segurando cartazes com fotos de perseguidos políticos e os dizeres "a voz que louva a ditadura calou a voz da cidadania", eles se viraram de costas para o deputado e entoaram o Hino Nacional.

A solenidade acabou sem- [...] rio-geral da Mesa, Mozart Viana, o regimento da Câmara afirma que não pode haver desrespeito ao orador. "Ficar de costas é o pior desrespeito. Eles ficaram de costas não só para o Bolsonaro, mas também para a Mesa", disse.

CENSURA

Em entrevista a jornalistas antes da sessão, Bolsonaro xingou uma repórter ao ser questionado sobre se não houve golpe militar no país.

Após chamá-la de idiota, ignorante e afirmar que ela deveria aprender a fazer jornalismo, ele disse que a repórter estava "censurada". [...] Eduardo Alves (PMDB-RN), criticou o encerramento da sessão sem que Bolsonaro pudesse falar. Para ele, o combinado era que todos os congressistas teriam direito à discursar na tribuna, independente da posição.

"O acertado era dar a palavra ao deputado Bolsonaro. Estava combinado este formato, e é direito dele. Depois eu soube que manifestações com algumas pessoas no plenário dando as costas, porque o regimento não permite, levou a não poder cumprir o combinado. Lamento profundamente, porque ele teria direito, sim, de dispor da pa- [...]

Evento na Folha discute economia pós-1964

Debate ocorre hoje na sede do jornal, às 19h30

DE SÃO PAULO

A **Folha** realiza hoje, às 19h30, a segunda rodada de debates sobre os 50 anos do golpe de 1964, desta vez com um enfoque econômico sobre o período em que os militares governaram o país.

O evento terá a participação do colunista do jornal Samuel Pessôa, pesquisador do Instituto Brasileiro de Economia da Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV); de Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, professor emérito de economia, teoria política e teoria social da FGV e ex-ministro da Fazenda (governo Sarney), da Administração e Reforma do Estado e da Ciência e Tecnologia (governo Fernando Henrique Cardoso); e de João Sayad, ex-ministro do Planejamento (governo Sarney).

Os debatedores discutirão o crescimento do PIB (Produto Interno Bruto) durante a ditadura militar, quando a economia cresceu [illegible] vezes e meia e a infraestrutura de transportes e comunicações se ampliou e se modernizou.

Abordarão também os impactos desencadeados pelas crises do petróleo e da dívida externa na economia brasileira nos anos 70 e 80.

O debate será no auditório da **Folha** (localizado na alameda Barão de Limeira, 425, 9º andar, São Paulo).

As inscrições para a discussão são gratuitas e podem ser efetuadas pelo telefone (11) 3224-3473 ou pelo e-mail eventofolha@grupofolha.com. Para finalizar a inscri- [...]

Image 47: *Folha de S. Paulo*. April 2, 2014. "Deputy celebrates coup and disturbs Parliamentry session about the dictatorship."

ment), Vem Pra Rua, and Revoltados Online, these demonstrators were normally dressed in the yellow shirt of Brazil's National Soccer Team, and were followed by hired cars with sound systems from which politicians such as Jair Bolsonaro delivered their speeches.

The positive reception of Bolsonaro's celebrations of the dictatorship era during this period led to an increase of such declarations. In the National Parliament session designated to approve the impeachment proceedings against Dilma, Bolsonaro used his voting time to celebrate the military regime and former torturers: "You lost in 1964 and lose now in 2016. For the memory of Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, the dread of Dilma Rousseff, for Brazil is above everything and God is above all, I vote yes" (Bauer, 2020, pp. 174–175). Brilhante Ustra, as already explained throughout this thesis, was the commander of the DOI-CODI of the 2nd Army in São Paulo between 1970 and 1974. He was identified in several legal actions as the commander of torture sessions at the DOI-CODI in São Paulo where President Dilma Rousseff was also tortured. According to Bauer (2020), Bolsonaro's declaration surprised many who have never heard of him, causing a sudden rise in the Google search mechanisms for the terms "Bolsonaro" and "Brilhante Ustra." At the same time, Bauer (2020) draws on Jelin (2003) to highlight that the efficacy of performative discourses is proportional to the authority enunciating them. In this respect, this public declaration during a televized voting session in the National Parliament, and the lack of an official reprimand for Bolsonaro's apology of torture, "granted legitimization to denialist narratives" (Bauer, 2020, p. 175) and resonated with the dictatorial moralism according to which torture can be celebrated in the name of Christian morality and the so-called traditional family.

Celebrations of the 1964 coup within military and right-wing sectors were never completely absent in Brazilian politics, but they did intensify from June 2013 to the pro-impeachment push in 2015 and, finally, to the end of Dilma Rousseff's Presidency in 2016. From this moment "members of the Armed Forces started to publicly abandon the neutrality and non-partisanship that characterized their declarations in most governments of the New Republic" (Godoy, 2021, p. 43). At the same time, pro-impeachment political discourses within governmental institutions and in street demonstrations across 2015 and 2016 mobilized narratives very similar to those that supported the 1964 coup such as the defence of "family and Christian values," the fight against "corruption," and the combat against the "communist threat," characterizing a tendency towards dictatorial nostalgia.

Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature, Svetlana Boym, developed a complex account of nostalgia in the book *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001). From a historical perspective, the word nostalgia was coined in 1688 by Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer who wanted to define "the sad mood originating from the desire for return to one's native land" (2001, p. 32). Examining mainly Swiss soldiers fighting overseas, amongst the common symptoms of nostalgia was an ability to "hear voices or see ghosts" (2001, p. 33). Nostalgia (from the Greek roots *nóstos*, return home, and *álgos/álgia,* longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. It is an emotional condition characterized by the loss of the original object of desire, and by its spatial and temporal displacement. The idea of home, in this sense, shall be understood beyond the physicality of place to include the yearning for a different time, be that "of our childhood, or the slower rhythms of our dreams" (Boym, 2001, p. 30). Dwelling between space and time, creativity and idealization, nostalgic longing can be easily connected to social and political utopias.

In *The Future of Nostalgia,* Boym (2001) does not seek to explain the psychological component of nostalgia, but rather the ways in which we make sense of our relationship to a potential "cultural experience": "Perhaps what is most missed during historical cataclysms and exile is not the past and the homeland exactly, but rather this potential space of cultural experience that one has shared with one's friends and compatriots that is based neither on nation nor religion but on elective affinities" (Boym, p. 123). The individual's relationship to such "elective affinities" is then separated by Boym into two categories of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia evokes a national past and future. It emphasizes the *nostos* and expects a complete rebuild of the "lost home." This kind of nostalgia has been embraced by different nationalist revivals around the globe and it engages in the "antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories" (Boym, 2001, p. 102). By contrast, reflective nostalgia evokes individual and historical time. Instead of expecting to rebuild the mythical place of the "lost home," it emphasizes the *algia,* the longing, the inevitability of time, and the imperfections of the process of remembering. It acknowledges the ruins of the "lost home" and enables a "defamiliarization and sense of distance that drives them to tell their story, to narrate the relationship between past, present, and future" (Boym, 2001, p. 117).

These two types of nostalgia, for Boym (2001), might overlap in their uses of symbols or iconography to evoke memory, but they differ in terms of the kinds of stories they tell about the past. While restorative nostalgia is expressed in the attempts of total reconstructions of monuments of the past, reflective nostalgia dwells in the ruins. In relation to the politics of memory, restorative nostalgia attempts to restore a tradition by means of symbolic formalization and ritualization, offering a collective script for individual longing. The space for mnemonic exchange can be reduced and politically manipulated with the aim of restabilizing a specific relationship to authority.

> Restorative nostalgia knows two main narrative plots, the restoration of origins and the conspiracy theory, characteristic of' the most extreme cases of contemporary nationalism fed on right-wing popular culture. The conspiratorial worldview reflects a nostalgia for a transcendental cosmology and a simple premodern conception of good and evil. (Boym, 2001, p. 104)

By contrast, reflective nostalgia does not focus on restoring but instead on assisting meditations on the passage of time. Sometimes relying on ironic, inconclusive, and fragmented narratives, in opposition to deadly serious restorative narratives, reflective nostalgia does not intend to provide a unique way of apprehending the past. As suggested by Boym, it inserts a critical dimension in longing that opens up multiple possibilities for envisioning the future:

> Reflective nostalgia has elements of both mourning and melancholia. While its loss is never completely recalled, it has some connection to the loss of collective frameworks of memory. Reflective nostalgia is a form of deep mourning that performs a labor of grief both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future. (Boym, 2001, p. 127)

Boym's framework here emphasizes the importance of culture to the construction of collective memory by analysing the shared narratives through which the two kinds of nostalgia take form. The two types of nostalgia described suggest the creative possibilities of nostalgic longing while, at the same time, being alert to its dangers. If reflective nostalgia opens up "nonteleological possibilities of historic development," restorative nostalgia might confuse the actual home with an imaginary one for which one might be ready to die or kill. In this case, "unreflected nostalgia breeds monsters" (Boym, 2001, p. 20).

In recently democratized Brazil it was not difficult to find expressions of dictatorial nostalgia within military sectors, as explained by Godoy (2021).[48] However, as I have demonstrated above, after 2013 these expressions started to proliferate outside military spaces towards the streets (such as in protests asking the Armed Forces for help against communism, see Image 46), and in public institutions (such as in celebrations of the military coup within the National Parliament, see Image 47). Such proliferation was facilitated by a deeply rooted idealized view of the dictatorship that arose as an alternative during the complex institutional crisis that began in 2013. This process of Brazilian "fascistization," analysed by Teixeira da Silva (2021, p. 28) as the result of "regressive utopias," can be understood in relation to what Zygmunt Bauman (2017) names "retrotopia" to address the current forms of nostalgia within political contexts. To him, retrotopia is a derivative of the exhaustion of utopic horizons. Due to its inability to imagine futures, humanity turns to the glorification of the "lost / stolen / abandoned but undead past" (Bauman, 2017, p. 8).

Expressions of dictatorial nostalgia coincided with the reemergence of extremely reactionary and conservative political groups that mercilessly attacked the government of Dilma Rousseff leading to the 2016 Impeachment process. These expressions became even more present in political discussions during the 2018 presidential campaign of Jair Bolsonaro, which relied on the narratives defended by the military "memory community" (e.g., celebrating the dictatorship, fighting the so-called "internal enemy," and denying the atrocities committed by the military regime) to put forth a far-right conservative political project supported

[48] Marcelo Godoy (2021, p. 42) demonstrates that Brazil's transition to democracy led the Armed Forces to retract from politics while maintaining "low intensity" activities to defend their views and indoctrinate young officials about their version of the dictatorship. This version, characterized by a combat against cultural Marxism and in defence of family, religion, and economic freedom, was supported in the 1990s by groups maintained by retired officials such as group *Inconfidência, Guararapes,* and *Ternuma* and books such as *Orvil: Tentativas de tomada do poder* (Maciel & Conegundes do Nascimento*,* 2012) a response to *Brasil: Nunca mais* (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985), which disseminated the military version of the dictatorship.

economically by a neoliberal agenda and to delegitimate governmental initiatives to reckon with the past, from compensation policies (ironically referred to as "dictatorship grants") to the National Truth Commission (referred to as the "National Half-Truth Commission"). Such narratives materialized into public policies and initiatives during the governments of Michel Temer (2016–2018) and especially of Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2022).

As described earlier, from the 2013 protests until the 2016 Impeachment, not only their narratives but the military themselves had an expanding presence in political debates, which got more institutional expression during the next terms. Since the beginning of his temporary government (2016–2018), President Michel Temer distributed strategic institutional roles to the military. During his term generals took place in the *Gabinete de Segurança Institucional* (GSI, Cabinet of Institutional Security), Cabinet Civil Office, National Secretariat of Public Security, National Indigenous Foundation (FUNAI) (Governo Efetiva General Indicado Pelo PSC Domo Presidente da Funai, 2017), Chief of Military Interventions of Rio de Janeiro, and Ministry of Defence. By the end of Temer's government there were 2,765 military people in government office (Nozaki, 2021).

The growing presence of the military in the Federal Government came hand in hand with the generalized lack of faith in the traditional forms of (civilian) representative democracy and calls for military intervention during this period. During the presidential campaigns of 2018 there was an intense circulation of narratives normally associated with the "military community" from reconciliation through forgetting to the two-demons narrative and the total denial of human rights violations during the dictatorship (Bauer, 2019; Bauer, 2020; Benetti et al., 2020). The tone for such discourses was set mainly by Bolsonaro and his frequent appearances in the public sphere during his successful Presidential campaign.

During an interview in July 2018, three months before the elections, while on the traditional debate show Roda Viva broadcast by the public network television TV Cultura, Bolsonaro was asked about dictatorial archives that remained inaccessible. To that the candidate replied: "There are no archives. The Amnesty Law buried this. What about the left? Will the PCdoB (Communist Party of Brazil) open their archives too? It's a wound that needs to be healed. Forget about this. It's from now on" (Roda Vida, 2018). Bolsonaro's discourse, on this occasion, presented a mix of narrative strategies that went from denial "there are no archives," to the two-demons narrative "what about the left?," to the more moderate reconciliation through forgetting: "it's a wound that needs to be healed." Such positioning, as observed by Bauer (2020), reunites a range of historic interpretations that have been shared by military sectors since the 1970s. And the influence of such historic interpretations on memory conflicts could be observed in the public opinion, as demonstrated by the 2018 survey of Instituto Datafolha regarding Brazilians preferences of political regimes,[49] and in the victory of Jair Bolsonaro later that year.

In what concerns memory conflicts regarding the dictatorial period Bolsonaro's role can be understood as one of a "militant in favour of the apologetic memory of the dictatorial regime and against the memory of its victims" (Pedretti, 2020, p. 4), and when in government he made use of the Federal Government's official mechanisms to intervene over shared expressions of remembrance such as in commemorative dates by encouraging military celebrations of the 1964 coup. As stated by Jelin (2003, p. 54), "Dates and anniversaries are conjunctures when memories are activated"; for this reason since the transition to democracy the dates commonly used to mark the beginning of the military regime (31 March and 1 April) were cautiously addressed by all Presidents. From José Sarney to Michel Temer, there was no

[49] According to the survey, which interviewed 10,930 citizens in 389 municipalities, although 69% stated that democracy was the best form of government—the highest number since 1989—between 2016 and 2019, the number of people who believed dictatorships were good in some circumstances, and the number of people for whom it didn't matter if the government was a democracy or a dictatorship, increased (Datafolha, 2018).

tradition of encouraging celebrations around the 1964 coup. This changed dramatically during the first year of Jair Bolsonaro's government and in March 2019 the President determined the celebrations of the coup. When asked about the government's decision to encourage these celebrations the Presidential spokesman, General Otavio Rego Barros, stated that:

> The President does not consider March 31 1964 a military coup. He considers that society, perceiving the dangers the country was going through in that moment, got together; civilians and military got together, and we were able to recover and re-establish our country in a direction that, for the lack of a better view, if it hadn't happened, today we would have a type of government that wouldn't be good to anyone. (Bauer, 2020, p. 187)

Besides encouraging celebrations of the 1964 coup this statement relied on historic denialism in its rhetorical strategy to present an idealized version of the dictatorial past. Affirming that "civilians and military got together" conceals the military hegemony in the coup, downplays the role of the Head of State across twenty-one years, and eclipses the State violence that persecuted and tortured thousands of civilians. Statements such as this illustrate the Bolsonaro government use of official channels to produce what Arjun Appadurai calls "imagined nostalgia" as a "nostalgia for things that never were" (1996, p. 77). Such cultural expressions of nostalgia involve practices, narratives, and styles that tend to manipulate and idealize the past towards the construction of a mythical time that is presented as an alternative for interpreting the problems of the present.

Supporting such statements from the Federal Government, military sectors published manifestos and letters with the aim of intervening in political debates. Sometimes using official channels such as the Army's newspapers, and at other times non-official means such as social media platforms, the military many times assumed the role of "influencers" (Godoy, 2021) to criticize the Supreme Court and to defend Bolsonaro's "plans towards economic and moral recovery of the country," as expressed in the document "504 Guardians of the Nation" signed by hundreds of members of the Armed Forces (Agostini, 2020). In this document, as well as in other declarations produced by the military community during this period, it is not difficult to find elements of the military discourse that supported the 1964 coup, such as the one presented in the "Declaration to the Nation," a text that precedes the first dictatorial Institutional Act Number (AI-1) approved on April 9 1964. According to this Declaration Brazil was being threatened by corruption, plots between internal and external enemies, elites' inability to correctly guide the State, the ghost of international communism, and offenses against the Armed Forces. Teixeira da Silva (2021, p. 32) suggests that these perspectives come from the 1950s and reach the present via "the [*Escola Superior de Guerra*] ESG, via IPES/IBAD[50] and the military schools and academies, populating the mentalities of the military clubs and forming new militaries." For this reason, Teixeira da Silva (2021, p. 26) insists that to comprehend the current politico-institutional crisis in Brazil it is necessary to observe in the country's transition to democracy the roots that allowed not only the 2016 coup but the emergence of radical right-wing groups and their fascist tendencies after 2018.

Bolsonaro's government "militancy," or "memory activism," supporting military versions of the dictatorship and opposing victims' memory aimed at past government initiatives on transitional justice also took other fronts. During 2019 his party PSL elaborated on a proposal to create a parliamentary inquiry commission to investigate the NTC (Benetti et al.,

[50] The *Escola Superior de Guerra* (ESG, Superior School of War*), Instituto Brasileiro de Ação Democrática* (IBAD, Brazilian Institute of Democratic Action)*,* and the *Instituto de Pesquisas e Estudos Sociais* (IPES, Institute of Social Studies and Research) were anti-communist institutions created in the context of the Cold War and financed by national and international companies. These institutions were responsible for creating "the ghost of the internal enemy" (Teixeira da Silva, 2021, p. 32).

2020). After that, the Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights, under which the Amnesty Commission was run at that point, welcomed new members who were openly "against the policies that aimed to overcome the past of exception" (Benetti et al., 2020, p. 12) and for this reason were considered unsuitable to occupy such positions by the Federal Public Ministry (Leitão, 2019). In addition to that, the Special Commission of the Dead and Disappeared (CEMDP), like other entities such as the *Grupo de Trabalho Araguaia* (GTA, Task Group Araguaia) and the *Equipe de Identificação de Mortos e Desaparecidos* (EIMDP, Team for the Identification of Dead and Disappeared), were recently dissolved (Balza, 2022).

Finally, it is also relevant to highlight that Bolsonaro's discourse appropriated elements of dictatorial nostalgia according to the contemporary circumstances of a post-Cold War era and globalized world. For example, his alerts against a supposed "communist threat" most of the time referred to the Brazilian Labour Party, but sometimes they also addressed the Supreme Court. The lack of definition of the "communist threat" meant that anyone who disagreed with the discourse could be framed as part of it. At the same time, the international influence of authoritarian and anti-democratic discourses, of which Bolsonaro's government can be seen as a Brazilian expression (Araújo & Carvalho, 2021) led some of his supporters to appropriate authoritarian symbols from other countries. As demonstrated in the analysis developed by Portal and Junior (2021, p. 284) regarding the uses of Ukrainian nationalist right-wing discourses and symbols used by radical groups such as the *Pravyi Sektor*, "dialogues between Ukranian and Brazilian nationalisms are part of a transnational memory." The importance of investigating the flows of mnemonic narratives within and across State borders has been addressed by scholars such as Assmann and Conrad (2010), and Rigney and de Cesari (2014), and should be considered carefully in future studies of the Brazilian post-dictatorship. For now, it is possible to affirm that the contemporary circumstances that allow transnational dialogues between fascist discourses might also enable exchanges between human rights advocacies.

10.2 Reformulating tactics of memory activism

As I have demonstrated in Chapters 5 to 9, the period between 2010 and 2014 was marked by an intensification of memory activism practices. Fostered by favourable changes in political opportunities following governmental initiatives, mainly the NTC (2012–2014), activists explored new tactics and expanded their repertoires to strengthen their struggle within public spaces and governmental stances. During that time, *Collective Aparecidos Políticos* (AP), *Coletivo Político Quem* (CPQ) and *Frente de Esculacho Popular* (FEP) had their most active period, developing new forms of urban intervention, joining governmental activities, and exhibiting their works with the support of public grants.

After 2014 there were still activities being performed in regard to the struggle for memory, truth, and justice—albeit, with less intensity. For example, group *Filhos e Netos por Memória Verdade e Justiça* (FN-MVJ) was created in 2014 and had their most active period between 2016 and 2017. The carnivalesque parade *Cordão da Mentira* (CM, Lie Parade), inaugurated in 2012, marched every April 1 until 2017. And the group *Coletivo Comum* (CC, Common Collective) kept on producing new political theatre plays (although without a major focus on the Brazilian dictatorship) also until 2017.

The complexities of the political transformations across June 2013 have produced, until the present, different accounts even amongst members of the same movement. That year and the following years, although experienced differently by memory activists, brought to the surface indictments of the dictatorial nostalgia they had been dealing with before 2013. In this sense, Rafael (P4) from CPQ reflected on this experience in our interview:

> My first experience with these nostalgic discourses of the dictatorship came from something simple (…). I used to keep track of the newspapers as a basic source of information. I subscribed to all of them, and in the online versions I started seeing in all articles regarding the dictatorship, without exceptions, people cursing communists, saying that it was a period of great economic growth (…). Those keeping up with the topic of transitional justice could also observe this virulent discourse so in the end I wasn't surprised, but I was frightened by this figure of Jair Bolsonaro who ends up concentrating all this discourse. Rafael (P4)

Rafael's account of the post-2013 period reveals a disappointment with popular (mis)understandings of the dictatorship period, although not one that is entirely unanticipated. Even during their public interventions, he explained, there were some people who would stop to defend the dictatorship or to simply ask when the dictatorship had been (suggesting a lack of formative education about recent Brazilian history). However, the rise of dictatorial nostalgia, according to Rafael, was not the reason for the decrease in CPQ actions, but rather that decrease was related to the demands of their personal and professional lives. In a way, Rafael's memory activism started to shift from the streets to institutional settings after 2014 when he started working for the Government of São Paulo, within the Human Rights Secretariat.

Alexandre (P1) gave a similar account of this period when asked about AP's lack of activity during 2016. To him, despite the rise of dictatorial nostalgia after 2013, which also affected AP, changes in the personal lives across the 2016 coup contributed more to the collective's deceleration:

> I think there was the element of the coup, all this dissent within social struggles. It was the end of a cycle. We know that politically all countries go through conservative cycles but it was a vertiginous fall and it had a repercussion in our group. What was all that energy of 2013? We were doing those protests and then see this authoritarian rise, and we were in the middle of that thing. So, it influenced us and is part of the reason [of why we weren't much active in 2016]. (…) There is also this thing of working in collectives. It can be tiresome. So, since 2016 we started to press each other less to do things. (…) We thought about splitting and a part of our discussion was about this because if we split it would be a way of opening up to all that's happening in the country. And it's also a form of resistance to remain collective and not letting the energy end. Alexandre (P1)

Alexandre also started working for the government in the Amnesty Caravans in Brasília from 2014 until 2016. As he explained: "I was in the middle of that thing. Next to my office I saw people doing *buzinaços* while wearing yellow football jerseys. I went through the before, during, and after this situation. But then I realized it was all over (…) so I decided to focus on my [academic] research." Although AP never ceased, during 2016 members turned their focus to their individual careers and lives, resulting in a slight change in the group's methods to reduce individual pressure.

Both interviewees demonstrate that the events of June 2013 and the rise of dictatorial nostalgia affected collectives of memory activism and contributed to their members' dispersion and engagement with other professional and personal projects. In opposition to the favorable context characterized by Brazil's turn to memory that encouraged their mobilization, as analyzed in Chapter 5, the emergence of dictatorial nostalgia contributed to de-mobilize these activist collectives. In addition to Rafael's and Alexandre's statements, Paula (P5) highlighted conflicts between political agendas after 2013 as a reason behind FEP's termination, even though she wasn't able to specify the causes:

> That's a good question. There wasn't a decision, a split. It required effort so at one point we started to demobilize, people stopped attending the meetings. (…) There

> were some people at FEP who were also members of MPL. I don't know if that contributed to their dispersal, because 2013 was basically about that in the beginning (…). Paula (P5)

Slightly different accounts came about during my interviews with Mariana and Leo, both members of FN-MVJ. Despite diverging in their accounts of the 2013 protests, both provided a more combative response to the rise of dictatorial nostalgia. In this respect Mariana (P2) explained:

> I think 2013 shocked us. We were going to the demonstrations and seeing people singing the National Anthem and saying that no parties were allowed. I think this affected us (…). And I think it made clearer to this side that things are not (…) I mean, not that it wasn't clear before, but I think it potentialized the understanding that there was a risk of memory erasure, and that this was an important struggle to wage. From that point, 2013, 2014, Dilma is reelected, and we watched the advancement of this other discourse of revisionism, so I think it became a responsibility as daughters and granddaughters [of victims of the dictatorship]. (Mariana, P2)

Leo (P3), on the other hand, stressed some positive outcomes of the year 2013 and the ability of protests to mobilize and to engage more people in the country's political discussions. Even though he did not address the rise of dictatorial nostalgia in the streets, he did mention on several occasions their impacts on governmental policies and, consequently in the collective's activities:

> The year of 2013, it can symbolize, the NTC, in August there was a public hearing with one of my grandfather's torturers. I was literally face to face with the guy. After the hearing I went to talk to him. It was tense (…). So the context of the NTC influenced a lot. The journeys of 2013 as well, in a certain way, because agreeing or not with the aftermath of all of that, how that was organized or, better, anarchic, the spontaneity of that thing, it was a moment that somehow inspired (…). It inspired many people, movements of favelas, collective Fala Acari, Papo Reto, alternative media arose from within those protests." (Leo, P3)

It is possible that the fact that the collective FN-MVJ was officially inaugurated after 2013 contributed to its members' engagement during the rise of dictatorial nostalgia. Some other factors are also worth mentioning: (1) the members' circumstances of belonging to directly affected families; (2) the collective's therapeutic function in supporting individuals' paths towards overcoming trauma; and (3) the collective's strong connection to other movements not necessarily related to the conjuncture of memory, truth, and justice. These specific aspects of FN-MVJ might, perhaps, help explaining the collective's enthusiasm during that time, especially in contrast to the other collectives observed here. Such enthusiasm would only be affected in 2018 with the election of Jair Bolsonaro.

As explained earlier, the years between 2016 and 2020, which comprised the governments of Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro, were marked by the institutionalization of military discourse about the dictatorship, materialized in the dismantling of essential initiatives for reckoning with the dictatorial past. This affected the collectives' activities in different ways. At the same time some activists highlighted their frustration and discouragement to produce new actions, others stressed a mix of fear and sense of responsibility. These perspectives can be observed in Alexandre's (AP) and Mariana's (FN-MVJ) descriptions of their experience from that time to the present:

> Nowadays we don't even try public grants, sometimes I have some sort of self censorship, knowing it won't even get in (…). But still we sent some projects and

> weren't selected in any. Some of them we thought we had chances (…) we had been selected in the past to this same grant. So, we know that if the context was different (…) But now we think of other things, we are thinking about making a publication of our [group's] 10 years via collective funding. I wrote about four projects this year, none was accepted. So now I'm going to try collaborative funding. Alexandre (P1)

> I remember that in 2017 and 2018 we were very active, and then somehow with the admission of the new President, with the visibility we were having, this paralyzing fear stayed for a while but we try to elaborate strategies so that this paralyzing fear becomes a mobilizing rage. I think it's natural, we saw that in our collective but also that it wasn't just with us, that many other collectives connected to the memory, truth, and justice [movement] were also destabilizing and destructuring, perhaps hopeless. This phase was a slap in the face. But I think that in a certain way either we mobilize or we sink. Mariana (P2)

In these accounts, self-censorship and fear can be seen as consequences of the rise of dictatorial nostalgia inside and outside the government, resembling the constraints felt by artists during the dictatorship (see Section 2.2). However, while self-censorship during the dictatorship was related to explicit State censorship, for Alexandre (P1) it emerged as a result of the lack of institutional opportunities for public funding and other forms of support. Fear was mentioned by Mariana in regard to the visibility they were having as a collective in a context of violent political opposition. From this perspective, the rise of dictatorial nostalgia within institutional and non-institutional stances represented a renovated form of silencing of second and third generations of victims' narratives within democracy.

These activists' mentions of self-censorship and fear evoke those expressed by artists and activists who were active during the dictatorship (mentioned in Chapter 2). Observing Boym's (2001) understandings of the two main plots of restorative nostalgia—the restoration of origins and the conspiracy theory—it is possible to distinguish their uses after 2016 to restore in the present some aspects of the dictatorial past. In other words, such a simplified conception of the past, based on good and evil, helped bring authoritarian discourses to current memory disputes.

Within the collectives observed in my research, two of them were active only between 2010 and 2014. As described in Section 10.2 above, the others had their activities affected by changes in activists' personal lives, but also by the rise of dictatorial nostalgia inside and outside the government, especially after the impeachment (or coup) in 2016 and the election of Jair Bolsonaro. The range of different tactics of urban intervention analysed earlier (*esculachos*, occupy, street art, and so on), in this sense, was also impacted by changes in the political structure of opportunities. In addition to this, the COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges for memory activism. Restrictions on mobility and gathering made it more difficult for any form of collective work. The government's disastrous approach to the situation also resulted in one of the highest overall death tolls in the world and contributed to activists' relative isolation and a reduction in their actions.

However, despite these many setbacks, AP, FN-MVJ, CC, and CM managed to remain active and critical to current governments. By re-elaborating their tactics and organizational methods according to the new scenario they were able to keep members and partners engaged, and to develop actions against governmental attacks on democracy and human rights. As mentioned earlier, cuts in public funding for artistic and activist practices and governmental redirection of memory policies led AP to start using collective funding to support their work. At the same time, they developed campaigns against censorship.

For example, in 2018, after the censoring of an artwork in an exhibition in the northern city of Belém, AP created a campaign to donate R$50 to the artist Gidalti Moura Jr every day while the censorship lasted. Other similar campaigns were developed by the collective in

protest against censorship of the arts. AP's online presence also increased during the following years due to COVID-19 physical restrictions.

Other collectives also had their online presence increased. *Coletivo Comum* developed an experimental fusion of theatre and cinema to be distributed on online platforms. Filmed in a studio, the performance *Os Grandes Vulcões* (The Great Volcanos) is a monologue inspired by British playwright and 2005 Nobel Prize for Literature winner Harold Pinter. The monologue discusses geopolitical issues, as did Pinter in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, but in connection to Bolsonaro's Government. The performance started to be exhibited in 2021 at online events, most of the time organized by social movement groups, and were followed by debates with the CC.

The carnivalesque parade *Cordão da Mentira* also adapted their street performance to an online mode. Unable to take to the streets in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021 the parade took place online on a YouTube live hosted by Alex Rocha and Fernanda Azevedo (CC). The title of that year's parade was *A Democracia dos Massacres e o Massacre da Democracia* (The Democracy of Massacres and the Massacre of Democracy). Throughout three hours of livestream, victims of past and present atrocities, human rights advocates, artists and activists provided personal testimonies and political reflections about the rise of fascism in Brazil.

Social distancing regulations in such critical times enhanced the contentious moment provoked by political circumstances, but they also enabled opportunities for the mentioned collectives. For example, the necessity of online meetings through platforms such as Zoom, although restraining in many senses, allowed for those who lived in distant places to engage more with the collective, as noted by Leo (FN-MVJ):

> The rearticulation moment of the FN-MVJ began in 2019 and now we are back with weekly meetings. There is a certain facility with this Zoom thing, of pandemic communication. The geographic barriers are not in the way so our colleague who lives in Nova Friburgo [150km from Rio de Janeiro] can attend.

The constraints imposed by the pandemic added to the political challenges brought by Bolsonaro's government to memory activists. The examples mentioned here, however, suggest that their adaptations to the new context also enabled new opportunities. In this respect, these collectives invested in alternative, mostly online-based, tools and spaces for funding (e.g., crowdfunding), internal organization (e.g., Zoom), social engagement (e.g., Instagram), and exhibition (e.g., Youtube).

Fear, self-censorship, distancing, and fragmentation came as a consequence of the rise of dictatorial nostalgia (2013–2021) and was intensified by COVID-19. But the memory activists interviewed in this thesis managed to transcend this state of "paralyzing fear" to embrace "mobilizing rage" (Mariana, P3). Some expressed a sense of personal responsibility, while others highlighted a social and political responsibility; some are still engaged with their former collectives, others are not engaged with any collectives in the present, but all of my interviewees expressed a desire to continue disputing the meanings of the dictatorial past.

Conclusion

What these activists, artists, and collectives of the second and third generation seem to tell us is that the problems of our "safe and slow" transition are still affecting our current democracy; the most efficient way to deal with them is by taking them to the public sphere. These activists were stimulated by Brazil's turn to memory (2007–2014) when the State started taking their memory initiatives "outside the marble walls" of Government buildings (Abrão e Cardozo,

2012, p. 25). At the same time, they developed a repertoire of tactics to expand the limitations of this memory's turn.

If, according to Boym (2001), restorative nostalgia evokes the national past and future and reflective nostalgia is more about cultural memory, the projects of memory activism discussed here fall into the second category. As they aim to mobilize society through cultural-political actions, their works build on the "cultural intimacy" that glues the background of our everyday lives. In so doing, memory activism promotes alternative experiences that help us to think collectively about the dilemmas of our present in connection to the past. These participative and historically informed experiences have the considerable ability to communicate the necessity of expanding democracy and human rights beyond the limits imposed by liberal history.

The rise of dictatorial nostalgia in Brazil, just like the Brazilian dictatorship (1964–1985) itself, was connected to changes in broader economic and political circumstances. The memory activists that took part in this research were affected in different ways by these changes but managed to transform their "paralysing fear into mobilizing rage" (P2) and reformulate their tactics inside or outside their collectives to "keep disputing narratives" (P5) about dictatorial memory. At the same time they questioned the structures (capitalist, colonial, patriarchal) that maintain human rights violations in Brazil, and by extension the concept of human rights itself.

CONCLUSION

On March 14, 2019, the date that marks the first anniversary of city councillor Marielle Franco's unsolved murder, the feminist collective *Movimento de Mulheres Olga Benario* (Olga Benario Women's Movement), along with other collectives, performed an intervention on Bridge Costa e Silva (recently renamed as Honestino Guimarães) in Brazil's capital, Brasília, in which they renamed the bridge Marielle Franco. According to the group's manifesto "on the completion of 365 days of councillor Marielle Franco's murder, the people still have no answer to the question: 'who ordered the crime?'" (Garonce, 2019). Resembling the same visual language (e.g., dimensions, colours, and typography) used by local street signs and using an adhesive technique to paste the name change, the bridge was nominally transformed. On the pole that holds the bridge's name sign, the group also pasted a note that read: "We Brazilian women, in the name of democracy, of history and human rights, sovereignly rename this monument to Marielle Franco."

As seen in Chapter 2, Costa e Silva was the second of six dictators who took seat during the Brazilian dictatorship period (1964–1985). He was responsible for signing the Institutional Act Number 5 (AI-5) in 1968 that gave the government the right to censor, persecute and arrest anyone considered to be a subversive. Marielle Franco was born in 1979, by the end of the dictatorship, in one of Rio de Janeiro's largest *favelas* known as Maré, and became a sociologist, human rights activist and city councillor of Rio de Janeiro. Critical of the police and militia's violent actions in poor communities, she was murdered on March 14, 2018, in Rio de Janeiro's city centre; ongoing investigations point to the local militia.

This action by *Movimento de Mulheres Olga Benário* (and others) spoke back to the multiple mnemonic layers that compose the physical and symbolic domain of the bridge, while activating new ways of apprehending the Brazilian dictatorial period in relation to current political struggles. As in the other actions of contemporary memory activism analysed in this thesis, the bridge's renaming relied on a guerrilla-style tactic appropriating temporarily the space, language and the role assumed by the State in the naming of public locations to raise awareness about the historical role of the dictatorship in Brazil's culture of impunity. Such actions organized by second and third-generation memory activists have a significant potential to force the limits of Brazilian transitional justice by generating new links between past and present, and by developing tactics to engage with civil society.

As explained in Chapter 1, the growing interest in the possibilities of memory studies as a theoretical framework to comprehend how we reckon with national pasts can contribute to strengthen current democracies. However, based on relevant scholarship (e.g., De Cesari & Rigney, 2014; Assmann & Conrad, 2010; Erll, 2011), I have argued that to do so this theoretical effort should expand its geographic and disciplinary borders to consider the challenging work of social actors organized in collectives and political movements questioning the limits of such democracies. Thus, in dialogue with recent advances regarding studies on memory and activism (e.g., Gutman & Wustenberg, 2021; Rigney, 2021; Zamponi, 2018), this thesis aimed to combine approaches to collective memory and social movement (e.g., Alexander, 2012; Jelin, 2003; Jasper, 2018;) with studies on Brazilian memory conflicts (Atencio, 2014; Bauer, 2020; Teles & Quinalha, 2020) to investigate memory activism in the Brazilian post-dictatorship.

Initiating the investigation Chapter 2 provided a political and cultural contextualization of the dictatorial period (1964–1985) and demonstrated the main political and economic factors that contributed to the emergence of a right-wing military dictatorship supported by part of the civil society and financed by corporate groups. Drawing on relevant literature (Fausto, 1995;

Fico, 2001, 2014, 2017; Napolitano, 2001; Reis, 2010; Ridenti, 2014), participants' testimonies, and media archival research I observed how national and international economic interests led to the construction of an internal enemy (mainly students and workers) and to the institutionalization of violence as a political tool against political opponents of the dictatorship. Chapter 2 also analysed the cultural production and artistic tendencies during the most violent period of the dictatorship (1968–1974) to understand the dynamics of cultural resistance during that period. Chapter 2 ended by explaining the political machinations that allowed the military to conduct the transition to democracy while maintaining their institutional power and exempting their agents from being prosecuted for human rights violations. Building on this context, Chapter 3 considered in more detail the democratic transition and demonstrated how legislation and other Government initiatives helped to maintain silences around State terrorism. Chapter 3 also highlighted examples of social efforts by victims' relatives that initiated the struggle for memory, truth, and justice in Brazil, a struggle that reached its most public moment in the first National Truth Commission in 2012. Chapter 3, then, provided an overview of the politics of memory and explained the shift from what Rebecca Atencio (2014) calls "reconciliation by institutionalized forgetting" to "reconciliation by memory." The theoretical and historical apparatus elaborated during these three first Chapters was employed in the analysis of the disputes around the memory of victim Fernando Santa Cruz who "disappeared" in 1974. Chapter 4 analysed interviews and documents provided by relatives to investigate their struggle to obtain information and promote justice across different political circumstances within Brazil's recent history. In this sense Chapter 4 aimed to understand the social and political dynamics of a *desaparecido*, a status of dictatorial victim whose absence, due to uncovered truths and incomplete justice, persists across time.

Building on the investigations developed in Chapters 1 to 4, in Part 2 of the thesis (Chapters 5 to 10) I identified some of the ways through which younger generations started addressing these and other persisting absences produced by the dictatorship and that affect the shape of current democracy. Combining the theoretical frameworks laid down in Chapter 1 with participant interviews, in Chapter 5 I focused on their individual accounts of the reasons and emotions behind their engagement in collective political actions (Jasper, 2018; Della Porta & Diani, 2006), and their perceptions of the political opportunities enabled by Brazil's "turn to memory" (Atencio, 2014; Kitschelt, 1986; Tilly, 2006). In Chapter 6 I drew on sociocultural approaches to memory and place (Jelin, 2003; Ricoeur, 2007; Donohoe, 2012) and analysed how memory activists' interventions into the mnemonic layers of public spaces disrupt the power relationships configuring such spaces (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2016; Rose-Redwood et al., 2010; Azaryahu, 2016), and how they might transform those spaces into urban commons (Harvey, 2013) that encourage social participation in the construction of the city and its material and symbolic structures. Chapter 7 advanced such a perspective by exploring the actions of *esculachos* against former agents of the dictatorship. Adopting approaches to social performances developed by Jeffrey Alexander (2004; 2006), Chapter 7 investigated how memory activists' performance of the *esculachos* promotes a temporary experience of popular justice that suggests an expansion by which the limits of transitional justice are infringed. Adopting a different approach Chapter 8 explored aesthetic-political examples of past artistic tendencies, particularly the 1970s "art guerrillas" (Morais, 1970; Calirman, 2012; Shtromberg 2016), in contemporary memory activism. In Chapter 8 I analysed the role of aesthetic agency (Rigney, 2021; Assmann & Assmann, 2010; Hirsch, 2012) and of "previous mobilizations' framing, forms of organization, and repertoires" (Daphi & Zimmerman, 2021, p. 94) in contemporary memory activism. Closing my investigation of specific actions and collectives of memory activism Chapter 9 investigated the participation of young activists in the psychotherapeutic project Clinics of Testimony (CT) and the role of witnessing in the social construction of the victim (Vital, 2015; Magaldi, 2022; Schwab, 2010). In Chapter 9 I argued

that by creating a space to explore individual traumas in connection to past and present political struggles, the CT project encouraged memory activism by helping young participants to transform their individual pain into an instrument of political action. In a broader sense Chapters 5 to 9 demonstrated how contemporary *mnemonic guerrillas* have used the social and cultural frameworks that structure collective memory to produce changes in the present.

However, Chapter 10 demonstrated that the changes advocated by activists during Brazil's brief turn to memory (2007–2012) were eclipsed by the country's turn towards dictatorial nostalgia when Dilma's government "was overthrown by a parliamentary coup, installing a fervent admirer of the dictatorship in the presidency" (Anderson, 2019, p. 28). Chapter 10 explored the elements of dictatorial nostalgia mobilized following Dilma's impeachment (Boym, 2001), and the re-emergence of the military sector as a powerful actor within Brazilian politics (Martins Filho, 2021b). Drawing on participant interviews Chapter 10 also demonstrated that facing such unfavourable political circumstances activists reformulated some of their strategies to keep fighting for memory, truth, and justice. In sum, Chapter 10 analysed the rise of dictatorial nostalgia and memory activists' efforts towards transforming a "paralysing fear into a mobilizing rage."

This thesis proves the potential of Government initiatives for reckoning with past human rights violations, particularly those that manage to leave the walls of Government buildings and enter the public sphere, and that stimulate the engagement of younger generations in the debates about those violations. As I have demonstrated, by engaging with such debates younger generations were able to produce rejuvenated connections between past, present, and future, and to communicate them in more effective ways to the broader society. Moreover, my investigations of the younger generation's memory activism in Brazil have shown that, while often interacting with Government initiatives, their actions can force the limits of State-driven processes towards new forms of transitional justice and new approaches to human rights from below.

This is important, at least in part, because the shortcomings of transitional justice in liberal democracies can contribute to future threats to democracy. The limits posed by Brazilian democracy in the name of "governability" and of a "non-vindictive" reconciliation have led to the coexistence of conflictive narratives about the dictatorial regime. Despite the rise of new movements related to class, race, gender, and human rights in contemporary Brazilian politics, negotiations between our democratic Governments and the Armed Forces have enabled the latter to preserve their narratives about the dictatorial past. Beyond such narratives, the Armed Forces have also managed to preserve their power within the democratic Governments, as can be observed lucidly in the introduction to the National Truth Commission report released in 2014: "The military authorities opted to maintain the pattern of negative or insufficient response existing across the past fifty years, obstructing information about the circumstances and authors of gross human rights violations that occurred during the military dictatorship" (CNV, 2014c, vol. 3, p. 29). The insufficient responses of military authorities regarding State violence during the dictatorship legitimate the silence about ongoing forms of State violence. In this respect, the limits of Brazil's current democracy are reinforced by, for example, the daily episodes of police brutality against civilians (especially those from marginalized communities) who are ordinarily silenced within public political discourse.

During 2018 Brazil experienced the assassination of human rights activist and councillor of Rio de Janeiro, Marielle Franco, and watched the escalation of authoritarian discourses and the victory of a militarized Government led by a politician who openly praises torture and torturers. In the past four years this Government worked to dismantle and/or delegitimize previous initiatives regarding transitional justice, to encourage celebrations about the dictatorial period, and to mock victims and their relatives. Employing similar discourses used by the dictatorship, such as those grounded in anti-communism and Christian moralism

(family, nation, and God), Bolsonaro justified his actions and inactions. During the Covid-19 pandemic, having a military man as head of the Ministry of Health, the Government invested in a campaign against vaccines and recommended the use of medications that had no support from the scientific community. In 2021 a Commission of Parliamentary Investigation about the Government's measures regarding the pandemic produced a report recommending the indictment of 66 people, including President Bolsonaro, and two companies. The recently elected Government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will have the opportunity to initiate the processing of the national trauma resulting from the nearly 700,000 deaths by Covid-19. I hope this opportunity is taken with the seriousness it deserves and that it leads to a revision of the country's culture of impunity—as Brazilian history has shown us this also requires a revision of our democratic culture of negotiated silence.

To return to the action performed by feminist collective *Movimento de Mulheres Olga Benário* (Olga Benário Women's Movement) in 2018, the practice of renaming the Bridge from dictator Costa e Silva to Marielle Franco allowed the latter to be positioned publicly as a victim of ongoing political repression. Alongside the other *mnemonic* guerrilla actions analysed in this thesis, the tactical use of processes that legitimize authority in the construction of national memory (naming public locations in this case) by voices often marginalized from such construction not only urges us to look at the spectres of past and ongoing violence embedded in our everyday lives, but also to possibilities of fighting them through creative combinations of political and cultural means. This thesis demonstrates the potential of such combinations in generating participatory experiences for constructing collective memory and linking the legacy of dictatorial violence and its persistence in the present in order to prefigure democratic improvements in the future. However, I have also called attention to their limitations in producing structural changes, as could be observed in the rise of dictatorial nostalgia following the National Truth Commission. As a radical and passionate part of Brazil's cycle of memory, the actions of memory activism analysed here confronted the logic of governability that uphold the culture of impunity within Brazil's "democracy", and even though they were unable to affect its structure, these experiences can propagate and give rise to new expressions. In other words, the efficacy of such actions in producing structural changes lies in their prefigurative power – if the past is still being disputed and the future is still being constructed, and if both sides of the temporal continuity are held in tension, then the only space left for imagining and producing change, even if symbolic and ephemeral, lies in the domain of the present. It is in this sense that the experiments developed by contemporary mnemonic guerrillas function as bridges between past and future.

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT LIST

PARTICIPANT NUMBER, NAME / AGE	INTER-VIEWED ON	OCCUPATION	LOCATION	POLITICAL / ACTIVIST GROUPS	GOVERN-MENTAL WORK
(P1) Alexandre Mourão, 35	Sep 03, 2020	Professor, psychologist, visual artist	São Luís, MA (Zoom)	Aparecidos Políticos	National Truth Commission Amnesty Caravans
(P2) Mariana Lydia Bertoche, 27	Oct 01, 2020	Visual artist, researcher, professor	Rio de Janeiro, RJ (Zoom)	FN-MVJ RJ-MVJ OcupaDOPS	
(P3) Leo Alves, 42	Oct 10, 2020	Musician, researcher, professor	Rio de Janeiro, RJ (Zoom)	FN-MVJ OcupaDOPS	
(P9) Marcelo Santa Cruz, 77	Dec 17, 2020 Jul 1, 2022	Lawyer, politician, human rights advocate, and brother of Fernando Santa Cruz, assassinated by the dictatorship in 1974.	Recife, PE (Zoom and F2F)	Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais Pernambuco Centro Dom Helder Câmara de Estudos e Ação Social	Human Rights Department of Recife Local Councilor of Olinda
(P4) Rafael Schincariol, 38	Jan 12, 2021	Lawyer at Vladimir Herzog Institute, human rights specialist, Writer	São Paulo, SP (Zoom)	Coletivo Político Quem Comitê Paulista por Memória, Verdade e Justiça	Dead and Disappeared Commission Human Rights Department of São Paulo Interamerican Court for Human Rights UNESCO
(P5) Vivian Mendes, 40	Jan 21, 2021	Activist and political leader	São Paulo, SP (Zoom)	Family Commission of Dead and Disappeared Movimento de Mulheres Olga Benário Movimento de Luta nos Bairros, Vilas e Favelas	Truth Commission of São Paulo Leader of political party Unidade Popular (UP)

(P6) Fernando Kinas, 55	Feb 06, 2021	Activist, playwright, researcher	São Paulo, SP (Zoom)	Coletivo Comum	
(P7) Fernanda Azevedo, 47	Feb 06, 2021	Activist, actress, researcher	São Paulo, SP (Zoom)	Coletivo Comum	
(P8) Nara Santa Cruz, 43	Jul 07, 2022	Activist, lawyer, researcher and niece of Fernando Santa Cruz, assassinated by the dictatorship in 1974.	Recife, PE	Comitê Memória, Verdade e Justiça para a Democracia - PE	
(P10) Edival Cajá Nunes, 71	Jun 29, 2022	Activist and sociologist, direct victim of dictatorial violence and persecution. Arrested and tortured in 1978.	Recife, PE	President of Cultural Centre Manoel Lisboa Member of the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR)	
(P11) Paulo Abrão, 47	Nov 18, 2022	Brazilian human rights expert, former president of the Amnesty Commission, and law professor.	São Paulo, SP (Zoom)		

- This list is ordered chronologically according to the date of the interview (except for Marcelo P9 who was present in multiple moments in this research).
- Participants may be members of other collectives and associations. I cited only the ones analysed in this research.

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